

In Brief

Himang Barman of Nalbari qualifies for NEET with exceptional performance

Nalbari:Himang Barman, from Gobindapur village in Assam's Nalbari district, has achieved remarkable success by qualifying for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG), despite financial hardships faced by his family. As the second son of daily wage earners Kalindra and Pratibha Barman, Himang pursued his dream of becoming a doctor with determination, scoring an impressive 573 marks in the NEET examination. His academic achievements include a 96.5% in the HSLC (Class 10) and 91.4% in the Higher Secondary (Class 12) examinations. He completed his primary education at Gobindapur Milan Middle English School and attended Bonbhag Khata Dihajari High School, before finishing his Higher Secondary education at Ramujan Academy, Baihata Chariali, where he received free education due to his exceptional talent.

Arunachal's monsoon crisis is made worse by new landslides and flash floods

Itanagar: The flood situation in Arunachal Pradesh is critical, with fresh floods and landslides impacting Upper Subansiri and Upper Siang districts. Currently, 1,13,674 people are affected across 546 villages in all 26 districts. The disasters have resulted in seven fatalities and 29 injuries. Significant damage includes 804 houses, 177 roads, 28 bridges, and 30 culverts. Crop losses are reported at 603.75 hectares, and water supply disruptions are noted in Naharlagun. Restoration efforts are ongoing, and the India Meteorological Department has warned of further heavy rainfall.

After reviewing CMAAA recipients, Assam finds that just half are eligible for second-phase support

Guwahati, July 19: The Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Asom Abhijan (CMAAA), the Assam government's premier self-employment program, has come under increased scrutiny after a performance evaluation revealed that only roughly half of the beneficiaries chosen in the scheme's initial phase had successfully used the financial aid given to them.

Addressing a press conference at Janata Bhawan on Friday, Industries, Commerce and Public Enterprises Minister Bimal Borah said that of the 25,277 recipients selected under CMAAA 1.0 in 2023, only 12,976 have qualified for further financial assistance following a detailed evaluation. According to him, the beneficiaries were evaluated based on their eligibility and efficiency, and those who did not meet



the requirements will be reevaluated before any further decisions were made. Borah said that the first phase of the scheme covered 25,277 beneficiaries, including 221 under the

professional category comprising doctors, engineers, pharmacists, chartered accountants, MBA graduates and other qualified professionals. The remaining beneficiaries were selected

under the non-professional category.

Under the scheme, non-professional beneficiaries received Rs 1 lakh each as the first instalment to establish their enterpris-

The Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Asom Abhijan (CMAAA), the Assam government's premier self-employment program, has come under increased scrutiny after a performance evaluation revealed that only roughly half of the beneficiaries chosen in the scheme's initial phase had successfully used the financial aid given to them.

es, while those in the professional category were provided Rs 2.5 lakh.

The minister said the Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Asom Abhijan, launched on September 23, 2023, aims to encourage entrepreneurship among the state's youth, promote self-reliance and create employment opportunities through sustainable business ventures. He said the initiative is intended to strengthen Assam's entrepreneurial ecosystem by supporting aspiring entrepreneurs with financial assistance and institutional backing. Borah expressed concern over the review's conclusions, stating that

the program's goal could not be met unless recipients made responsible use of the help and turned it into profitable businesses. He asked beneficiaries to take the effort seriously and make sure the money is put to the right use.

Additionally, the minister warned recipients not to abuse government support, threatening to remove them from Bihu committees if they did not use the money properly.

He went on to say that banks would only provide subsidies and extra funding if recipients showed real growth and successfully carried out their business operations.

A workshop is held at Gauhati University to review the draft of the Assam State Water Resources Assessment

Guwahati, July 19: A one-day consultative workshop was held on Friday by Gauhati University's Centre for Brahmaputra Studies (CBS) to examine the draft Assam State Water Resources Assessment (SWRA) Report, a crucial document that is anticipated to direct the creation of the future Assam State Water Policy. The workshop, which took place in the Vice-Chancellor's Conference Room, brought together academicians from different departments, senior university officials, and specialists from the Flood and River Erosion Management Agency of Assam (FREMAA) to discuss the report's findings and provide suggestions prior to its finalization. Gauhati University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nani Gopal Mahanta emphasized



the importance of the project in his inaugural speech, calling the Brahmaputra the region's lifeline and highlighting the university's dedication to evidence-based research for sustainable water governance. The scope, methodology, and key conclusions of the research were presented by a team from FREMAA under the direction of Dr. Pratap Singh.

The report, which was created as part of the Assam Integrated River Basin Management Programme (AIRBMP), which is supported by the World Bank, offers a thorough evaluation of the state's water resources using the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) framework. Water resources, flooding and erosion, economic water usage,

reliance on river systems for culture and life, and water and environment are the five main themes that are examined in this research. The need for an efficient transboundary hydrological data-sharing mechanism with neighboring countries, better flood management through non-structural measures, increased protection for erosion-affected char communities, restoration of wetlands and floodplain connectivity, expansion of irrigation coverage, and greater recognition of cultural and livelihood values in water resource planning were among the major topics discussed during the interactive session, which was facilitated by Prof. Dhrubajyoti Sahariah, Director of the Center for Brahmaputra Studies.

The foundation stone for the Magurmari community development project was laid

Guwahati, July 19: Pan-kaj Chakravarty, the Kokrajhar district commissioner, lay the foundation stone for the multipurpose community development project Seemanta Bahumukhi Prakalpa at Magurmari on Thursday. The Transformation & Development Department of the Government of Assam is carrying out the project,

which is expected to cost Rs 2 crore. The District Commissioner spoke to the group and emphasized the value of community-driven projects in fostering inclusive growth, bolstering social cohesion, and generating chances for learning, skill development, and cultural pursuits. In order to guarantee that the initiative makes a significant contribu-



tion to the welfare and general development of the local

community, he called on all parties involved to cooperate.

Amid the modernization of the Assam Railway, ARPA demands more stops and new train services

Guwahati, July 19: The Assam Rail Passengers' Association (ARPA) has reiterated its demands for new train services, more stops, and better daily rail connectivity throughout Assam amid the ongoing modernization of railway infrastructure and redevelopment of stations under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. According to the association, many of these projects are still pending with the Ministry of Railways, even though the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has accepted a number of significant plans throughout the years and sent

them to the Railway Board for review. Because of this, passengers in Assam are still denied access to a number of crucial train services that might greatly enhance their quality of life and connection. There is currently no daily passenger train linking the Gauripur-Bilasipara railway segment with Guwahati, despite the fact that freight train operations have begun on the route, according to ARPA. Additionally, the group has reaffirmed its long-standing demand that the Tinsukia-Dhubri Intercity Express, which has been shut down for years,



be restored. The expansion of the Guwahati-North Lakhimpur Jan Shatabdi Express to Murkongselek and the provision of stops for additional express trains at significant railway stations throughout

the state are among the other major demands.

ARPA claimed that these ideas are still awaiting Railway Board approval even though NFR has approved them.

Meghalaya's oldest MLA, TD Shira, promises to run for office again at the age of 80

Shillong, July 19: Senior National People's Party (NPP) leader and Cabinet Minister TD Shira has denied rumors that he is retiring from politics, stating that he plans to run for another term in the 2028 Assembly elections if his health permits. This comes as political parties in Meghalaya are starting to position themselves almost two years before the next Assembly election. The oldest lawmaker in the state made the statement at a time when political activity is intensifying throughout Meghalaya and parties are adjusting their tactics in



preparation for the election. The eighty-year-old leader claimed that rumors that he might not run in the upcoming Assembly election were untrue and that he would continue to be involved in politics as long as his health permits. Shira acknowledged his advanced age but stated that, closer to the

election, his choice will ultimately rely on his physical state. "That may not be accurate. If my health permits, I plan to run for the Assembly in 2028. I'll compete if I can keep up my current level of health. But I won't compete if I'm physically incapable of doing so," Shira declared. The Resubelpara constituency lawmaker added that he is still optimistic about running in the upcoming Assembly election despite the fact that he now has no one to continue his political legacy. In response to the Bharatiya Janata Party's attempts to increase its footprint in Me-

ghalaya, especially in Garo Hills, in advance of the elections for the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council, the leader of the NPP stated that he was confident the BJP would struggle to gain a sizable electoral advantage in North Garo Hills. The most recent MP election was a painful experience for us. We ran poorly in the previous MP election despite having an alliance with the BJP. The folks were not persuaded by us. Although there is some fear of the BJP, we don't mind. He said, "Those folks have no idea how the world is evolving.

Manipur Chief Minister opens a two-day Criminal Justice Administration conference

Aizawl, July 19: On July 18, Yumnam Khemchand Singh, the chief minister of Manipur, attended the first day of a two-day Legal Seminar on Criminal Justice Administration at Imphal's MSFDS Hall. Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, judges, police officers, public prosecutors, and legal experts were present at the event, where they discussed many facets of the criminal justice system and the efficient application of criminal laws. Speaking to the crowd, the Chief Minister stated that the seminar will be crucial in bolstering the application of criminal laws and advancing an open, effective, and people-centered justice delivery system. He expressed hope that the seminar's talks will improve the state's overall



criminal justice administration and increase collaboration among justice system stakeholders. Members of the judiciary, law enforcement, and legal ex-

perts come together for the two-day seminar to explore best practices and reforms targeted at guaranteeing equitable and efficient justice delivery in Manipur.

Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister of Assam, hailed the Vikram-1 launch as a turning point for India's private space industry

Guwahati, July 19: On July 18, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma celebrated the successful launch of Vikram-1, India's first privately produced orbital launch vehicle, calling it a significant turning point for the nation's entrepreneurial ecosystem and space industry. Sarma congratulated Skyroot Aerospace, the business that spearheaded the initiative, saying that the accomplishment showed the expanding potential of Indian entrepreneurs and innovators. "The Vikram-1 launch signifies a new high point for India's space sector as well as the boundaries of entrepreneurial potential. In a post on X, he wrote, "My congratulations to the entire @SkyrootA team as they launch India's first



private orbital launch vehicle." Sarma said the mission reflected the progress made under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, adding that "the sky is not the limit, deep space is" for India's innovators, investors and

entrepreneurs. Vikram-1, a four-stage orbital launch vehicle standing seven storeys tall, successfully placed its primary technology demonstration payloads from Grahaa Space, Cosmoserve, DCubed and Skyroot's SCOPE into a

450-km Low Earth Orbit during its maiden mission. The rocket also carried a micro-art payload, an 18-carat gold rocket, and a handwritten postcard from Prime Minister Narendra Modi bearing the message "Vande Mataram", along

with postcards from engineers, scientists and Indian astronauts. Vikram-1 is India's first all-carbon composite orbital rocket fueled by a 3D-printed engine, Sarma said, highlighting the mission's technological significance.

He claimed that the launch would test technology that might assist address the rising problem of space debris while simultaneously bolstering the nation's capacity to launch private satellites.

The chief minister called the launch a worthy tribute to generations of Indian scientists and engineers who set the groundwork for the nation's space program, pointing out that it occurred precisely 46 years after the momentous flight of India's SLV-3.

A panel of the Arunachal Assembly challenges departments on unfulfilled government promises



Itanagar, July 19: On Thursday, the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly’s Committee on Government Assurances (GAC) examined the state government’s implementation of

promises made on the House floor during prior terms and urged the relevant departments to guarantee prompt compliance. According to an official statement, MLA Laisam Simai chaired the fifth session of the GAC of the Eighth Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, which took place in the Assembly Secretariat conference hall today. The committee reviewed the Action Taken Replies from the departments of Sports, Public Works, and Social Justice, Empowerment, and Tribal Affairs.

The Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Legislative Assemblies were the subject of the guarantees that were being examined. The committee reviewed the status of the pending guarantees and emphasized that in order to protect the House’s sanctity, the relevant departments must ensure prompt and efficient compliance.

Tripura introduces the “Yoddha” portal to facilitate anonymous social issue reporting

Agartala, July 19: The North Tripura district administration initiated the ‘Yoddha’ web portal on Wednesday, July 15. This platform is designed to foster public engagement in tackling social issues by enabling residents to report incidents anonymously. The administration emphasizes the importance of maintaining complete confidentiality for all submissions, thereby encouraging greater participation from the community in addressing local concerns. The portal serves as a confidential platform for citizens to report various social issues, including child marriage, drug abuse, domestic violence, and child

labor. Users can submit reports without disclosing their identities, ensuring their safety while addressing these critical concerns. North Tripura District Magistrate Chandni Chandran said the initiative is aimed at empowering people to play an active role in combating social evils while protecting the identity of those who come forward with information. Chief Minister Manik Saha welcomed the initiative and said the state government would consider replicating the model in other districts if it proves successful. “If the ‘Yoddha’ appears successful, we will urge the other district magistrates to follow the concept to ad-

dress the unaddressed problems of the people,” Saha told reporters. The chief minister said he had heard the grievances of around 26 people from North Tripura district through the Mukhyamantri Samipeshu programme and stressed that it is not possible to resolve people’s issues by remaining confined to Agartala. Mukhyamantri Samipeshu is a weekly grievance redressal programme in which the chief minister interacts with citizens in the presence of senior officials and directs departments to take remedial action. Owing to its positive response, the programme has now been extended to the district level.

Meghalaya High Court upholds co-accused’s life sentence while acquitting one in the 2014 murder of Jowai

Shillong, July 19: The Meghalaya High Court upheld the co-accused’s life sentence based on the testimony of two child eyewitnesses and supporting medical evidence, but cleared one of the two convicted in the 2014 murder of Prodis Nangbah, finding that the prosecution had not proven his involvement beyond a reasonable doubt. On July 15, a Division Bench made up of Chief Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Justice W. Diengdoh rendered the decision in two related criminal appeals contesting the conviction and sentence imposed by the West Jaintia Hills Sessions Judge in March and April of 2024. The trial court had convicted Belting Tyngkra and Salbinal Nangbah under Section 302 read with Section 34 of the Indian Penal Code and sentenced them to life imprisonment. A third accused,

Chalbinal, died during the trial. According to the prosecution, Prodis Nangbah was attacked at his home in the early hours of May 6, 2014, after refusing to reopen his shop to sell cigarettes. His children, who were present inside the house, witnessed the assault and later gave statements during the investigation as well as before the trial court.

The High Court held that the evidence against Salbinal Nangbah was reliable and sufficiently corroborated by medical findings. Referring to the testimony of the deceased’s son and daughter, the court noted that there was “no cross-examination with respect to the actual assault” and found their evidence to be “credible, trustworthy and without blemish”, adding that it inspired confidence. The Bench noted that Salbinal was known

to both eyewitnesses because he lived in the same village, rejecting the defense’s claim that no Test Identification Parade (TIP) was held.

It further concluded that since the accused was already known to the witnesses, identification by candlelight was conceivable even though the community was without electricity that evening. The argument that the child witnesses were “interested witnesses” was also rejected by the court, which noted that they were natural witnesses because they were in the house when the incident occurred. There was no evidence that they had any reason to falsely accuse Salbinal. However, the Bench reached a different conclusion regarding Belting Tyngkra. It noted that the deceased’s son neither named nor identified Belting, while the daughter also failed to iden-

tify him in court. The prosecution, the court said, had “failed to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt” against Belting. The High Court granted Belting’s appeal, overturned his conviction, and mandated his immediate release if it wasn’t needed in another case.

Additionally, it ordered the reimbursement of whatever fines he had deposited. At the same time, it upheld Salbinal Nangbah’s conviction and life sentence by rejecting his appeal. The Bench further ordered the Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), West Jaintia Hills, to report within eight weeks on whether the trial court’s recommendation to compensate the deceased’s family with ₹3 lakh had been carried out. On September 3, 2026, the matter was listed for compliance.

Manipur CM says at the MPSC felicitation that open, merit-based hiring is essential to fostering public trust

Imphal, July 19: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday said that a transparent and merit-based recruitment system in government services strengthens public confidence in governance and institutions, reiterating that transparency and fairness remain the state government’s foremost priorities. The Chief Minister on Wednesday attended the felicitation programme for the successful candidates of the Manipur Public Service Commission (MPSC) 2022 batch, held at a hotel in Imphal. Speaking at the function, the Chief Minister lauded the private coaching centre for their unwavering commitment towards nurturing civil service aspirants despite numerous challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the prevailing law and order situation in the state. Addressing the newly selected MPSC 2022 candidates, the Chief Minister asked whether they had any doubts regarding the lack of transparency in the recruit-

ment process. Receiving a unanimous response of “No” from the successful candidates, he stated that transparency and fairness remained the government’s foremost priority. CM Singh said he deliberately refrained from contacting or meeting the Chairman of the Manipur Public Service Commission before the declaration of the examination results.

He added that he congratulated the Chairman only after the results were announced, as he wanted the entire recruitment process to remain transparent, impartial and free from any external influence. Expressing satisfaction over the outcome, CM Khemchand Singh said that the government was pleased that the selected candidates have earned their success through merit and possess a clean image. He also informed that the Chief Minister’s Scholarship Scheme for Civil Services has been implemented by the BJP-led government in the state with a provision

of Rs 2.8 crore annually. Under the scheme, the top 200 civil service aspirants will receive a full scholarship for their preparation, reaffirming the government’s commitment towards encouraging talented youth to join public service. Retired IAS officer R.K. Nimai Singh, who also addressed the event, congratulated the successful candidates and urged them to uphold integrity, honesty and dedication throughout their careers. He advised them to stay away from corruption, drug abuse and other unethical practices that could tarnish the image of the civil services. Nimai Singh also emphasised that officers selected through the MPSC play a vital role in the state’s development as they possess a deep understanding of Manipur’s needs and aspirations. During the programme, the Chief Minister, along with other dignitaries, felicitated the successful candidates of the MPSC 2022 examination in recognition of their achievement.

The chief minister of Mizoram starts a campaign to force fraudulent family pensioners to give up their PPOs or risk legal action

Aizawl, July 19: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Wednesday appealed to individuals receiving family pensions from the state government through fraudulent or invalid documents to voluntarily surrender their Pension Payment Orders (PPOs) during the designated voluntary surrender window, warning that strict legal action would follow against those found guilty after verification. The Finance Department of the Mizoram government on Wednesday launched the statewide kick-off programme on “Sensitisation of Voluntary Surrender of Pension Payment Order (PPO)” to facilitate the voluntary surrender of PPOs by persons drawing Family Pension based on fraudulent or invalid documents. Addressing the function, the Chief Minister said that after the voluntary surrender window closes, the government’s Task Force will undertake comprehensive field verification of all Family Pension beneficiaries. He warned that those found to have illegally obtained Family



Pension will have their pension discontinued and face legal action. Expressing concern over the misuse of the Family Pension system, the Chief Minister said that while some individuals had delib-

erately used forged documents to obtain Family Pension, others might have done so unknowingly. He stressed that the government is determined to put an end to such misuse of public funds. As

To prevent seasonal illnesses, East Khasi Hills releases a monsoon health warning



Shillong, July 19: East Khasi Hills’ District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) has released a public health advice advising locals to take precautions against frequent monsoon-related illnesses. The alert emphasizes the higher risk of food and water-borne infections, scrub typhus, mosquito-borne illnesses, and mushroom poisoning during the wet season. Water buildup in and around residences, including in abandoned tires, containers, and other objects

that could serve as mosquito breeding grounds, has been discouraged. Additionally, the advice suggests avoiding contact with floodwater or contaminated water, wearing full-sleeved clothing, especially in the morning and evening, and using mosquito nets or repellents. Anyone who comes into contact with such water should thoroughly wash with clean water and soap. To reduce the risk of food- and water-borne infections, the health department has urged people to refriger-

ate cooked food within two hours, reheat it to at least 75°C before consumption, and avoid eating stale or uncovered food. Frequent hand-washing with soap before meals, while cooking, after using the toilet, and after handling animals has also been advised. The advisory further stresses the importance of maintaining household cleanliness and proper waste disposal to prevent rodent infestation. It cautions against washing the soiled clothes or linen of diarrhoea patients

in or near streams, springs or other drinking water sources. People have also been advised not to defecate uphill or close to water sources, as rainwater can contaminate drinking water supplies, and to avoid rearing pigs near residential areas wherever feasible. Due to the possibility of poisoning, the health service has also cautioned the public against eating unlabeled or wild mushrooms. Regular inspections of schools, offices, and other establishments are required in order to remove stagnant water, keep the premises clean, guarantee that there is access to safe drinking water and sufficient sanitary facilities, and quickly notify the closest medical facility of any unusual clusters of fever or diarrhea cases. The advisory states that the majority of seasonal illnesses can be avoided by maintaining a clean environment, practicing excellent personal hygiene, limiting exposure to pathogens, and getting medical help as soon as symptoms appear.

Malayan Bamboo Bat Recorded in Assam for First Time

Dimapur, July 19: Researchers have recorded the Malayan bamboo bat (*Tylonycteris*) in Assam for the first time, extending the known range of one of the world’s smallest bat species and adding a significant new entry to the state’s mammalian diversity. The discovery was made by a team of field biologists during biodiversity surveys in a protected forest area, where the species was identified through mist-netting, acoustic recordings and detailed morphological examination. The researchers confirmed the bat’s identity after matching its physical characteristics with the known features of the genus *Tylonycteris*. The Malayan bamboo bat is among the world’s smallest microbats and is known for its distinctive flattened skull and

specialised fleshy pads on its wrists and feet. These adaptations enable it to cling to smooth bamboo surfaces and enter narrow openings in bamboo internodes, where it roosts in small colonies. The species feeds primarily on insects and plays an important role in maintaining ecological balance by naturally controlling insect populations.

Wildlife experts said the finding is significant as it expands the known distribution of the species in the Indian subcontinent and highlights the ecological importance of Assam’s bamboo-rich forests. The discovery also points to the presence of well-preserved microhabitats capable of supporting highly specialised and lesser-known mammals.

The Shillong Premier League 2026 begins

Shillong, July 19: Defending champions Langsning FC will play Sawmer SCC in the first match of the Shillong Premier League (SPL) 2026 on July 25, marking the return of Shillong’s top local football league. The dates and kick-off times for the first seven league games were confirmed by the Shillong Sports Association (SSA) on Thursday. The rest of the schedule will be revealed at a later time. Ten teams will compete in this year’s edition of the SPL. Alongside Langsning FC and Sawmer SCC, the participating clubs are Shillong Lajong FC, Mawlai SC, Nangkiew Irat SC, Rangdajied United FC, Laitkor SC, Myllem SC, Nongkseh SSCC and Meghalaya Police. Nongkseh SSCC and Meghalaya Police secured promotion after their performances in the First Division League 2025. The competition will once again follow a single round-robin format. Each team will play the others once, with the club finishing at the top of the standings after 45 matches being crowned champions. The bottom two teams will be relegated to the First Division League for the 2027 season. Following the conclusion of the league, the SSA will organise the second edition of the Super Cup. The top six teams from the SPL will qualify, with the league champions and runners-up advancing directly to the semi-finals. Teams finishing third to sixth will contest playoff matches to determine the remaining two semi-finalists. During this season’s competition, the 2026–27 Laws of the Game will take effect.

Three young people from Nalbari finish their bicycle journey to Kedarnath

Nalbari, July 19: Three youths from Assam’s Nalbari have completed an inspiring 39-day bicycle expedition to Kedarnath in Uttarakhand, proving that determination can overcome even the toughest challenges.

Riding ordinary Hero bicycles, Pankaj, Kashyap and Dangoriya covered the long distance despite limited resources and difficult conditions.

Their journey, which began over a month ago, was initially met with disbelief, with many calling the plan impossible. Undeterred, the trio cycled through West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Ayodhya, Vrindavan and Uttarakhand, facing scorching heat, rain, hunger, thirst, frequent punctures and mechanical problems.

With little money, they survived on rice, lentils, potatoes and other essentials brought from home, occasionally cooking simple meals in hotel rooms to save costs. As videos of their journey, shared regularly by Pankaj, gained traction on social media, well-wishers offered financial support, allowing them to stay in hotels on a few occasions.

On the 38th day, they reached Sonprayag, where authorities informed them that bicycles could not be taken to Kedarnath. Determined not to abandon the cycles that had carried them throughout the journey, Pankaj and Kashyap pushed and carried their bicycles up the steep mountain path, while Dangoriya left his bicycle behind to support them.

PM Modi Launches ₹4,736 Crore Development Projects in Chandigarh, Inaugurates New PGIMER Facilities

Chandigarh, July 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth ₹4,736 crore in Chandigarh, focusing on healthcare, infrastructure, connectivity and urban development. The projects are aimed at strengthening the city's position as a regional healthcare centre while enhancing public services and quality of life for residents. Addressing a public gathering at Punjab Engineering College, Modi described Chandigarh as a symbol of planned urban development and said the city has remained a key priority for the NDA government. He highlighted Chandigarh's strategic importance as a link between Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, adding that improvements in the Union Territory benefit people across neighbouring states as well.

"Chandigarh is not just a city; it has long been a model of development for India. It is known for its planned growth, better lifestyle and ease of living," Modi said



while underlining the city's contribution to regional healthcare and governance. The Prime Minister also recalled his association with the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), saying he had visited the institute during his earlier stay in Chandigarh. He praised the institution's doctors, faculty and management for expanding healthcare facilities and serving patients from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. As part of the development package, Modi inaugurated the Advanced Mother and Child Centre and the Advanced Neurosci-

ences Centre at PGIMER. The Advanced Mother and Child Centre is expected to enhance specialised healthcare services for women and children, while the Advanced Neurosciences Centre will provide comprehensive treatment facilities for neurological disorders, including neurology, neurosurgery, neuro-critical care and advanced diagnostics.

He also laid the foundation stone for a 150-bed Critical Care Block at PGIMER under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM). The facility is expected to improve critical care capacity and strengthen

emergency medical services in the region. Highlighting Chandigarh's transformation through technology-driven initiatives, Modi said projects such as the Integrated Command and Control Centre, smart traffic management, smart parking and digital governance systems have helped turn the city into a modern urban hub. He said more than ₹2,500 crore has been invested in such initiatives. The Prime Minister also praised retired IPS officer and social worker Inderjit Singh Sidhu, who was honoured with the Padma Shri for his contribution to cleanliness efforts in Chandigarh. The event was attended by Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria, Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Chandigarh MP Manish Tewari. With the launch of these projects, the Centre aims to expand healthcare access, improve infrastructure and further strengthen Chandigarh's role as a model city for planned development.

57 hearings and an unanswered need for affordable drugs: court seeks response

New Delhi, July 19: In the instance of access to life-saving drugs, the Supreme Court has issued a notice to the Centre, requesting a response on the delay in cases needing life-saving treatment. The ruling comes after a breast cancer patient filed a petition that had been adjourned 57 times previously. In 2022, Saroja Radhakrishnan, a breast cancer patient from Kerala, filed a writ case with the Kerala High Court, claiming that one of the treatments recommended for her ailment, Ribociclib, was "too expensive and unavailable at an affordable price" since it was patented.

Radhakrishnan claimed that the "unaffordable price of the medicine" violated her right to health, which is a basic right under Article 21. India's generic drug makers, who routinely manufacture cheaper versions, were legally prohibited from making a version of Ribociclib, originally manufactured by the multinational pharmaceutical company Novartis. How-



ever, if the government determines that a drug is needed by a large section of the public and they are unable to access it, the Centre can issue a 'compulsory licence', allowing drug manufacturers to produce it at an affordable price. The provision applies to both patented and non-patented drugs. The petitioner, Radhakrishnan, died while waiting for a final judgment. The Kerala High Court kept the matter alive in public interest, noting that over a lakh patients require similar relief. The case has been listed 57 times since January 21, 2023, but nothing conclusive has come out. The Working Group on Access to Medicines and Treatment has writ-

ten to the Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court requesting him to expedite the final hearing involving access to breast cancer medicine Ribociclib. The group's co-convenors, Jyotsna Singh and KM Gopakumar wrote that "every stakeholder has been heard. Every report sought by the court has been placed on record. Every scientific development has been brought before. The pleadings stand completed. Yet the constitutional questions on the obligations of the government under Article 21 with regard to access to medicines remain unaddressed". The letter was also addressed to the Chief Justice of India and the President, after which the Supreme Court took suo motu cognisance of the matter. The Court stated that it will issue a notice in the matter and urged that the Kerala High Court expedite its ongoing suo motu proceedings. The court further stated that it may establish pan-India norms for expeditious adjudication of such life-and-liberty cases.

ED Launches Nationwide Raids in Five States Over Alleged Terror Financing Network



Lucknow, July 19 : The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday conducted searches at 13 locations across multiple states as part of a money laundering investigation linked to an alleged terror funding and illegal infiltration network. The searches were carried out by the ED's Lucknow Zonal Office under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The investigation stems from a First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) in 2024. According to officials, the case pertains to an alleged organised network involved in facilitating the illegal infiltration of Rohingya and Bangladeshi nationals into India. The investigation also focuses on the alleged use of forged Indian identity documents, including Aadhaar cards, PAN cards and passports, to enable illegal immigrants to settle in different parts of the country. The ED conducted searches at locations in Deoband in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district, Jamia Nagar in Delhi, Ballabhgarh in Haryana's Faridabad district, and several locations in the South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas and Murshidabad districts of West Bengal. According to sources, investigators are examining the role of a network that allegedly operated through public charitable trusts registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA). These trusts are suspected of receiving foreign contributions from certain UK-based entities, which were allegedly routed through multiple bank accounts and layered financial transactions.

The ED is also investigating allegations that funds were transferred through mule accounts in small amounts, including transactions of Rs 6,000, Rs 8,000 and Rs 10,000, to support the settlement of suspected illegal immigrants in India. Officials suspect that the funds were used to facilitate the economic rehabilitation of infiltrators by providing financial assistance, employment opportunities and other means of livelihood to help them establish themselves permanently. The investigation is also examining the alleged involvement of separate groups operating in border districts of West Bengal. According to sources, one network allegedly assisted in the illegal entry of Rohingya and Bangladeshi nationals into India, while another was involved in arranging forged identity documents before sending them to different states. Investigators are further probing claims that financial assistance was extended through charitable organisations in the form of cash support, employment arrangements and assets such as e-rickshaws to help beneficiaries become economically self-sufficient. The searches are part of the ED's ongoing investigation into the suspected money laundering aspects of the case. Officials said further action will depend on the evidence collected during the raids and the findings of the ongoing probe.

25 transfers in 21 years, now the face of food safety raids across Maharashtra

Mumbai, July 19: Several manufacturers, wholesalers, eateries and retailers in Maharashtra are being subjected to intense scrutiny over the past two months, given the significant increase in the state's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) raids in several places. At the centre of this wave is officer Tukawam Mundhe, who took charge in May, and since then, a crackdown on food adulteration has drawn enhanced focus. The FDA recently suspended the food business licence of the Mumbai-based Parsi Dairy Farm Pvt Ltd. The action was part of a massive statewide enforcement drive that reportedly resulted in the seizure of food products worth over ₹1.90 crore. The FDA suspended the food business licence of the chain after finding serious food safety and hygiene violations, officials informed on Thursday. The crackdown was a part of a special statewide inspection campaign conducted on July 14 and 15, during which the FDA teams inspected dairy units, food manufacturers, restaurants and vendors across Maharashtra, officials

added. IAS officer Tukaram Mundhe took charge as Maharashtra's FDA commissioner on May 25. Since then, the FDA has conducted raids across Maharashtra on wholesalers, manufacturers, retailers, and eateries. In the process, when serious violations were found, licences were suspended, samples were seized, and more such action was undertaken. Meanwhile, earlier, under the "Safe Food, Safe Medicines, Safe Maharashtra" campaign, Maharashtra FDA seized stocks of Aciloc 150 and Aciloc 300 worth approximately ₹2.45 crore. Furthermore, a total market recall of the brand over deceptive labelling and branding concerns was ordered. "Any confusion caused by a medicine's brand name among patients, doctors, or pharmacists, leading to the dispensing of the wrong medicine, is a matter of grave public health concern," FDA Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe said. "Compliance with regulations governing drug branding, labelling, and marketing, while ensuring patient safety, must remain

paramount. Safe medicines are a fundamental right of every citizen, and safeguarding that right is our highest responsibility," he added. Notably, one FDA action drew attention recently as the Maharashtra FDA issued a notice to a spice and dry fruits shop owned by the family of Siya Goyal, who is currently accused in the murder of Pune realtor Ketan Agarwal. The shop located at Market Yard in the heart of Pune city is operated by M/s BG Goyal and Company, a firm owned by the family of Siya Goyal. Following the FDA inspection, the shop was reportedly asked to stop business operations until further orders. Siya Goyal, 20, and her alleged boyfriend Chetan Chaudhary, 22, are accused of pushing her fiancé Ketan Agarwal, 25, off a cliff at Lohagad Fort in Pune district on June 18 during a trek. The case has garnered widespread attention and sent shockwaves across the country. A court at Vadgaon Maval in the district on Thursday extended the judicial custody of Siya Goyal and Chetan Chaudhary.

Activists are outraged that 3,000 trees would be cut down for the Uttarakhand road project



Dehradun, July 19: This year's Harela festival in Uttarakhand, which celebrates trees and greenery, is overshadowed by protests. In a week when the state should be witnessing tree planting efforts, environmentalists are protesting the removal of over 3,000 trees for a road development project. Instead, they are commemorating "Black Harela". Fell trees litter the area near 'Saat Mod' as workmen continue to cut more to make space for the project. Environmentalists claim the region is already environmentally sensitive. They argue that large-scale felling would not only diminish green cover, but will also have a negative impact on local animal variety and the microclimate.

On Thursday, dozens of protesters dressed in black marked the festival as 'Black Harela' to protest the destruction of green cover. "Does the gov-

ernment want to turn this place into a desert or a concrete jungle? Even the person operating the saw rests in the shade of these very trees when tired," said an environment activist at a protest on Thursday. Protesters allege that the tree felling is being carried out "without adequate ecological assessment". They point out that an Environment Assessment Plan is made for every project to compensate for environmental damage caused during construction. "Our demand is that the government ensure its strict implementation," they said. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), which is executing the Bhaniyawala-Jollygrant-Rishikesh Four/Six Lane Project, has maintained that the project is being executed "in accordance with mitigation measures recommended by experts, particularly in view of elephant corridors along the stretch".

The approximately 20-kilometer-long project is being built at an estimated cost of Rs 743 crore under the Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM). It aims to strengthen connectivity between Dehradun, Jollygrant Airport and Rishikesh, while providing better infrastructure for tourism, the Char Dham Yatra, and the state's growing transport needs. Authorities say several key engineering modifications have been made in the project design to minimize environmental damage. While the standard Right of Way (ROW) for a national highway is 60 meters, it has been reduced to just 23 meters in forest areas. Officials say this will significantly reduce tree felling without compromising highway safety standards. In addition, based on a scientific assessment by the Forest Research Institute (FRI), 754 trees have been identified as suitable for transplantation. These will be transplanted during the monsoon season. According to Forest Department records, 29 wildlife deaths in road accidents were recorded in the last five years on the existing two-lane road under the Rishikesh and Barkot forest ranges. Special elephant underpasses, including an approximately 3.5 km long elevated structure, are being developed on the proposed highway for safe passage of elephants. Officials say this will make wildlife movement safer and help reduce wildlife accidents on the busy route.

Rahul Gandhi Slams Paper Leak Cases, Says Youth Futures Must Be Protected

Dehradun July 19: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday alleged that Uttarakhand has become an "epicentre" of paper leak cases and said his party would continue to raise concerns over recruitment irregularities affecting students and job aspirants.

Ahead of his scheduled interaction with students in Dehradun on Friday, Gandhi said he was visiting the state to highlight issues related to examination scams, recruitment processes and challenges faced by young people. In a statement shared ahead of the event, Gandhi alleged that a system had developed around examinations conducted by the Uttarakhand Subordinate Service Selection Commission (UKSSSC), claiming that government posts such as Patwari and Lekhpal were not always secured purely on merit. He alleged that despite the introduction of an anti-cheating law, incidents of paper leaks continued, leaving thousands

of aspirants disappointed after years of preparation. Gandhi said students spend significant time, money and effort preparing for competitive examinations, only to find that opportunities meant for them are affected by unfair practices. "This is not just a leak, it is theft — theft of a young person's rights, livelihood and future," Gandhi said.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha appealed to students and job aspirants in Uttarakhand to participate in the upcoming interaction programme titled 'Chhatron Ki Goonj'. He said the event would provide a platform for students to raise their concerns and discuss issues affecting the education and employment sectors. Meanwhile, Gandhi's proposed student interaction programme has triggered a political dispute after permission for holding the event at Parade Ground in Dehradun was withdrawn by the administration. Congress leaders alleged that the cancella-



tion was politically motivated and claimed that the party had completed necessary formalities, including payment of venue charges. The party said the programme would now be held at Bannu School Ground. Uttarakhand Congress leaders, including state president Ganesh Godiyal and Leader of Opposition Yashpal Arya, protested against the decision and accused the state government of attempting to restrict the event. The BJP, however, rejected the allegations. State BJP president Mahendra Bhatt said the Congress had not provided complete

information in its initial application and claimed that the Parade Ground was unavailable due to an extended government programme. Congress spokesperson Garima Mehra Dasouni said the student outreach campaign had received significant response, with registrations from students across Uttarakhand and other parts of the country. The 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' campaign, launched as part of Congress' wider outreach to students, focuses on recruitment issues, paper leaks, education costs and concerns within the education system.

Telangana CM seeks Centre's approval to kick start projects

Hyderabad, July 19: Telangana chief minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday sought the Centre's approval for the northern section of the Regional Ring Road (RRR) and sought the immediate commencement of construction works. In a meeting with Union minister for road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi, the chief minister said nearly 95% of land acquisition for the northern stretch had already been completed and also requested approvals for the southern section. The chief minister said simultaneous execution of both the northern and southern corridors would reduce costs and ensure faster completion of the project. Revanth Reddy also pressed for approval of the proposed greenfield highway connecting Hyderabad with Andhra Pradesh's capital region, saying the project was envisaged under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act. He urged the Centre to issue the necessary approvals at the earliest. Highlighting another major proposal, he briefed Gadkari on the planned 12-lane expressway linking the proposed Bharat Future City with Bandar (Machilipatnam) Port via Amaravati. According to the state government, the highway would reduce the Hyderabad-Vijayawada travel distance by nearly 100 kilometres while significantly cutting freight transportation time between Hyderabad and the port. The chief minister also sought early forest clearances for the proposed Mannanur-Srisailem elevated corridor, which passes through the Nallamala tiger reserve and wildlife sanctuary region and provides connectivity to the Srisailem temple and reservoir. In addition, he requested the sanction of a six-lane alternative highway connecting Mancherial and Hyderabad to ease traffic on the existing Rajiv Highway. He assured that the state government would undertake the required land acquisition and said the project would spur agricultural and commercial development across northern Telangana. Later, the chief minister met Union civil aviation minister K Rammoohan Naidu at Rajiv Gandhi Bhavan and requested that steps be taken to develop the proposed airports at Warangal (Mamnoon) and Adilabad to international standards, citing their strategic and commercial importance. Seeking a comprehensive aviation hub, Revanth Reddy requested that the Warangal airport include Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities, air cargo services and aircraft hangars. Informing the Union minister that land acquisition had already been completed, he urged the Centre to float tenders immediately and complete the airport by June 2, 2028, coinciding with Telangana Formation Day. The two leaders also reviewed the airport's architectural designs. Revanth Reddy proposed that the terminal reflect the rich history and architectural legacy of the Kakatiya dynasty, a suggestion that received a positive response from the Union minister. The chief minister also proposed establishing a dual-use airport at Adilabad comprising both defence and civilian aviation facilities. He assured the Centre that the state government would acquire and provide the required land. Similar to Warangal, he requested MRO facilities, air cargo terminals, hangars and Flight Training Organisations (FTOs) at the Adilabad airport to promote aviation training and employment.

EDITORIAL

North East Chronicle

JULY 20 2026 VOL 02 NO. 146



A City Should Be Easy to Read

A well-designed city does not require residents or visitors to constantly guess where they are going. Clear street names, visible house numbers, informative maps, and logical road layouts make everyday movement simpler. Poor navigation wastes

time, increases frustration, and can even delay emergency services. Urban planning is not only about constructing roads—it is also about making cities understandable. The easier a city is to navigate, the more welcoming it becomes for everyone.

The Habit of Finishing the Day Well

People often focus on how they begin the day, but how they end it is equally important. Reviewing unfinished tasks, preparing for tomorrow, spending time with family, or simply disconnecting from work can improve both productivity and well-being. Without a clear transition between work and rest,

stress tends to carry over from one day to the next. Healthy routines are built not only through productive mornings but also through purposeful evenings. A good day does not end when the work is finished—it ends when the mind is ready to begin again tomorrow.

Rath Yatra: The momentum of a juggernaut

Every year, millions of people travel to Puri, Odisha, for the Jagannath Rath Yatra. The three main deities of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra are drawn by ecstatic devotees on specially carved divine chariots or raths across Puri's grand avenue, known as the "Bada Danda," during the nine-day Rath Yatra 2026, which begins on July 16 and runs through July 24. The Jagannath Temple complex and the Gundicha Temple are separated by the 3-kilometer Bada Danda. On the ninth day of the Bahuda Yatra, the gods make their way back to the Shri Jagannath temple garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) following a seven-day sojourn in Gundicha Temple. The festivity is celebrated with pomp and grandeur on the 2nd day of Shukla Paksha in the Hindu month of Ashadha. The cultural framework of Rath Yatra has been carried forward lavishly by King Anantavarman Chodaganga of the Ganga dynasty, who built the present-day Jagannath Temple in the 12th century CE as per ancient history. However, the Puranas and scriptural accounts state that the tradition was initiated by legendary King Indradyumna at the request of his wife, Queen Gundicha.

The queen sought a grand festival to be solemnised for every subject of the kingdom, including those otherwise restricted from entering the temple sanctum due to strict societal norms, so they could catch a glimpse of the Lord of the universe. Responding to the wish, King Indradyumna eventually arranged for a grand fiesta where the deities were brought outside on wooden chariots and headed towards the present-day Gundicha Temple, where they were originally carved out of sacred logs of wood by Lord Vishwakarma. Legend has it that Vishwakarma, in the disguise of an old craftsman, wanted complete privacy while crafting and locked himself for 21 days inside hermetic chambers for deity sculpting. When the anxious king, at the request of the caring queen, opened the doors prematurely on the 15th day, Viswakarma vanished, leaving behind the magnificent deities in the present unfinished forms. The chariots, or 'raths', are completely wooden, carved from specific trees like Phansi, Bhaura, Asana, etc. They are erected in front of the 'Singhadwara', or Lion's Gate, of the Jagannath temple complex. The sheer magnitude of the magnificent chariots led to the inclusion of the famous word

"juggernaut" in the English lexicon, which is an anglicised form of "Jagannath." The tradition where devotees lay down in front of the massive rolling chariots during the festival caught the eyes of the British. Astonished at the unparalleled display of faith and devotion, they coined the term, meaning the unstoppable and indomitable force. It is a testament to the vibrance and greatness of the festivity in Puri. Servitors of Lord Jagannath, including Dahuka, Banati players, Mahasuar, Daitapati, and others, provide a variety of services and offerings to the great deities during the Rath Yatra. The Rath's charioteer, Dahuka, performs ribald or humorous off-color recitations known as "Dahuka-boli," which represent fertility and renewal. Only after Dahuka boli has been sung is the Ratha supposed to move. The Daitapati are descended from the fabled tribal leader Biswabasu, who discovered Neel Madhava. When the gods become ill, they feed them during the convalescence time. To placate Lord Jagannath, banati—fireballs attached to a rope—are swung. The construction of the divine raths begins quite early in the month of Vaishakh. The Chandan Yatra, or Sandalwood festival, is a pe-

riod of 42 days of chariot making, divided into two halves of 21 days each, called the 'Bahar Chandan' and 'Bhitar Chandan' periods. The Rath of Lord Jagannath is called 'Nandighosha', also known as 'Kapidhwaj' with 16 wheels. Four horses associated with it are Shankha, Shwet, Haridaswa and Balahak. The serpent Shankhachuda serves as the divine chariot rope. Various subsidiary deities are revered along with the chariot. Lord Balabhadra rides on 'Taladhvaj' with a palm tree emblem on the flag. It has 14 wheels with 'Basuki Naag' as the chariot rope. Goddess Subhadra's chariot is named 'Darpadalana' or 'Padmadhwaj' and is fitted with 12 wheels. The length, breadth and height of the respective chariots decrease accordingly in the same order. On the other hand, the Bahuda Yatra is equally fascinating. The principal deities are placed aboard the respective Raths and escorted back to the Jagannath Temple, and on the way, they are offered Poda Pitha, a fermented rice cake, at the Mausai Maa Temple, which is the maternal aunt of the Lord. After that, amid ostentatious festivities like "Suna-Besha" and "Niladri Bijje," the gods arrive at the Jagannath shrine and are rein-

stalled in the garbha griha. The main plot of Niladri Bijje is on Lord Jagannath using rasagollas, which were given a Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2019, to appease Goddess Lakshmi for abandoning her during the Rath Yatra. It's interesting to note that the artisans carve the magnificent dimensions using conventional measurement methods. The fundamental measurement standards used by craftsmen's clans are a hand-span (hath) and a finger-width (angula), which are passed down orally down the centuries. The craftsmen's clans have passed down oral traditions that form the basis of this knowledge. Depending on the components of the chariot, the artisans are grouped into several guilds. The Biswakarma Sevaks, Pahi Maharanas (wheel specialists), Rath Bhois (logistics support), Ojha Maharana (ironsmiths), Rupakars (idol designers), Chitrakars (painters), and others are the primary variations of craftsmen blending logs into life-size and vibrant juggernauts. Despite all the grandeur and elegance of the festival, authorities must introspect and address a different perspective that holds the mosaic. The basic raw material for chariot construction is wood, with more than 1,000 trees of

approximately 12 species. Wood serves as the primary raw material for chariot construction, with craftsmen felling over 1,000 trees from approximately 12 species each year annually. The major components of the chariot involve at least 865 logs of wood, each eight feet long, from trees like Phansi, Bhaura, and Asan. As forest cover diminishes and urbanisation accelerates, both craftsmen and authorities are increasingly concerned about potential scarcity. The government of Odisha started the Green Mahanadi plantation drives around the Mahanadi River basin to replenish declining reserves and the Jagannath Bana Prakalpa to safeguard the significant species utilized for Rath Yatra. A vital part of the festival's long-term improvement is community cultivations in individual backyards, where mature logs are donated for religious purposes. People from all walks of life come together for the Jagannath Rath Yatra, a demonstration of faith and belief that is both environmentally conscious and full of shared devotion, revitalized vitality, and a profound appreciation for culture. The massive juggernaut is still moving forward, unstoppable and ageless.

Assam's Economic Future and Rural Prosperity

Despite the fast rate of urban growth and rising investment in cities, rural Assam continues to be the real backbone of the state's economy. The vast majority of Assamese people still rely either directly or indirectly on agriculture and related rural activities for their livelihoods, despite the fact that metropolitan areas frequently dominate public discourse on development. This straightforward reality ought to influence all of the state's long-term economic policies. However, the state of the rural economy still reveals a concerning paradox. Fertile alluvial soil, copious amounts of rainfall, vast river networks, favorable weather, rich biodiversity, and a diligent farming population are all features of Assam. These natural advantages should have enabled the state to become one of India's strongest agricultural economies. Instead, rural prosperity remains uneven and uncertain. Economic growth recorded in official reports has not translated into a corresponding improvement in the everyday lives of ordinary farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans, and small entrepreneurs living in villages. Agriculture continues to function more as a means of survival than as a profitable enterprise capable of generating sustained wealth. Farmers frequently struggle with low productivity, fragmented landholdings, inadequate irrigation, weak storage facilities, limited mechanisation, and unstable market prices. The dominance of intermediar-

ies further reduces farm incomes, while poor marketing infrastructure prevents producers from receiving fair compensation for their labour. The continued existence of bureaucratic inefficiencies, which frequently postpone or lessen the advantages of government initiatives meant for rural communities, is equally concerning. Over-reliance on financial aid and subsidies has also led to a situation where short-term alleviation is sometimes prioritized over long-term production. Welfare measures alone cannot support rural development; instead, it must be based on increasing productive capacity, bolstering local entrepreneurship, promoting innovation, and generating long-term jobs. Building urban infrastructure and expanding business districts won't be enough to safeguard Assam's economic future. Whether communities develop into hubs of production, value addition, entrepreneurship, and technology adoption will determine its destiny. Each investment in irrigation, rural roads, storage facilities, digital connectivity, agricultural research, skill development, and market integration boosts the state's overall economic resilience in addition to local economies. Without prosperous villages, Assam cannot become prosperous since rural prosperity is not a stand-alone goal but rather the fundamental basis for the state's total economic strength. Therefore, agriculture needs a complete overhaul that goes well beyond raising crop yields. Instead of short-term fixes, fundamen-

tal reforms are required to address the structural flaws that have limited the industry for decades. Since many Assamese farmers work relatively small, dispersed plots, mechanization is costly and frequently unfeasible. Agriculture is nevertheless vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations due to its reliance on monsoon rainfall, and many areas still lack suitable irrigation infrastructure. Productivity is still being suppressed by the extensive use of conventional farming techniques, restricted access to high-quality seeds, inadequate scientific extension services, and irregular fertilizer supplies.

At the same time, climate variability has made farming increasingly unpredictable. Floods, droughts, irregular rainfall, pest outbreaks, and changing temperature patterns now present recurring challenges that require climate-resilient agricultural strategies. Crop diversification offers one of the most practical solutions to improving farm incomes. Assam possesses favourable conditions for horticulture, spices, medicinal plants, fisheries, livestock, floriculture, bamboo cultivation, and organic farming.

Expanding these sectors can reduce dependence on a single crop while generating higher returns for farmers. However, diversification must be supported by strong research institutions, extension services, modern logistics, reliable cold storage facilities, scientific warehouses, quality certification systems, and efficient transportation

networks. Equally important is the creation of transparent marketing systems where farmers receive prices determined by genuine market competition rather than by the bargaining power of intermediaries. Farmers' negotiating power can be increased by digital marketplaces, Farmer Producer Organizations, cooperative marketing structures, and contract farming arrangements with sufficient legal protections. Food processing businesses near production facilities would increase value addition and lower post-harvest losses. Beyond agriculture itself, these sectors would create jobs in rural areas, opening doors for young people with skills and semi-skills. Therefore, rather than taking the place of agricultural development, rural industrialization should enhance it.

A more robust agricultural economy that can endure future uncertainty would be produced by investments in renewable energy, digital technology, precision farming, mechanization appropriate for small holdings, financial literacy, crop insurance, and reasonably priced institutional financing. Rural prosperity becomes economically sustainable rather than reliant on sporadic government intervention when agriculture transforms into a contemporary, knowledge-driven, market-oriented industry. The increasing societal change occurring in rural Assam is another aspect that requires immediate attention. One of the most important effects of extended economic uncertainty is the migration of young people to other states.

Thousands of educated and semi-skilled youth leave their villages every year because local employment opportunities remain scarce and agriculture no longer appears capable of providing stable incomes. This continuous outflow of human capital weakens village economies, reduces the availability of productive labour, and gradually alters rural social structures. Large areas of cultivable land remain underutilized because younger generations increasingly view farming as an occupation offering limited financial security and social prestige.

Reversing this trend requires changing both economic realities and social perceptions. For educated young to see real chances in agriculture, the industry must become technologically sophisticated, economically feasible, and intellectually stimulating. To help students gain practical skills in addition to academic credentials, educational institutions should incorporate vocational training, entrepreneurship, agricultural technology, financial management, and digital skills into mainstream curricula. Stronger institutional support for rural entrepreneurship should come from improved access to funding, business incubation, market connections, and expert mentoring. Women have already demonstrated remarkable leadership through self-help groups that have expanded savings, micro-enterprises, weaving, livestock rearing, food processing, and other livelihood activities across many villages. Their

contribution represents one of the most encouraging developments in Assam's rural economy. Nevertheless, these initiatives require stronger market integration, branding support, quality certification, packaging expertise, and access to larger domestic and international markets if they are to achieve long-term commercial sustainability.

Financial assistance alone cannot guarantee lasting success unless accompanied by professional training and business development services. Comprehensive reform is also necessary for cooperative institutions, which have underperformed for many years due to poor governance and political meddling. In addition to enabling small producers to more successfully compete in bigger markets, effective cooperatives and Farmer Producer Organizations can enhance procurement, processing, storage, marketing, and bargaining strength. By making it easier to obtain institutional credit and lowering reliance on unofficial moneylenders who charge exorbitant interest, rural financial institutions must also become more inclusive. Only when rural households achieve both financial resilience and income security does economic empowerment take on significance. Together, stronger local institutions, increased community involvement, better administration, and open execution of development initiatives may build a rural economy that can attract and retain talent, foster innovation, and instill confidence in village populations.

Closing the Gaps in Assam's Egg Supply

The vulnerability of Assamese retail consumers to price shocks has been revealed by the spiraling prices of necessities. Unless local production rises to overcome the imbalance between supply and demand, consumers will continue to be caught in never-ending cycles of price increases. The sudden increase in egg prices, with retail prices reaching Rs 9 to 10 per egg, is a clear sign of how household finances are being severely impacted by the skyrocketing costs of necessities. In order to establish a clear plan for self-sufficiency in egg production, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma suggested establishing an egg production facility with a daily capacity of one lakh in each of the state's 126 assembly seats. Achieving this goal will be necessary to stop becoming complacent over incremental increases in local production. Even though production has gone up a lot, the gap between supply and demand is getting bigger because the population is growing and more people want eggs and egg-based dishes—especially those looking for healthier, protein-rich meals—forcing traders to buy many eggs from outside the area to fill the gap. Chief Minister Sarma attributed the sudden rise in egg prices to an "egg syndicate" operating in the state, with someone collecting illicit taxes on eggs procured from outside the state and local egg traders inflating the prices to match the prices of the lots coming from outside and subjected to illegal taxation. His idea to tax eggs brought in from outside the state and boost local production is a practical way to tackle the syndicate and make sure locally produced eggs are available at a fair price, as long as the goals in the plan are met. Establishing an egg production unit in each assembly constituency will also generate huge livelihood opportunities along the entire production and distribution value chain, as proposed. Creation of new livelihood avenues in agriculture and allied sectors is crucial to reverse the outmigration of rural youth to different states as unskilled workers. The state government's aggressive efforts open up new avenues for rural youth to re-enter the local economy, particularly by concentrating on agriculture and related industries. According to industry estimates, a large-scale layer unit with one lakh birds usually requires a capital expenditure

of between Rs 10 and Rs 12 crore. The project can be made more financially feasible by obtaining government subsidies, such as interest discounts on bank loans from various central government programs and recommended financial assistance from the state government. Even when the state is self-sufficient in production, the availability of feed at reasonable rates will be crucial for controlling egg pricing because chicken feed makes up between 70% and 75% of all egg production costs. The availability of mustard oil cake locally, known as "Kholihoi" in Assamese, guarantees feed affordability for the egg production units by drastically lowering feed production costs. An effective supply chain for the feed production facilities can be established by mapping the nearby mustard oil mills. Increasing mustard oil production continues to be a top government objective as the state aims to become self-sufficient in edible oil production. Despite being endowed with favourable agroclimatic conditions for growing mustard seeds, the state's own production can meet only 20% of the total edible oil demand, and 80% of the demand must be met through procurement from outside the region. The over-dependence on supplies from outside also keeps the prices of edible oil in the state volatile and exposes both households and commercial consumers – hotels and restaurants, food vendors – to sudden price shocks, which traders seek to attribute to a rise in prices at sources. The state unlocking its potential in mustard oil production can ensure increased availability of both edible oil and mustard oil cake for feed production units at reasonable prices. Setting up more mustard oil expeller units in each assembly constituency will greatly help create many job opportunities in rural Assam and along the supply chain to urban markets in the state. The commercial viability of the established mills and feed production units hinges on the availability of an adequate quantity of raw mustard seeds at affordable prices. This calls for expanding the area under mustard seeds and also increasing productivity per hectare. It is crucial for the Agriculture Department to develop a clear plan to increase productivity because mustard seed productivity is significantly lower than the national average.

The eruption of the other Kashmir

Large-scale rallies led by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) in Pakistan-administered Kashmir have escalated into violent confrontations with security forces, resulting in fatalities and a region-wide communication blackout. Although Islamabad denies Indian critiques and frames the unrest within constitutional norms, the Pakistani authorities have intensified security measures, including deploying forces and banning the protest group. This has drawn attention from international media to human rights violations, particularly as the tensions heighten ahead of upcoming regional elections. The situation worsened following a June 8, 2026 incident where security forces fatally shot protesters expressing discontent over political and economic grievances, marking a potential turning point in the area's history. The protests are seen as a culmination of nearly eighty years of discontent, reflecting the complex constitutional status of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, which Islamabad portrays as self-governing, while the reality suggests significant governmental oversight and control. The constitutional framework established under the 1974 Interim Constitution ensured that decisive powers remained concentrated in Islamabad. The federal government exercises authority through institutions such as the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and other supervisory mechanisms, leaving local governments with limited autonomy. Political parties that support independence or other constitutional arrangements are severely restricted, resulting in a democratic deficit that has increased public discontent. The structure of representation itself has been a significant cause of unhappiness. Seats in the Legislative Assembly are set aside for so-called Kashmiri refugees who reside throughout Pakistan. Critics contend that the setup enables Islamabad to sway election results and retain political power because these voters are scattered and frequently cut off from the region. One of the direct causes of the most recent protests was the Azad Kashmir Supreme Court's recent ruling to maintain these reserved seats. For many locals, this issue represents a bigger concern: governmental decisions that impact their life are frequently influenced by outside interests. Economically, the story of POJK is equally complex. On paper, some social indicators compare favourably with those in certain Pakistani provinces. Literacy rates and development indicators in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) surpass those in Balochistan and previous tribal areas, though these figures mask underlying economic vulnerabilities.

Tech Mahindra Q1 Preview: PAT could increase by more than 40% YoY due to company revenue growth

Mumbai: Brokerage projections indicate that when IT giant Tech Mahindra discloses data for the April-June quarter (Q1) of the fiscal year 2026-27 (FY27) later this week, it would likely record robust double-digit profit growth. On Thursday, July 16, the board of the firm will re-view and announce the audited financial results.

Tomorrow, Wipro and Tech Mahindra will both re-lease their Q1 profits.

Even though H1 is usually the best time for IT firms, experts generally anticipate a lackluster performance from IT firms because of the weak demand brought on by macro uncertainty and AI disruption, which delays contract completion and revenue conversion. Domestic brokerage Anand Rathii said that the results will be a modest “near-term negative” for Indian IT ser-



vices. “The quarter points to stabilising demand rather than a meaningful recovery, and argues against expectations of a sharp near-term discretionary spending rebound. However, the continued strength in Consulting bookings, large AI transformation programs and Accenture’s confidence in the structural AI opportunity reinforce our view that scaled IT services vendors remain best positioned to

capture AI-led spending as enterprise 8 deployments move from experimentation to production,” the brokerage added. Expectations are still high for Tech Mahindra, one of the leading brokerages in the Indian IT market. Analysts predict that Tech Mahindra will report growth of at least 40% for the first quarter of FY27, with a potential 15% increase in revenue due to an increase in significant

acquisitions. According to Anand Rathii, operating leverage is driven by the execution emphasis of current CEO Mohit Joshi and the telecom moat (~33% of revenues) that propels huge deal wins in Orange and Telefonica.

The company is anticipated to post deal TCV in the region of \$900–1000 million, and the margins are also anticipated to increase. ICICI Securities anticipates a 16.3% year-over-year (Y-o-Y) and 3% quarter-over-quarter (Q-o-Q) increase in revenue for the quarter under review to ₹15,530 crore, driven by a ramp-up of strong big deals TCV secured in FY26, partially offset by seasonal slowdown in the Comviva business. The income could increase by 0.7% in dollars and 1.1% in constant currency (CC). Retail, BFSI, and communication would

probably be the main drivers of growth. Automotive softness persists. According to the brokerage, “lower IT spending by technology giants is expected to cause volatility in the hi-tech vertical’s performance through FY27.” ICICI Securities’ topline grew by 41.1% year over year and 18.8% quarter over quarter to ₹1608.8 crore. Additionally, it anticipates that EBIT margin will increase by 30 basis points on a quarterly basis to 14.1 percent, driven by the ongoing benefits of currency movement and operating efficiencies from Project Fortius.

These benefits will be partially offset by headwinds from large deal ramp-up and employee expense restructuring due to new Indian labor code regulations. In contrast to the guidance of 15%, it projects an EBIT margin of 14.7% for FY27.

Asian stock markets surge following the unexpected drop in the US inflation rate

Mumbai: While oil took a break after the US abandoned a plan to impose a fee on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, Asia’s erratic stock markets surged on Wednesday after an unexpected slowdown in US inflation reduced expectations for interest rate hikes. Ahead of the next test for the AI rally, the volatile KOSPI index in South Korea jumped 7%. ASML, the most valuable business in Europe and the largest provider of AI chip manufacturing equipment worldwide, is expected to release its earnings. The MSCI’s broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside of Japan increased by 2.4%, while Japan’s Nikkei increased by 1%. Still, a 25% drop in IBM’s share price overnight, after the technology company’s revenue forecast missed analyst expectations, showed how stretched and skittish the market’s rally in AI-related stocks has become. Stellar profit at Wall Street banks, though, helped broader gains for the S&P 500 and Nasdaq on Tuesday which extended in Asia with US futures rising. With the exception of the persistently weak yen, the US dollar was generally weaker. Two-year Treasury rates fell 11 basis points to 4.19% from Tuesday’s 17-month high of around 4.3% as short-end bonds increased. For the first time since the COVID-19 epidemic, the US headline consumer price index decreased by 0.4% in June, while annualized core inflation was 2.6% as opposed to 2.8%. In a client note, J.P. Morgan analysts stated, “This is even better than Goldilocks could have imagined for market bulls.” “Inflation (is) lower with positive earnings growth. This print should remove any fears over a July rate hike and may assuage fears on September, too. This sets up the market to move higher and to broaden as it does so.” Market pricing for the chance of a US interest rate hike in July halved to 16%. China’s annual economic growth slowed sharply to 4.3% in the second quarter, official data showed on Wednesday, missing analysts’ expectations as weak domestic demand and the oil shock tied to war in the Middle East outweighed stronger production and exports. A rebound in Chinese retail sales June, relatively strong nominal GDP and hopes authorities will respond were the positives for investors. UOB economist Woei Chen Ho expressed skepticism about significant stimulus announcements, indicating any measures will be targeted due to uneven economic growth, primarily benefiting tech sectors.

Grohe-Hurun India Real Estate 150, Adani Properties’ largest gain in 2026

Mumbai: Adani Properties rose four spots to become India’s fourth-most valuable real estate company in the 2026 Grohe-Hurun India Real Estate 150, emerging as the biggest value producer with a valuation of Rs 38,000 crore. The Ahmedabad-based business, which is led by Gautam Adani and run by Pranav and Rajesh Adani, saw its valuation increase 72.5% year over year (YoY) to Rs 90,400 crore. The business is still India’s most valuable unlisted real estate firm. Hurun experts stated that the Adani Group’s decision to combine its real estate operations under Adani Properties was the primary cause of the increase. Gautam Adani, the richest person in India, may be creating the biggest real estate company in the nation, according to the research firm. The gains also propelled Gautam Adani and family to the top of the Grohe-Hurun India Real Estate Rich List for the first time, with a wealth of Rs 90,400 crore, up 73 per cent YoY, as the family has full ownership of the real estate business. Further, Gurugram-based DLF continued to be the most valuable real estate firm in India, with a valuation of Rs 1.46 trillion as of May 29, 2026 (cut-off date for the list), down 29.3 per cent YoY. Lodha Developers retained the second spot with a valuation of Rs 93,700 crore, down 32.2 per cent YoY. Meanwhile, Indian Hotels Company also remained in the third position, similar to the previous edition of the report, with a valuation of Rs 93,300 crore, down 13.9 per cent YoY.

The combined valuation of the 151 companies in the ranking rose just 2 per cent YoY to Rs 16.5 trillion, the slowest growth since the list’s inception nine years ago, compared with 14 per cent growth in 2025. The subdued performance coincided with a 20 per cent decline in the BSE Realty Index due to geopolitical tensions and concerns around artificial intelligence (AI), particularly affecting the residential segment. The total value of the 151 businesses is greater than the combined GDP of Bahrain and Luxembourg and equal to Kuwait’s GDP. Seventy-one percent of the list’s worth was made up of listed companies. The total value added by the listed firms was Rs 34,300 crore, a significant decrease



from the Rs 1.4 trillion added in the 2025 edition. In keeping with the correction in the BSE Realty Index, only 31 of the 151 firms saw an increase in value this year, while 74 saw a decrease. The total value remained stable primarily due to 37 new additions, primarily listed real estate trusts. Approximately two-thirds of the value acquired was accounted for by Adani Properties, which added Rs 38,000 crore, and Prism (OYO), which added Rs 34,700 crore. In 2026, hospitality represented 24 out of 151 companies in the Grohe-Hurun India Real Estate 150, increasing from 22 last year, with a combined valuation of Rs 2.85 trillion. Residential real estate accounted for 65% of companies, down 2% YoY, while hospitality rose to 16%, up 1% YoY, and commercial real estate comprised 13%, down 1% YoY. Anas Rahman Junaid noted the need for urbanization in India and warned against unsustainable growth by comparing India’s real estate trajectory with China’s, where many top developers have faced significant declines and restructurings since Covid. Mumbai continues to lead with 50 companies valued at Rs 7.32 trillion, followed by New Delhi (19), Gurugram, and Bengaluru (18 each). Notably, only three companies are led by women. NCC is highlighted as the top employer with a workforce of 31,408 and leads in CSR spending at Rs 33.3 crore.

RBI suggests giving MFs and insurers a one-time approval to increase bank stakes



Mumbai: On Tuesday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recommended a one-time permission system in place of the requirement that mutual funds, insurance firms, and pension funds obtain new approval each time they purchase a significant stake in the same bank. According to the current system, these organizations must first receive RBI approval before acquiring a significant stake in a bank, such as five percent or more. They must obtain new clearance before making another acquisition that would once more be considered a large shareholding if their stake later drops below the 5% level. Under the draft amendment, prior RBI approval will remain mandatory for the initial acquisition of a major shareholding in a bank. However, once such approval has been granted, eligible investors will not be required to obtain fresh approval for subsequent

acquisitions in the same bank. The proposal empowers the RBI to grant a one-time approval covering future acquisitions of up to 10 per cent of the paid-up share capital or voting rights in the same bank, subject to specified conditions. The draft also provides that such approval will remain valid unless revoked by the RBI, even if the investor’s holding subsequently falls below the threshold for a major shareholding. Entities granted one-time approval will be required to notify both the RBI and the concerned bank within one day if their aggregate holding falls below or rises above the 5 per cent threshold. “While obtaining prior approval shall continue to be mandatory for initial acquisition of major shareholding in a banking company, based on a review, it has now been decided to grant one-time approval for subsequent acquisitions of major share-

holding in the same banking company by mutual funds, insurance companies and pension funds, subject to certain requirements,” the RBI said in the draft circular. The central bank has invited feedback on the draft guidelines from stakeholders by August 4. Only a “qualifying person” will be eligible for the one-time approval. This includes mutual funds registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), insurance companies registered with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai), and pension funds registered with the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), according to the draft. Such an entity must either be a current significant stakeholder, be applying to acquire a substantial shareholding in a bank, or have owned a major shareholding in the same bank in the past. Additionally, it cannot be a part of the bank’s group entities or promoter group. The RBI proposed a separate amendment that would make it clear that a client’s shareholding would not be considered an indirect acquisition by its portfolio manager as long as the client is the registered owner of the shares and retains voting rights, the portfolio manager only offers non-binding investment advice, and the portfolio manager only exercises voting rights in response to a specific directive from the client.

IBM cautions that the AI growth is straining software budgets and causing an industry downturn

Mumbai: IBM predicted second-quarter sales below projections and said it had “faltered” in keeping pace with a shift in business expenditure from software to data center infrastructure. This is the most obvious indication yet of AI’s increasing impact on the industry. IBM’s stock fell 22% as a result of the warning, and the software industry as a whole saw a selloff. The iShares Expanded Tech-Software Sector ETF dropped more than 4%, and it also pulled down Dow futures. Fears that AI tools capable of automating repetitive tasks could pose an existential threat to the software sector have long made investors nervous. The announcement on Tuesday revealed that software bud-

gets were being negatively impacted by the surge in expenditure on servers, CPUs, and networking equipment for AI. In a letter to investors, IBM CEO Arvind Krishna stated, “In the last few weeks of June, we saw clients shift their quarterly capex spend toward servers, storage, and memory purchases to secure supply-constrained infrastructure ahead of expected price increases.” Krishna stated, “We did not anticipate the size of the capex reprioritization, even though we anticipated some supply-chain-related impact in our forecasts. The company had “faltered” in responding quickly enough, and “many significant deals” had failed to close as anticipated. Based on statistics provided by LSEG, the com-

pany anticipates revenue of \$17.2 billion for the quarter, which is lower than analysts’ forecast of \$17.86 billion. In contrast to the projection of \$3.02, adjusted earnings per share are anticipated to be \$2.93. Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at IG Group, stated, “This is an ugly moment for IBM and software stocks. The big question will be how long the shift to infrastructure and cybersecurity lasts.” It might be tolerable for a few more months, but after that, major concerns about software stocks will resurface. Salesforce, Intuit, Microsoft, and ServiceNow all saw declines of three to five percent. On July 22, IBM is anticipated to release its second-quarter earnings.

Prior to the IPO, SBI Funds Management raises Rs. 2,663 cr from anchor investors



One day prior to its initial public offering (IPO), SBI Funds Management, the biggest asset management company (AMC) in India by quarterly average assets under management (QAAUM), raised ₹2,663 crore through an anchor allotment on Monday.

The business notified the stock exchanges that it had given anchor investors 4.63 crore shares at a price of ₹574 each. BlackRock, Goldman Sachs, HDFC Mutual Fund, ICICI Prudential, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), Nomura India, and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority were among the nota-

ble institutional investors that took part in the anchor allocation. SBI Funds Management has priced its IPO at ₹545-574 per share.

The ₹9,813 crore IPO comprises entirely an offer for sale (OFS) by the company’s pro-

moters, State Bank of India and Amundi India Holding. At the upper end of the price band, the company is valued at ₹1.2 trillion. As of March 31, 2026, SBI Funds Management had a market share of 15.3% and a QAAUM of

₹12.51 trillion, making it the biggest AMC in India. Having started operations in June 1987 as the first mutual fund company created outside of the Unit Trust of India, it is also the oldest AMC in India. Subscriptions for the public issue will open on July 14 and finish on July 16. Ahead of a busy pipeline of several additional large-scale issuances, the mammoth IPO is viewed as a critical test of institutional and retail investor interest. Compared to 24 IPOs that raised ₹45,375 crore during the same period previous year, 27 companies in India raised ₹22,572 crore through IPOs by the end of June 2026.

Wipro Q1 preview and dividend: AI spending and wages to reduce margins; advice



Mumbai: On Thursday, July 16, IT services giant Wipro is scheduled to release its first-quarter FY2027 (Q1FY27) earnings.

After market hours (after 3:30 PM), the corporation will release its earnings. According to an exchange filing, Wipro’s board may possibly suggest an interim dividend for shareholders in addition to its Q1 results.

Due to pay increases, postponed deal ramp-ups, and ongoing AI investments, a number of brokerages anticipate Wipro to report reduced revenue growth in Q1. According to ICICI Securities, Wipro is expected to report -0.4 per cent Q-o-Q CC (-1.3 per cent QoQ USD organic) revenue growth in IT Services, led by healthy ramp-up of the Olam deal (TCV of USD 1 billion over 8 years)

aiding growth in the retail vertical; 1.5 month contribution of 0.8 per cent from the consolidation of Mindsprint and Alpha Net Consulting; and healthy revenue growth in the Harman acquisition helping accelerate the technology and communication vertical. That said, these tailwinds could be offset by client-specific issues and delays in ramp-up of large deals, the brokerage said, adding that it expects the IT Services revenue to be at \$2,638 million (consolidated revenue at \$2,666 million). The brokerage anticipates a 210 basis point quarter-over-quarter decline in Ebit margin to 15.1% due to headwinds from a two-month impact from pay hikes, increased competitive intensity, and D&A charges from acquisitions, which are partially offset by tailwinds from currency. The adjusted net

profit is estimated by the brokerage to be ₹31,921 million.

Similar opinions were expressed by Yes Securities, which anticipates -0.2% CC Q-o-Q growth as a result of delayed revenue conversions. Due to the full-quarter impact of pay increases and ongoing investments in AI-native platforms, margins could drop to 16.4% in the quarter under preview. Wipro’s Q2 outlook is anticipated at a subdued -1% to +1% Q-o-Q, according to Mirae Asset Sharekhan, underscoring the sector’s lack of near-term momentum. The brokerage anticipates that Wipro will report revenue of ₹24,947 crore in the June quarter, up 12.7% year over year and 2.9% quarter over quarter. However, adjusted net profit may be 4.6% lower sequentially at ₹3,341 crore (flat Y-o-Y). Due to salary increases, lower margin deal ramp-ups, and ongoing AI investments, margins are predicted to drop by 84 basis points quarter over quarter to 16.3%. Axis Securities states that the forecast for European business and acquisitions, new deal wins, and management guidance for FY27 are important monitorables.

Wages and AI expenditures will reduce profitability; guidance

Mumbai: On Thursday, July 16, IT services giant Wipro is scheduled to release its first-quarter FY2027 (Q1FY27) earnings. After market hours (after 3:30 PM), the corporation will release its earnings. According to an exchange filing, Wipro’s board may possibly suggest an interim dividend for shareholders in addition to its Q1 results. Due to pay increases, postponed revenue conversions. Margins could decline in the quarter under preview to 16.4 per cent, due to full quarter impact of wage hikes and continued investments in AI-native platforms. Wipro’s Q2 outlook is anticipated at a subdued -1% to +1% Q-o-Q, according to Mirae Asset Sharekhan, underscoring the sector’s lack of near-term momentum. The brokerage anticipates that Wipro will report revenue of ₹24,947 crore in the June quarter, up 12.7% year over year and 2.9% quarter over quarter. However, adjusted net profit may be 4.6% lower sequentially at ₹3,341 crore (flat Y-o-Y). Due to salary increases, lower margin deal ramp-ups, and ongoing AI investments, margins are predicted to drop by 84 basis points quarter over quarter to 16.3%. Axis Securities states that the forecast for European business and acquisitions, new deal wins, and management guidance for FY27 are important monitorables.

Q-o-Q to 15.1 per cent, led by headwinds from a two-month impact from wage hike; higher competitive intensity; and D&A charge from acquisitions, partly offset by tailwinds from currency. The brokerage has pegged the adjusted net profit at ₹31,921 million. Yes Securities also echoed similar views as it expects -0.2 per cent CC Q-o-Q growth due to delayed revenue conversions. Margins could decline in the quarter under preview to 16.4 per cent, due to full quarter impact of wage hikes and continued investments in AI-native platforms. Wipro’s Q2 outlook is anticipated at a subdued -1% to +1% Q-o-Q, according to Mirae Asset Sharekhan, underscoring the sector’s lack of near-term momentum. The brokerage anticipates that Wipro will report revenue of ₹24,947 crore in the June quarter, up 12.7% year over year and 2.9% quarter over quarter. However, adjusted net profit may be 4.6% lower sequentially at ₹3,341 crore (flat Y-o-Y). Due to salary increases, lower margin deal ramp-ups, and ongoing AI investments, margins are predicted to drop by 84 basis points quarter over quarter to 16.3%. Axis Securities states that the forecast for European business and acquisitions, new deal wins, and management guidance for FY27 are important monitorables.

Twelve foreigners were murdered in Spain's catastrophic wildfires, including seven Britons

Madrid: Twelve foreigners were murdered in wildfires in southern Spain, including seven Britons, according to authorities.Following post-mortem tests following the Andalusian fires, officials reported that 12 of the 13 victims were foreign citizens. Three were from Belgium, one each from France and the United States, and seven were from the United Kingdom. The final victim was a citizen of Spain.The public organization in charge of identifying the fatalities continued, “The 13 people who died are eight women and five men, all adults.”The charming province of Almería in the southeast, which is home to a large number of foreign inhabitants close to the Mediterranean shore, caught fire last Thursday. Extremely high temperatures caused tinder-box dryness as flames fuelled by strong winds tore through scrubland and woodlands. Pete and Fran Gillam, residents of Bédar, the village most affected by the wildfires, were among the British citizens who perished.”We are heartbroken to share that we have received confirmation from the police that Mum and Dad did not survive the fire,” their daughter Danielle Gillam-Kirton posted on Facebook. I appreciate all of your prayers, love, and support over the past few days. We can never adequately convey how much they have meant to us. Burned-out cars litter the road leading out of Bédar, and the authorities confirmed that some victims died in their vehicles as they tried to flee. One British man died in his car while trying to rescue his pets, according to a friend of his wife.Penelope Howe, 54, said her friend’s husband died when flames engulfed his car during the evacuation of the Los Gallardos area of Almería province.Emergency services initially recovered 12 bodies that were so badly burned that DNA samples were needed to identify them.The fire, one of Spain’s deadliest in recent years and caused by an electrical cable falling on a road, devastated about 7,000 hectares (more than 17,000 acres) of land.The flames have since been brought under control and residents have been able to return to their homes since Sunday.Spain has in recent years experienced increasingly long and frequent heat-waves, with temperatures exceeding 40C, creating perfect conditions for wildfires. According to the European Forest Fire Information System, more than 393,000 hectares were destroyed by fire in 2025—the highest amount in the nation’s recent history.

Fear of additional wildfires marred France’s Bastille Day celebrations

Paris: In the midst of a scorching weather and wildfires that caused officials nationwide to postpone customary fireworks displays and balls honoring France’s national holiday, Emmanuel Macron oversaw his final Bastille Day parade in Paris.Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the president of Ukraine, Keir Starmer, the prime minister of Great Britain, Friedrich Merz, the chancellor of Germany, and two dozen other national leaders joined the French president for the yearly military procession and flypast. Macron said on Monday night it was a great honour to welcome to the parade “all the partners in the coalition of the willing and our Ukrainian friends, who will march with us and illustrate its strategic reawakening and our unity”. The parade, which marks the 1789 storming of the Bastille fortress, followed a meeting in Paris on Monday of western allies supporting Ukraine in its war against Russia. About 500 soldiers from those countries marched alongside French troops.The foreign fighters, including British troops for the first time in about 20 years, marched in combat fatigues and dress uniforms with their national flags in a break from tradition. Usually only one foreign country is invited to take part.Aircraft from Germany, the UK, Croatia, Poland, Denmark, Greece, Sweden, Norway, Spain and Italy took part in the flypast. Twenty-five Ukrainian soldiers also marched down the Champs-Élysées and Ukrainian co-pilots flew French Mirage jets as part of what a French official said was “a strong signal that Europe is waking up to how dangerous the world has become”. The parade, France’s largest ever with nearly 6,700 troops, 98 aircraft, 31 he-



licopters and 315 vehicles, was also intended to display “France’s rearmament, France’s strategic autonomy, and Europe’s strategic awakening”, the official said.France’s deputy defence minister, Alice Rufo, said the procession showed “a Europe united and determined to support Ukraine in the face of Russia, a Europe that is confident in itself”.Many local authorities cancelled Bastille Day firework displays because of concerns about the high risk of more forest fires as France suffers its third heatwave of the summer, with temperatures in the high 30s across much of the country. About 850 firefighters and four water-bombing planes using water from the Seine continued to battle two wildfires ravaging the Fontainebleau forest, a former royal hunting ground popular with hikers and climbers about 40 miles (60km) south-east of Paris.The fires, which erupted on Sunday and Monday, had burned about 2,050 hectares – about 10% of the forest – by midday on Tuesday, authorities said, adding that firefighters hoped to bring the blazes under control by eve-

ning.The fires have forced about 1,000 people in and around Fontainebleau to flee their homes. Authorities are investigating whether they were started deliberately and have arrested six people, including a volunteer firefighter, on suspicion of arson. One suspect had admitted using petrol and a cigarette lighter to start fires in the forest over the weekend, and another to doing so accidentally by throwing away a burning cigarette butt, the Fontainebleau public prosecutor said on Tuesday. France’s interior minister, Laurent Nuñez, has said 32,000 hectares across France have been burned so far this year, more than during the entire 2025 fire season, with traditionally cooler regions such as Brittany also affected.In some places, including in Paris, the traditional Bastille Day firefighters’ balls have been called off to avoid heat exhaustion and limit the demands on emergency services.Human-caused climate breakdown is supercharging extreme weather across the world, driving more frequent and more deadly disasters such as heatwaves and wildfires.

Jacinta Nampijinpa Price was chastised for spreading the myth that labor was “importing” Indian migrants



Washington DC: After posting a social media video that falsely claimed Labor was “importing” Indian migrants, Jacinta Nampijinpa Price was chastised by her Liberal colleagues. This rekindled the debate that led to her dismissal by previous leader Sussan Ley.The backlash coincided with a new internal discussion paper that acknowledged that multicultural communities had “deep-rooted” issues with the Liberals and called on the party to “instill message discipline” in order to stop electoral rivals from using its stances as “hostile or racist.” The Northern Territory senator was last year sacked from Ley’s frontbench after suggesting the federal government’s migration program favoured Indians to win Labor votesPrice later clarified the initial remarks – acknowledging Australia has a non-discriminatory migration program – but refused to apologise for the hurt caused to Indian Australians.The senator’s refusal to publicly express support for Ley was the final straw for the then-leader. Earlier this week, Price, who was returned to the frontbench after

Angus Taylor took over as leader, shared a social media clip from right-wing podcaster Sam Bamford that harked back to the senator’s comments. The Liberal Party’s bad reputation in multicultural communities is “deep-rooted,” and some of its ideas have been “misappropriated by opponents as hostile or racist,” according to an internal discussion paper exploring ways to rehabilitate the party.According to the research, “the party must instill message discipline in addition to increased engagement to ensure such positions are not being exploited by opponents.”According to the article, Liberal candidates are frequently outnumbered by their political rivals at rallies, and other parties are far more prevalent in multicultural communities.According to the report, “engaging with multicultural communities meaningfully and consistently, not as a peripheral or exceptional task, is a political imperative for the party.” The host of the 2WorldsCollide podcast filmed himself responding to last Sunday’s episode of the ABC’s Insiders program, in which panellists discussed Indian prime minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Melbourne. The panellists debated the potential electoral benefit for Anthony Albanese from engaging with Australia’s Indian community given the size of the diaspora.In the clip, Bamford said: ‘We’re just importing Indians for votes. That’s pretty much what the ABC just said.’”It was not only a year ago that they came after Jacinta Price for pretty much saying the exact same thing,” he said.Bamford’s claim about “importing” Indian migrants is false because Australia has a non-discriminatory immigration program, meaning it does not select or reject visa applicants based on nationality, race, gender or religion.The Australian was first to report on Tuesday night that Price had re-posted Bamford’s clip to her X account.

The post was still on her page as of 4.30pm on Wednesday. Guardian Australia contacted Price’s office for comment.A spokesperson for Price told The Australian that the shadow minister for small business wanted to “highlight the ABC’s commentary around the prime minister’s engagement with the Indian-Australian community during prime minister Modi’s visit”.“The repost was not an endorsement of every comment made by the podcast host,” the spokesperson said, without specifying which part she might not have agreed with.The Liberal senator, Andrew McLachlan, said it was “degrading” to the Indian community for anyone to suggest that its members voted the same way.“Those that push this view are seeking to dehumanise people. In my experience, as with any community, there are variety of life experiences and a diversity of views,” he said. “The Liberal Party has a proud heritage of supporting multiculturalism and its enrichment to our country. Every member of our party not only needs to mindful of our policy heritage but also seek to build upon it.”Price’s views did not “have a home” in the Liberal Party, according to another senior Liberal, who said some colleagues had always felt uneasy about her joining from the Nationals. It is the second time that Price has attracted controversy for associating herself with Bamford, a prominent anti-immigration advocate who has 400,000 followers on Instagram.In May, she denied she agreed with the podcaster’s suggestion that Australia should stop migrants from India, China, Africa, and the Middle East “flooding the country”, after footage showed her nodding her head during an interview between the pair. Multicultural communities – in particular Chinese-Australians – have abandoned the Liberal party at the past two elections, damaging them in seats in Sydney and Melbourne in particular.

Keir Starmer is the first prime minister of the United Kingdom to be awarded the Légion d’honneur by France

London: In appreciation of his collaboration with France on European security, Keir Starmer became the first prime minister of the United Kingdom to receive the Légion d’honneur from a French president.At a crucial juncture for Europe in early 2025, Emmanuel Macron gave Starmer the historic honor for his role in forming the coalition of the willing, a group of nations led by France and the UK that have promised to defend Ukraine.Winston Churchill was the only other British prime minister to be awarded the Grand-Croix of the Légion d’honneur in 1958 for his leadership and strong relations to France during World War II. Awarding the honour to Starmer underlines the significant shift from Macron’s more testy relationships with some previous prime ministers, the French leader having frequently clashed with the Conservatives Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss over Brexit. On one of his final engagements on the international stage, Starmer was in Paris to attend Bastille Day celebrations, meeting British troops involved in the ceremonial events before watching the parade alongside Macron and others including Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. At Starmer’s final coalition of the willing summit on Monday, Macron, Zelenskyy and Germany’s chancellor, Friedrich Merz, paid tribute to his role on the world stage, with his approach to international affairs seen as one of the strengths

of his time in office. Presenting the award, Macron said Starmer had played a “historic role” in establishing the group of countries to support Ukraine.He said: “Prime minister, dear Keir, I wanted to reiterate my gratitude and the gratitude of the French people, obviously for your years as a prime minister. But I have to say, beyond that, for your personal leadership and your commitments for obviously your country, but the security of our Europe, Ukraine, the bilateral relationship, your decency.”I have to say, all the human qualities that we learn to appreciate, all those remain very important to all of us. We found with you a very reliable and friendly partner.”While Churchill, the former US president Dwight D Eisenhower, the former West German chancellor Willy Brandt and Nelson Mandela have been among those receiving the higher-order Grand-Croix, more controversially the Légion d’honneur was also given – though later revoked – to the then Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, in 2001 and to Vladimir Putin in 2006, both by Jacques Chirac. Prior to the award, Merz stated that Starmer would “phone you occasionally to get your opinion on this or that,” while Zelenskyy had lauded Starmer’s “constant, steadfast support,” which the prime minister claimed would continue under his successor, Andy Burnham.Since Boris Johnson denounced Russia’s invasion in February 2022, other British prime leaders have backed



Ukraine by sanctioning Russia and offering military and humanitarian assistance. Under fellow Conservatives Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak, this support persisted.The coalition of the willing, which consists of more than 30 nations, has sanctioned Russia, promised financial and military assistance to Ukraine, and suggested the establishment of a global peace-keeping force once hostilities end.

A new American patient with Ebola travels to Germany for medical care

Washington DC: The health ministry in Berlin said on Monday that a US citizen who contracted Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has arrived in Germany for treatment. This comes only weeks after another American who contracted the disease in the DRC received treatment in Berlin.According to a White House official cited by Reuters, the Trump administration said on Monday that it was preventing US citizens in the DRC from taking commercial flights to the US.According to the German health ministry, the new American patient arrived in Frankfurt overnight and was moved to the university hospital. The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said the man was a “humanitarian worker” who had been in Bunia, the capital of the north-eastern Ituri province of the DRC. Ituri is the center of an Ebola outbreak that the DRC declared in mid-May – its 17th.The WHO had provided the infected man with “clinical care and close monitoring”, The WHO director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on X. “The patient has been safely transferred to Germany for continued follow-up care,” he added.An official working for the Christian aid group Samaritan’s Purse confirmed to Reuters that the patient, in his 60s, was a full-time employee of the organization working as a warehouse manager in the DRC.The DRC’s ongoing outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of the virus – for which there is no vaccine or cure.There have been more than 1,900 confirmed cases in the outbreak and more than 700 confirmed deaths, according to the WHO.The German health ministry said the US patient represented “no danger for the general population or for other patients” in the Frankfurt hospital.“The risk of someone infected with Ebola entering Germany is very low,” the ministry said. It added that US authorities



had requested help from Germany because of the country’s expertise in treating Ebola cases and the shorter flight time from the DRC to Germany.Another US patient with the virus was quarantined at the end of May along with his family at Berlin’s Charité hospital.He made a recovery after two weeks of treatment.The Trump administration’s barring Americans in the DRC from traveling to the United States on commercial flights is being done under a transportation authority known as Title 49, according to Reuters’ reporting. That will place US citizens in the DRC or those who have recently left on a “do-not-board” list until they have spent at least 21 days in a third country, Reuters reported, citing a White House official. According to the US official cited by Reuters, some twenty Americans were scheduled to board aircraft to the US on Tuesday after visiting the DRC. According to Reuters, the US State Department will provide assistance to American citizens and other impacted parties while they wait.High fever, vomiting, and internal and external bleeding are some of the symptoms of the frequently fatal viral disease Ebola, which is transmitted by direct contact with bodily fluids from infected humans or animals.

How West African floods caused thousands of people to be displaced due to global warming



Ethiopia: Dozens of people drowned, hundreds had to be rescued and thousands were displaced when floods struck the coasts of west Africa last month.Now scientists have concluded that the rains that caused the floods were supercharged by climate breakdown. Global heating, they say, turned what should have been a routine weather event into a climate catastrophe. They also warn that the countries affected must adapt to a frightening new reality. “The climate is changing faster than most nations can adapt,” said Friederike Otto, a professor of climate science at Imperial College London.“Adapting to these now common events is critical, but so is reducing emissions much further and faster, to allow us time to keep up with the changes we’ve already put into motion. Quite simply, until emissions stop these extremes will only grow worse.” Residents on the Gulf of Guinea coast expect rain this time of year.

Rainy season runs from May until the end of July. Granted, this year it had been particularly heavy, but what began on 20 June caught people by surprise. Over the course of 72 hours, intense rainfall drenched the densely populated coastal regions of Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Nigeria. More than 140mm of rain fell in some cities in less than a day. The deluge overwhelmed drainage systems, triggering a series of flash floods. From Lagos to Monrovia in Liberia, the overflow inundated neighbourhoods and washed away markets. It submerged roads and swamped infrastructure. At least 34 people died in Ghana. Five died in Togo. In Côte d’Ivoire, 59 have died as a result of floods since May.On Thursday, Otto and the World Weather Attribution team said

such a deluge was five times more likely in today’s climate. Heavy, three-day downpours in the region had increased in intensity by roughly 23% since record-keeping began, they said.It will not be long until something similar occurs again, they warned. With the climate 1.4C hotter than before the industrial use of fossil fuels, they expect rainfall of a similar scale to explode above the Gulf of Guinea every two to four years.To quantify the role the climate crisis had played in the disaster, scientists compared historical weather observations with climate model simulations. They focused specifically on the three most extreme days of rainfall. Despite climate models often struggling to recreate similar events in regions in the global south, they showed climate change had caused a 4% increase in intensity. The researchers said this made them confident that greenhouse gas emissions had intensified the event.Joyce Kimutai, who researches extreme weather and climate change at Imperial College London, was the lead author on the study. She said: “Climate models typically struggle to capture the full scale of tropical precipitation trends when we look at extreme events like this one.”As such, the fact that we found such a role for climate change is significant. Combined with the very wetter trend in the observational-based data, it’s clear that human-caused warming made this event worse, and wetter, with devastating impacts. “This study is a clear example of the need for international cooperation on climate justice. Industrialised nations have a responsibility to help nations like Togo, Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana to adapt to a worsening problem that they didn’t cause.”

The Slovenian Riviera in the summer

I’m riding a salt-coloured horse through the Dragonja valley, deep in the green hills of Slovenian Istria. Electric-blue dragonflies zip over the river as we gallop past olive trees and vineyards. The landscape rises steeply in a series of grassy terraces, and at the top of the hill we rein in the sweating horses to take in the view. Far below, the huge grids of solinas (salt pans), glittery and light-blue in the early morning light, look strange and somehow elegant against the wild, expansive sea beyond.

The Istrian peninsula is the largest in the Adriatic Sea, with 90% of it in Croatia and smaller portions in Slovenia and Italy. I’ve come to explore the Slovenian section. At just 29 miles (47km), the country’s coastline is one of the shortest in Europe, from the Italian city of Trieste down to the Croatian border, but it boasts colourful seaside towns, hilltop villages and an emerging gastronomy scene. We ride back to Kmetija Medljan, the farm where I’m staying, in time for breakfast – served at long communal tables under the shade of a mulberry tree – with freshly laid eggs, strawberries from the garden and homemade bread. The Kodarin family bought the land in the 1980s and today the farm is run by Marina, Marko and their son Tilen. There are simple rooms near the stables, rustic apartments in the old farmhouse and plans to build treehouses in the future. For now, it feels much as it must have done 250 years ago. House martins flit through the air hunting insects, chickens cluck in the orchard, and horses graze among the olive trees. The coast is just a 10-minute drive away, but the peace of the Istrian hills is what guests come for – along with Marina’s delicious home cooking (her take on traditional Slovenian noodle soup is a favourite). Not far from the farm is the Saltworks Museum, where I learn more about the Sečovlje salt pans I glimpsed from the hillside. Housed in three former salt-workers’ houses, the museum has interactive displays and abandoned pans you can



visit. Salt is still harvested by hand in the working part of the salt pans, historian Prof Flavio Bonin explains as we walk around large crystallisation basins where sea water once ran through a series of shallow pools with the salt becoming increasingly concentrated. Istrian salt is prized for its quality and whiteness, the solni cvet, or salt flower, having a delicate, slightly sweet taste. There’s a stark beauty to this empty landscape, and the solinas are also an important haven for wildlife. A black-winged stilt with bright orange legs stalks slowly through the pans in search of lunch, and snow-white egrets rise up from the marshlands into the azure sky as I watch. My next stop is medieval Piran, a little way up the coast towards Italy, perhaps the most beautiful of Slovenia’s seaside towns. The Venetian Republic ruled Istria for five centuries and took one-fifth of the salt produced in tax, while a seventh went to Piran, which became wealthy as

a result. The Venetian influence is everywhere, from the elegant painted houses in shades of lemon, orange and coral, to the Italian-inspired culinary scene. Rostelin is known for its handmade pasta, though for me a dish of delicate raw scallops, served with thin slices of black truffle, steals the show. I’m staying in Benečanka Casa Veneziana in Tartini Square, which is the finest example of Venetian gothic architecture in the town. Legend has it that, in the 15th century, a Venetian merchant fell in love with a beautiful girl from Piran and built her the prettiest house in the city. But their relationship scandalised the town’s gossips, since he had a family back in Venice. So he defiantly had the inscription Lasa pur dir (let them talk) engraved on the front wall. The water surrounding Piran is a protected marine area, and in the afternoon I go scuba diving, hoping to spot sea horses, which live in the sea grass meadows close to

shore. The shallow reef runs close to the promenade, so I can walk straight into the water with my instructor. The sea horses prove elusive, but there is plenty of other marine life, including a jaunty, hairy crab wearing a bright orange marine sponge as a cap. There are no sandy beaches here, but people swim from the rocky waterfront, which has ladders down into the water. From Piran, it’s an easy walk along the coastal path to Izola, 7 miles to the east. The trail cuts through the Strunjan landscape park and passes one of Slovenia’s loveliest beaches, Moon Bay. I stop for lunch on the breezy terrace of the Belvedere hotel. Located at the top of a hill, it offers excellent seafood and sweeping views to Trieste. Izola manages to be laid-back and vibrant at the same time. From my base at the supremely comfortable DeGrassi hotel, I stroll to Ljubljanska Ulica, a street bursting with artists’

workshops, pink and peach houses and colourful bunting. Music is playing, old men drink coffee and kids play in the street. Along from here is a tiny mu-

seum, where cultural heritage expert Gregor Benčina tells me the history of the place. Izola was originally a poor fishing village. “Piran was our mortal enemy,” Gregor says solemnly. “In medieval times, there was a law that when an Izolan died, they could leave their wealth to anyone local or international, but it was forbidden to leave anything to people from Piran.” The next day, local guide Matic Horvat takes me on an ebike tour of the surrounding countryside. We zip effortlessly through the Šavrini hills, planted with vines, as well as olive, cherry, fig and almond trees, and swoop down the endless descent from Gažon to Koper, which makes me whoop like a child. In the port city, we stop for a zingy orange and ginger ice-cream, before a leisurely return to Izola. As the heat of the afternoon cools into one of those long, languid evenings, I stop by Manzioli wine bar, on the main square, for an aperitivo of fresh rosé from local winemaker Zaro. The bar’s owner, Marko, explains that his family’s vineyards are located

very close to the water and break. The salt informs the minerality, which gives this wine its depth of flavour. Across the square, Bujol is one of superstar Slovene chef Ana Roš’s favourite places to eat on the coast, and I feast on plump mussels and fritto misto (mixed fry) with a killer homemade tabasco sauce. The next day, teenagers belt out punk rock from the bandstand, and Istrian food producers set out their wares at the Pier of Tastes food market, which is held monthly from April to October (except in July and August). Keen to learn more about the local produce and award-winning wines, I join Nina Golob, from the tourist board, to visit some artisan producers in nearby villages (she’s launching her own tours soon). Tilen Praprotnik is dedicated to reviving indigenous grape varieties and produces an extraordinary malvasia wine, while at Korenika & Moškon we taste different varieties of olive oil, including belica, which has a powerful kick. We finish up at Gostilna Korte, where Lejla, the owner, brings out dish after dish of



Denmark’s “Cold Hawaii” is the creatively chilly surf area on the coast of Jutland

The North Sea wind is buffeting my body and face, shaking me awake after a six-hour journey from Copenhagen on buses and trains to this rugged stretch of the Danish coast. From my high vantage point on the grassy dunes, overlooking what feels like an endless sea, there is hardly another soul to be seen, save for the specks of a few surfers who are trying their luck on the crashing waves. Surfers, windsurfers and paddleboarders flock to this stretch of north-west Jutland, which is playfully known as “Cold Hawaii”. The phrase was coined in the 1990s by the international surfing community, and popularised by world champion windsurfer Josh Stone, to describe this laid-back shoreline and its 31 official surf spots running for around 30 miles (50km) from a little north of the industrial harbour of Hanstholm down to the sandy beaches of Agger. Unlike tropical Hawaii, however, the European version is lined with the heathlands, dunes and forest of the Thy national park. The weather is also brisker – you’d be loath to spend long in the water here without a wetsuit to keep you warm. The wild beauty of the

coastline feels markedly different to the largely agricultural landscape I have come to know in the several years I’ve lived in Denmark. Cold Hawaii has been recommended to me countless times as somewhere a little more under the radar than the popular resorts on the north coast of Zealand, or Skagen on the northern tip of Jutland. It’s not easy to reach Thy by public transport and, once here, the patchy local bus service makes it far easier to explore by car. For that reason, Cold Hawaii has remained something of a local secret, and there’s a strong sense of community here even in winter, when all the summer houses sit empty. On a sun-drenched afternoon in early spring, with the tourist season yet to begin, the surf schools and ice-cream shops are still quiet. Driving into Klitmøller – the unofficial centre of Cold Hawaii, which hosts an annual international surfing competition – there are hints of how the area has transformed into a surfers’ paradise over recent decades. As well as surf shops and schools, there’s a wine bar, a spa and a co-working space on the main street. Several artists are based in the area, too, includ-

ing the internationally renowned Jeppe Hein. It’s a similar story in the nearby seaside town of Vorpør, where I’m staying at the Vorpør Badehotel. It is an expansion of the original Vø Surfshop, opened by Peter Joseph Jensen and Sigrid Bruun Jakobsen in 2011; another couple joined them to open the hotel in 2023. My bubblegum-pink room is nestled in the eaves with huge windows looking out to sea and a freestanding tub (a luxury for a Copenhagen like me). In cosy Danish fashion, there’s a shoes-off-at-the-door policy. Standing on Vorpør beach between anchored fishing boats, I’m joined by families enjoying strolls in the blustery wind and dappled sunshine – it’s that time of the year when Denmark emerges from the winter gloom and everyone rushes to be outside as much as possible. Not so long ago, Vorpør was a quiet fishing village, but in recent years it has become increasingly popular with Danish, German and Belgian tourists, giving rise to a flurry of new places to stay, restaurants and boutiques. One notable addition, not far down the coast, is the restaurant Tri. The founder and head chef, Nicolas Min Jørgensen,

earned a Michelin star just a year after opening in 2022, winning acclaim for a hyperlocal approach to produce and menu planning. The flavours of the sea, Thy national park and the nearby Limfjord, which cuts through northern Denmark, are evident in the mussel broth and seaweed, smoked roe butter and magnolia flowers that feature on the menu. During dinner, Jørgensen waves to fisher René, who harvested the first shrimps of the

season from the Limfjord that morning, and points out farmer Niels, who is eating in the restaurant and enjoying his own berries. The next day, I venture to SMK Thy, the new, highly acclaimed outpost of the National Gallery of Denmark (Statens Museum for Kunst), which opened in the village of Doverodde last year. From Vorpør, it’s a 30-minute drive inland to the banks of the Limfjord, passing the dune plantations of Thy national park.

A 42-metre former grain silo from the 1960s towers over the collection of warehouses that now host exhibitions such as Living Landscapes (until 18 October) featuring artists from Claude Lorrain to Edvard Munch and rising Danish stars such as Rasmus Myrup. Inside, a winding steel staircase traverses three floors and rewards visitors with remarkable views over the Limfjord. There’s also a “Nature Village” with pavilions serving as

bases for outdoor education, exploring nature and kayaking. It’s hard to figure how the National Gallery ended up in this sleepy part of Jutland, but it is already proving popular with people who might otherwise feel disconnected from the collection in the Danish capital on the other side of the country. Across the Limfjord is another notable destination for culture lovers – Kunsthall Thy gallery was set up in 2023 by artist Rasmus Søndergaard Johannsen in a barn on the medieval manor house estate of Boddum Bisgaard. Its programme features a roster of international and Danish avant garde artists, working in sculpture, video and installations that feel unexpected in this quiet corner of Denmark, and quite different from SMK Thy’s efforts over the water to share its collection with a regional audience. And it’s that sense of the unexpected that lies at the heart of the region’s growing appeal. It’s why outdoor adventurers may be willing to swap the classic Atlantic surf hubs of Biarritz in France or Ericeira in Portugal for a northern outpost dubbed Cold Hawaii. That and a certain understated sense of Scandinavian style, of course. The trip was supported by Visit Denmark and Visit Nordvestkysten. Doubles at the Vorpør Badehotel start at £178 B&B. Several trains depart in the morning from Copenhagen central station to Sjørring in the Thy district, which connects to local buses run by Nordjyllands Trafikselskab. A ticket from the train company DSB covers transport from Copenhagen to Vorpør, including two trains and a bus, from 516 krone (around £60)



ENTERTAINMENT

Alia Bhatt Flaunts Corset Blouse in Unseen Photos from Best Friend Akansha Ranjan Kapoor's Wedding

Mumbai: Alia Bhatt has shared unseen pictures from her BFF Akansha Ranjan Kapoor's wedding. The actress took to Instagram to share heartwarming photos with her girl gang. Akansha Ranjan Kapoor and Sharan Sharma's wedding may have been intimate, but moments from the ceremony are now reaching fans, who are sending the couple their love.

Alia Bhatt captioned the post, "This. Just this" In one of the photos, Alia posed with all her friends as they surrounded the bride. Another photo featured Alia flaunting her purple corset blouse. The actress looked every bit regal in the royal attire. She also lovingly kissed her BFF in a photo from her wedding day. Alia's fans cannot get over the images and took to the comments to send their love. One person wrote, "Bride's maid goals! Perfect girl tribe." Someone else wrote, "OMG I love that saree look." A comment read, "The best girl tribe. From



school girls to married women, they've grown together and never stopped showing up for each other. Forever grateful. Akansha Ranjan Kapoor

and Soni Razdan also sent their love. Another comment read, "All the girlies are so prettyyyy." Someone else wrote, "& they all found their happily ever after" A comment read, "Aloo you look ravishing in all these pictures!!! @aliaabhatt." Another comment read, "Awwww such a sweet & wholesome moment for all the girls."For the unversed, Akansha and Sharan tied the knot on July 11 in an intimate ceremony held at their apartment building in Mumbai. The couple, who had reportedly been dating for four years, chose to skip traditional wedding rituals and instead opted for a registered marriage at home. News18 Showsha had earlier exclusively reported that the couple would not be having traditional pheras or elaborate religious ceremonies. A source had shared that Aanksha and Sharan wanted the focus to remain on their union and the presence of loved ones, rather than conventional wedding customs.

Supreme Court Clears Way for Shah Rukh Khan's Mannat Expansion with Two Additional Floors



Mumbai: In a big relief for Shah Rukh Khan, the Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a plea challenging the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance granted for the addition of two floors to Bollywood superstar's Mumbai residence, Mannat. A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana refused to interfere with an order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that had rejected the challenge. The apex court noted that the authorities had found substantial compliance with the law and stated that the construction can move forward. During the hearing, Senior Advocate Shobh Alam, appearing for the appellant, argued that the case should not be treated differently merely because it involved a prominent film star. He also highlighted that the petitioner had previously exposed the Adarsh Housing Society scam and was a respected activist. However, the bench made it clear that Shah Rukh Khan's celebrity status had no bearing on its decision. "We are in no way influenced by all of this," Justice Sanjay Kumar Bagchi observed during the proceedings. Recently, Shah Rukh Khan acquired the remaining floors of the South Delhi home where he and Gauri Khan began their married life, making him the sole owner of the entire property. SRK, who already owned the basement and first floor of the residential building in Panchsheel Park, bought the second and third floors for approximately Rs 37 crore. The acquisition gave him complete ownership of a house that is not just another high-value real estate asset, but one of the earliest addresses in the Shah Rukh-Gauri love story. Meanwhile, on the work front, Shah Rukh Khan will soon be seen in King. The film also stars his daughter, Suhana Khan, in the lead. Deepika Padukone and Munjya star Abhay Verma will also play key roles in the film. King is set to hit theatres on 24th December 2026.

Ujjwal Nikam Claims Sanjay Dutt Could Have Prevented 1993 Mumbai Blasts

Mumbai: Sanjay Dutt's arrest in 1993 under the Arms Act for the illegal possession of weapons made the most headlines during that time. The case was so significant that people still discuss it years later. Now, prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam, who played a major part in Dutt's imprisonment, has spoken about the case. In a conversation with Lallantop, Nikam, while revealing that he had insisted the court impose a strict sentence, clarified that he never considered Sanjay Dutt a terrorist. "I want to clarify that Sanjay Dutt is not a terrorist. It was his childishness. You could see it in his eyes. He was curious about weapons, and during that time many people were fascinated by the underworld. Being associated with them was seen as a flex," he said in a recent chat. While further continuing, Nikam said that he was highly disappointed in Dutt because one right action on his part could have prevented the deadly 1993 Mumbai serial bomb blasts. Speaking about the incident and how Sanjay Dutt could have prevented it, Nikam shared, "When Abu Salem came with a truck full of weapons, Sanjay Dutt kept some and returned the rest. My point is that if he had informed the police immediately, we could have stopped the bomb blasts. The conspiracy could have been exposed, many lives would have been saved, and those involved could have been arrested. That was my grievance against him. But he was not a terrorist."Despite whatever happened in the



courtroom, Nikam said that he shares a close bond with Dutt and revealed, "I met him after he was released. I have met him several times since. He respects me. Once, I was at a hotel when he came up to me and spoke with me. I have no personal enmity against anyone." He further spoke about Dutt's reaction following the verdict and said, "When the judgment was delivered, he was trembling. He kept saying, 'No sir, I didn't do anything wrong, sir. I will come back.' He was virtually shaking. I was standing nearby and told him, 'Sanju, the media is watching, please stand straight.' Then I asked the police to take him away. Had I not motivated him at that moment, the media would have made me the villain. Everyone was against me."

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh Step Out for a Dosa Date Amid Pregnancy Buzz



Mumbai: Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh, one of the most loved couples in town, recently took a break from their busy schedules for a low-key outing in Mumbai. Ever since they announced their second pregnancy, they have been staying away from the public eye. As the couple prepares to embrace parenthood once again, they were spotted enjoying a simple dosa date, with videos from their casual evening quickly making the rounds on social media.

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh were recently seen enjoying a rare outing in Mumbai as they headed out for a relaxed lunch date on Tuesday. The

couple visited a popular eatery to savour benne dosas, with security accompanying them throughout the visit. Soon after, glimpses from their outing began circulating widely on social media. Videos shared online captured the couple leaving the restaurant after their meal. Choosing comfort over glamour, Deepika stepped out in a breezy co-ord ensemble, while Ranveer sported a T-shirt paired with black trousers. Both kept a low profile by wearing face masks as they walked towards their waiting car. One of the clips also showed members of Deepika's security team politely asking people gathered outside the restaurant not to film the couple while

they were leaving the premises. Soon after the videos surfaced on social media, their fans were elated to see them after so long. One fan wrote, "Ram - Leela." Another fan wrote, "Aww you two." Others were seen dropping red heart emojis in the comments section.

Meanwhile, in April 2026, Deepika and Ranveer took to social media to announce their second pregnancy. They posted a picture of baby Dua holding a pregnancy test showing two distinct pink lines. They captioned the post with evil eye emojis. As soon as they made the announcement, the post was flooded with warm wishes and congratulatory messages from their colleagues, friends and fans. Currently, the actress is in her third trimester. On the work front, Ranveer was last seen in Dhurandhar: The Revenge alongside Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun, Rakesh Bedi, R Madhavan, and Danish Pandor. Deepika, on the other hand, has Shah Rukh Khan's King which is slated to release on December 24, 2026. She also has Raaka with Allu Arjun, helmed by Atlee.

Samantha Ruth Prabhu Shares Personal Thoughts on Motherhood and Family

Mumbai: Samantha Ruth Prabhu and Raj Nidimoru are expecting their first child, and the couple recently confirmed this when the actress announced her pregnancy during the promotions of Maa Inti Bangaaram. Samantha is currently on maternity leave, and in a recent chat, she revealed that she had always wanted to be a mother. Speaking to Pinkvilla, Samantha mentioned, "It's definitely new and exciting. But I've been waiting for this moment for a while now. I've always wanted to be a mother. So I know that I'll be giving this my all." This will be Samantha's first child. After her divorce from Naga Chaitanya, she married Raj Nidimoru in December 2025. "I've always been passionate about everything in life. But now

I feel I carry a different, new kind of strength and purpose in me. I'm looking forward to this journey a lot. And I'm filled with gratitude, learning every day, and getting ready to embrace whatever comes next," said the actor. Pregnancy rumours first surfaced after fans noticed what appeared to be a baby bump during the success celebrations of Maa Inti Bangaaram. Samantha later made the announcement herself at the film's success meet, where she revealed that she would be taking a brief maternity break after completing her current commitments. Now, besides her pregnancy, Samantha is also celebrating her film's success. Her latest film, Maa Inti Bangaaram's worldwide gross box office collection recently crossed the Rs 100 crore mark.

In a video posted a few days ago, the actress shared her excitement after the film reached the milestone, marking a successful run at the box office. The mom-to-be was seen relaxing at home when she was informed about the film's performance. She beamed with joy and thanked audiences for their love and support.

Samantha also recalled initial doubts around whether audiences would show up for a woman-led film and said the success marks the start of a bigger change. For the unversed, Maa Inti Bangaaram is a Telugu action comedy-drama directed by BV Nandini Reddy. The film is produced by Samantha Ruth Prabhu, Raj Nidimoru and Himank Reddy Duvvuru under Tralala Moving Pictures.

Aditya Narayan Says Classical Music Shaped His Passion for Singing



Mumbai: Singer and television host Aditya Narayan has reflected on the music that shaped his early years, saying that the timeless melodies of past decades played a defining role in nurturing his passion for singing and continue to inspire him even today.

In a recent post on social media, Aditya shared memories of growing up in a household filled with music from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. He said those songs became the soundtrack of his childhood and helped develop his appreciation for melody, rhythm and the rich traditions of Indian music. Although he grew up in the 1990s, Aditya said his musical influences began much earlier, thanks to the songs that were constantly played at home. He added that the enduring appeal of these compositions lies in their ability to connect people across generations. "The music of the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s was always

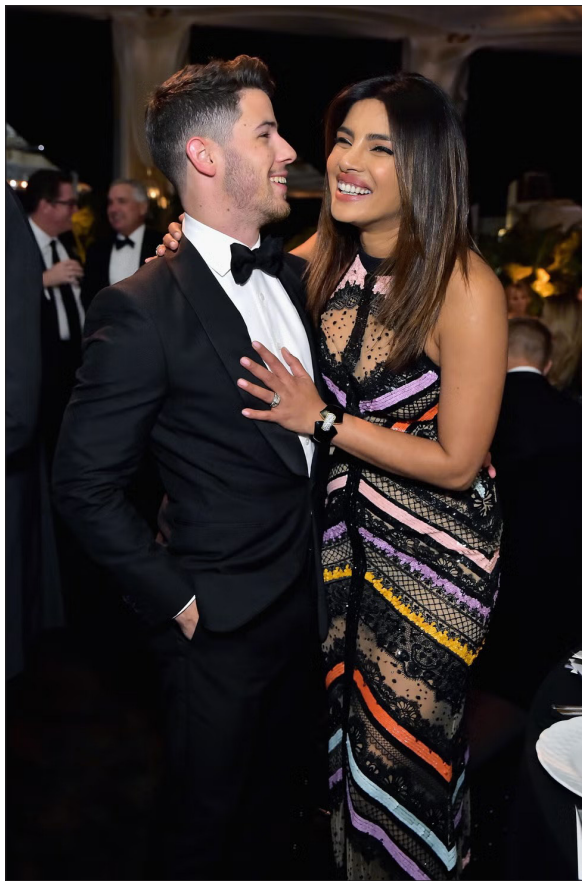
playing at home. These songs shaped my love for music and, even today, they have an incredible way of bringing people together," he wrote. The singer said this deep connection with classic Bollywood music inspired him to create Retro Rewind, a live musical experience celebrating evergreen songs that continue to resonate with audiences of all ages.

According to Aditya, the show is not merely an exercise in nostalgia but a tribute to timeless compositions that still fill dance floors and inspire singalongs. Featuring a live band, the concert will showcase popular Bollywood dance numbers, memorable melodies and iconic tracks from different eras. He expressed confidence that the music would appeal not only to those who grew up listening to these classics but also to younger audiences who have discovered them through digital platforms and so-

cial media. "Great music doesn't age. It just finds a new generation," he said, highlighting how classic songs continue to remain relevant despite changing musical trends. Aditya also announced details of his upcoming concert in Mumbai, where Retro Rewind will bring together some of Bollywood's most celebrated songs in a live performance. The son of veteran playback singer Udit Narayan, Aditya has built a successful career as a singer, television presenter and performer. He began his playback singing journey at a young age with the Nepali film Mohini in 1992 before making his Hindi playback debut alongside legendary singer Asha Bhosle for Rangeela. He later collaborated with his father on a song for Akele Hum Akele Tum, further establishing himself in the music industry. Apart from playback singing, Aditya has become a familiar face on Indian television through his long association with the reality show Indian Idol, where he has hosted multiple seasons. He has also participated in reality programmes such as Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 9. Most recently, Aditya was seen hosting Indian Idol 16, continuing his successful association with one of the country's most popular singing competitions while balancing his roles as a performer, host and live entertainer.

Priyanka Chopra Remembers Nick Jonas' First Message That Started Their Love Story

Mumbai: Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas looked back on the beginning of their love story, including their first conversation, a year and a half before they started dating. The couple revealed that their connection began in 2016 after they interacted on Twitter, before moving their chats to text messages. On the July 14 episode of 'Hey Jonas', Priyanka and Nick were seen holding hands and cringing as Joe Jonas and Kevin Jonas read their first messages to each other out loud. Meanwhile, Priyanka revealed that Nick made an unusual request after they moved to texting on phone- he asked her to prove it was really her by asking her to send a timestamped photo. Nick and Priyanka's first conversation began after Kevin Jonas asked Nick if he had watched Quantico, the ABC series in which Priyanka Chopra starred from 2015 to 2018. Nick admitted he hadn't watched the show, but seeing Priyanka on a billboard for the series caught his attention and encouraged him to message her. Joe Jonas then read out



Nick's first Twitter DM to Priyanka, where he introduced himself and mentioned that several people had suggested they meet. "Hello. I've heard from a few people that we should meet. I have to agree with

these people.. Are you in LA anytime soon?" read Nick's first message to Priyanka. Their mutual friend Graham Rogers had already told Priyanka about Nick. Priyanka replied to Nick and wrote, "Hey.. Graham's

told me so much about you.. Let's text. More private. My team can access this." After this, they moved to texting each other privately. Kevin Jonas asked Nick to share their first text exchange. When he requested to see the first message sent to Priyanka's number, Nick jokingly replied, "You can't see that one."

Priyanka then recalled what happened during those initial conversations, revealing that Nick made an unusual request as he wanted to make sure he was actually speaking to her. He asked her for a photo with a timestamp to verify her identity. "I will tell you what that first text was. He wanted to corroborate it was actually me. So he asked me for a photo that moment looking into the camera with a time stamp. I was like 'this guy is so sus of me already'. But I appreciated it too," said Priyanka. Nick and Priyanka revealed that they started dating a year and a half later. They got engaged just 2.5 months after they began dating each other, in July 2018.

Rani Mukerji Honoured with La Trobe University's Honorary Doctorate at IFFM 2026

Mumbai: Indian actor and humanitarian Rani Mukerji will be conferred with the prestigious Honorary Doctor of Letters by La Trobe University during the 2026 edition of the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM). The honour recognises her outstanding contribution to Indian cinema as well as her continued efforts towards social causes involving women, children and underprivileged communities. The honorary degree will be presented at a special ceremony on August 14, 2026, at Federation Square in Melbourne as part of the festival celebrations. The IFFM is scheduled to take place from August 13 to 23, 2026, bringing together filmmakers, actors and cinema enthusiasts from India, Australia and other parts of the world. With a career spanning nearly three decades, Rani Mukerji has established herself as one of India's most respected performers. Known for her versatility and powerful screen presence, she has delivered acclaimed performances in films including Black, No One Killed Jessica, Hichki, the Mardaani franchise and Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway. Through these roles, she has helped highlight important issues such as women's empowerment, gender equality, disability inclusion and social justice. Beyond her acting career, Rani has also been associated with humanitarian initiatives focusing on children's healthcare, education and community welfare. Her work both on and off screen has contributed to meaningful conversations around social change. Expressing her gratitude, Rani said she was deeply humbled by the recognition and described cinema as a powerful medium that can inspire empathy and create positive change. She thanked La Trobe University and the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne for honouring her journey and dedicated the recognition to India and audiences worldwide who have supported her career. La Trobe University Chancellor John Brumby AO praised Rani's achievements, saying her body of work had gone beyond entertainment by encouraging discussions on equality, inclusion and social issues.

2,600 Passengers, 110 mph Design Speed: An Overview of India’s First Hydrogen Train

New Delhi, July 19: With the introduction of its first domestic hydrogen-powered train, Indian Railways has ushered in a new age of environmentally friendly and sustainable transportation. The 10-coach, zero-emission train set that will run on the 89-kilometer Jind–Sonipat stretch of the Northern Railway in Haryana has been officially launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. With this, India becomes one of a few nations investigating rail transportation fueled by hydrogen. These include the US, China, Japan, and Germany. The locomotive is built to use clean hydrogen fuel cells to provide its own electricity. The project integrates specialized hydrogen storage, refueling, and operating infrastructure with cutting-edge propulsion technology. The hydrogen train project, which was created wholly in India by the Research, Design & Standards Organization (RDSO), exemplifies Atmanirbhar Bharat.It is a 10-car hydrogen fuel cell-based trainset with a 1200 kW hydrogen fuel cell propulsion system.The hydrogen train can accommodate about 2,600 passengers and is authorized to run at a maximum speed of 75 kmph with a design speed of 110 kmph.developed from the design phase to the production of prototypes.It will serve intermediate stations and link Sonipat, Gohana Junction, and Jind Junction.Jind City, Lalit Khara Halt, Bhambhewra, Isapur Kheri Halt, Butane



Halt, Khandrai Halt, Rabrah Halt, Lath Halt, Mohana, Barwasni Halt, and Sonipat New are among the proposed halts. Through Indian Railways’ hydrogen train program, India is advancing its hydrogen mobility goals and establishing the project as a crucial part of the nation’s larger clean energy transition.The hydrogen train project aims to develop the systems, infrastructure, and institutional capacities needed for future hydrogen-powered rail operations, rather than just introducing a new trainset. The project will increase the technical know-how required to support hydrogen mobility on a greater scale while assisting in the validation of hydrogen technology, operating procedures, and maintenance practices.The project supports Indian Railways’ continuing modernization initiatives while being in line with the National Green Hydrogen

Mission and India’s long-term net-zero emissions goals. Indian Railways is exploring hydrogen technology for heritage railways, particularly the Kalka–Shimla route, utilizing insights from the Jind–Sonipat Hydrogen Train project. This initiative marks a shift from pilot testing to a structured national program for hydrogen-powered trains, aiming to enhance sustainable rail transport and support India’s decarbonisation goals. Despite 95% of India’s broad-gauge railway being electrically equipped, hydrogen trains may play a niche role rather than dominate the system. Their effectiveness in achieving climate objectives will hinge on the affordability of green hydrogen and their economic viability for specific routes, as noted by Moushumi Mohanty from the Centre for Science and Environ-

PM Modi Says India-UK Trade Pact Will Open New Opportunities for Farmers and MSMEs

New Delhi, July 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday welcomed the implementation of the India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) along with the Agreement on Social Security, describing the development as a major milestone in the growing partnership between the two countries.

Modi said the two agreements would strengthen economic cooperation between India and the UK and help transform the shared vision of both nations into practical opportunities for citizens, businesses and professionals. Highlighting the potential benefits of the trade pact, the Prime Minister said CETA would provide fresh momentum to Indian farmers, entrepreneurs and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). He added that the agreement would allow several key sectors to gain improved access to the UK market and create new avenues for trade and invest-



ment. “This is a significant moment in the India-United Kingdom partnership. With the coming into force of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Agreement on Social Security, our economic linkages are going to get even deeper,” Modi said in a post on social media platform X.

The Prime Minister said the social security agreement would benefit Indian professionals working temporarily in the UK by

reducing challenges related to social security contributions. He added that the arrangement would also improve the competitiveness of Indian companies operating internationally. According to Modi, the agreements reflect the trust between the two democracies and their commitment to building a future-focused partnership based on trade, technology, investment and innovation. The India-UK free trade agreement officially came into effect on Wednesday,

beginning a new phase of economic engagement between the two nations. The agreement includes a series of tariff reductions aimed at increasing the movement of goods and services while creating wider market opportunities for businesses in both countries. Signed in July last year after extensive negotiations, the CETA is expected to significantly expand bilateral commerce. Officials have projected that the agreement could help double India-UK trade from its current estimated annual value of around 48 billion pounds by 2030. The pact is also expected to contribute positively to the economies of both countries, with estimates suggesting long-term gains of nearly five billion pounds annually for each economy. The agreement marks a significant step in strengthening India-UK relations and is expected to encourage greater collaboration across sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, services, technology and investment.

India-UK Free Trade Agreement Comes into Force, Marking New Era in Bilateral Trade



New Delhi, July 19: India and the United Kingdom on Wednesday officially brought into force the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), marking a significant step in strengthening bilateral trade and economic cooperation. The agreement is expected to enhance market access, reduce trade barriers and

create new opportunities for businesses, professionals and investors in both countries.

The implementation of the landmark free trade agreement will provide duty-free access for a wide range of Indian products in the UK market, offering a major boost to exports across several sectors. The pact is also expected to benefit Indian farmers,

entrepreneurs and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by improving their competitiveness and expanding their reach in one of India’s key international markets. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal announced that the Agreement on Social Security also came into effect from July 15 alongside the trade pact. In a post on social media platform X, Goyal said the two agreements would deepen economic ties between India and the UK and create greater opportunities for people and businesses. According to the minister, the CETA will strengthen cooperation in sectors such as technology, innovation and professional services while facilitating increased mobility for skilled Indian professionals seeking

temporary employment opportunities in the UK. The accompanying social security agreement is expected to provide significant relief to Indian professionals working in the United Kingdom by addressing issues related to social security contributions. The arrangement is also expected to improve the competitiveness of Indian companies operating internationally by reducing the financial burden associated with dual social security payments. Officials believe the implementation of the agreements will further reinforce the strategic partnership between India and the UK, encouraging higher levels of trade, investment and business collaboration. The pact is expected to benefit several export-oriented

industries, including textiles, leather, engineering goods, food products and other manufacturing sectors. The India-UK CETA is regarded as one of India’s most significant bilateral trade agreements in recent years and is expected to accelerate economic engagement between the two countries. Besides expanding trade in goods and services, the agreement also aims to promote investment, encourage innovation and strengthen long-term cooperation across multiple sectors. With the agreement now operational, businesses in both countries are expected to begin taking advantage of reduced tariffs, improved market access and simplified trade procedures, further enhancing the India-UK economic partnership.

Anurag Kumar, a former head of a spy agency, has been appointed as Delhi’s new police commissioner



New Delhi, July 19: The government announced on Friday that Anurag Kumar, a former special director of the Intelligence Bureau, has been appointed as the new commissioner of Delhi Police. Satish Golcha, an IPS officer from the 1992 batch, took over as chief of police for Delhi in August of last year. Kumar, an IPS officer from the 1994 batch, took his position.On Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s cabinet’s Appointments Committee returned Kumar from the Bureau to his parent cadre, AGMUT. Anurag Kumar, IPS (AG-

MUT:1994), is now appointed as Commissioner of Police, Delhi with effect from the date of assumption of charge and till further orders, with approval from the Competent Authority, according to an official order. Golcha, who served till April 2027, is now required to report to the lieutenant governor of Delhi.With almost 32 years of expertise in both administration and law enforcement, Anurag Kumar has worked as a special director in the nation’s top intelligence organization, the Intelligence Bureau.He oversaw crucial duties pertaining to intelligence analysis, national security, counterterrorism tactics, and delicate security issues during his lengthy service at the IB.Kumar, who has a bachelor’s degree in engineering, received the Police Medal for Meritorious Service in 2010 and has

President’s Police Medal for Distinguished Service in 2016. Officers who have made outstanding achievements to the police force are given these honors. As he assumes leadership of the Delhi Police, Anurag Kumar will now confront a number of significant obstacles. His top responsibilities will include upholding law and order in the nation’s capital, reducing organized crime, combating cybercrime, bolstering women’s safety, improving counterterrorism readiness, and guaranteeing VIP security.Given that the city is home to the Parliament, Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Prime Minister’s Office, the Supreme Court, foreign embassies, several sensitive government institutions, and historical landmarks, the Delhi Police is one of the most significant police forces in the nation.

How Neeru’s flawless start and coach’s bet inspired historic World Cup gold triumph

Mumbai: Neeru Dhande entered uncharted territory by producing performances of a lifetime on Friday and Saturday. At the iconic Olympic Shooting Range in Lonato del Garda (Italy), which has witnessed numerous shooters produce legendary performances over the years, the Haryana shooter went about her shooting like a seasoned pro to gun down the gold medal in the women’s trap event of the ongoing ISSF World Cup. Up against some of the marquee names of the sport, the 26-year-old held her own to ace the eight-woman final, returning with the top prize in the process. It’s her first gold medal at this level. More notably, it’s also India’s first in this particular category.

Never before had an Indian climbed atop the podium in this particular event in the history of World Cups. She was a picture of focus and determination throughout the 30-shot final, where she garnered an impressive return of 27 hits. Carole Commenier of France, 10 years her senior, kept her honest until the very end but in a tense battle, the former world champion erred twice to eventually finish second-best — two hits behind the Indian. This winning feeling might have been new for her and the country, but she had been showing signs of a promise over the last 12 months or so. It was a kind of performance Mansher Singh, India high performance manager (shotgun), had been anticipating for some time. She shot well in the beginning of the year in Almaty. We knew there was something coming. We were training to get her confidence level up and she had won a medal in the mixed event, which made a big impact. She is a very strong, especially in the finals,” he told The New Indian Express. It’s also a redemption of sorts



for Neeru, who had narrowly missed out on a podium finish at the same venue just last year. However, she had bounced back to grab the gold medal during the Asian Championships in Shymkent the same year. Mansher said her opening day performance had been a sore point that had been hurting her chances of wins in the past.

provided by the return of senior players like Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, and KL Rahul, stating that their experience brings a calming presence to the team. This collective familiarity and camaraderie contributed to a more relaxed atmosphere on the field, fostering improved unity and confidence in team dynamics. Looking ahead, India is set to face England again on Thursday in Cardiff for the second match of the series.

Axar Patel prioritises timing over power after T20I struggles with batting

New Delhi: Axar Patel, the all-rounder, played a pivotal role in India’s successful chase against England in the opening ODI, scoring a measured 57 runs off 52 balls and taking four wickets in 9.5 overs. This performance marked a shift in his approach following a challenging T20 series against the same team, where he only managed 19 runs and was criticized for trying to hit too hard. Axar emphasized the importance of timing and self-belief in his



batting technique, explaining that remaining focused was crucial for his improvement. In the match, India successfully chased down the target

of 259 with 28 balls to spare, thanks to Shubman Gill’s 80 runs and Washington Sundar’s 52. Axar shared insights about managing pressure in the death overs, where going for big shots is necessary, but he had to adapt his strategy to build partnerships instead. He noted the significance of reading the bounce on the Edgbaston wicket, which initially posed challenges for new batters, making it hard to play aggressively.Additionally, he commented on the advantage

provided by the return of senior players like Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, and KL Rahul, stating that their experience brings a calming presence to the team. This collective familiarity and camaraderie contributed to a more relaxed atmosphere on the field, fostering improved unity and confidence in team dynamics. Looking ahead, India is set to face England again on Thursday in Cardiff for the second match of the series.

Bengal government seeks ‘National Mela’ title for Gangasagar and appropriate financial help from the Centre

Kolkata, July 19: The state administration has urged the Centre to grant the Gangasagar Mela “National Mela” status and offer appropriate financial and institutional support to highlight the fair’s cultural significance.“The Mela attracts several million pilgrims, saints, and visitors from all over the country and abroad, and it represents a unique convergence of India’s spiritual traditions, living cultural heritage, and centuries-old pilgrimage practices,” the letter, addressed to the secretary of the Ministry of Culture,

reads. The letter was written on July 14 by the secretary, department of information and cultural affairs of the Bengal government.The erstwhile Trinamool Congress government had repeatedly sought “National Mela” status for the Gangasagar Mela and requested financial assistance from the Centre. The BJP, then in the Opposition, had accused the state government of commercialising the event.Held annually in January on Sagar Island in South 24-Parganas, at the confluence of the Hooghly and the Bay of Bengal, the



Gangasagar Mela draws several lakh pilgrims who take a holy dip on Makar Sankranti and offer prayers at the Kapil Muni Ashram.The issue had acquired political overtones in January 2025 when Puri

Shankaracharya Swami Nischalananda Saraswati, during his visit to the mela, said that the Centre would grant National Mela status only after the BJP came to power in Bengal.

World Cup speculation intensifies as Gambhir backs Rohit Sharma amid growing pressure

New Delhi: India head coach Gautam Gambhir has given senior opener Rohit Sharma complete freedom to play his natural game, with the team management keen to ensure that the veteran batter approaches cricket with a relaxed frame of mind, sources told India Today. Rohit endured a disappointing outing in the ODI series opener against England, managing just 11 runs off 21 balls before Sam Curran dismissed him. The India skipper got off the mark with a trademark pull shot for four against Jofra Archer but fell soon after, miscuing a delivery from Curran straight into the hands of Harry Brook. According to sources, Gambhir’s message to Rohit has been straightforward: the former India captain has already contributed immensely to Indian cricket and should continue to express himself without being weighed down by questions over his future. “Rohit has done a lot for this team and the country in white-ball cricket. The coach wants him to play the way he has throughout his career and express himself freely,” sources said. “The way Rohit Sharma has been batting under pressure, it seems clear that he needs a bit of time and mental space rather than constant scrutiny,” the source added. “Players of his calibre often perform at their best when they are free from external pressure and

allowed to trust their natural instincts. Instead of over-analysing every innings, it is important to back someone who has consistently delivered for India over the years. A relaxed and confident Rohit Sharma is capable of changing games on his own, and sometimes faith and patience are just as important as technical adjustments.” Gambhir’s directive is a strong rebuttal to speculation over Rohit Sharma’s ODI future, with reports suggesting his place in the side ahead of next year’s World Cup was under scrutiny. Rohit, who led India to Champions Trophy glory in 2025, was removed as ODI captain immediately after the triumph, with Shubman Gill taking over the reins. There was a school of thought that Rohit, who is now 39 and will be 41 by the time of the ODI World Cup, might no longer be at his best to cope with the demands of batting in South African conditions. However, the former captain, who only plays ODIs at the highest level, has worked hard on his fitness to stay in shape. Since playing under Gill, Rohit has scored 563 runs in 13 matches at an average of 46.91 with a hundred and four fifties. On the other hand, Virat Kohli, who is also one of the senior members of the team, has scored 896 runs in 17 matches at an average of 64 with four hundreds and five fifties.

India drawn with Malaysia, Syria, Iraq in AFC U17 Women’s Asian Cup qualifiers



New Delhi: The India U17 women’s team have been drawn with Malaysia, Syria and Iraq in Group E of the AFC U17 Women’s Asian Cup China 2027 Qualifiers, following the draw conducted at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on July 16. Following the Young Tigresses’ historic first-ever knockout stage appearance in the previous edition, India will aim to qualify for back-to-back AFC U17 Women’s Asian Cups for the first time. Malaysia will host Group E of the Qualifiers from October 5 to 11, 2026. India will begin their campaign against Iraq, followed by a match against Syria, and then Malaysia, according to a release. The group winners will qualify for the

AFC U17 Women’s Asian Cup China 2027, which will be held in Suzhou from March 31 to April 17, 2027. For the draw, 30 teams were seeded into four pots and an additional hosts’ pot based on a points system derived from their final rankings across the previous three editions of the tournament. India were seeded in Pot 1, with the final cast divided into eight groups -- six of four teams each, and two of three. The teams will compete in the Qualifiers in a single round-robin centralised league format from October 5 to 11, 2026. The eight group winners will advance to the 11th edition of the Finals, to be staged in China PR for the second consecutive year, where they will be

joined by the top four finishers from the 2026 campaign who have directly qualified: defending champions DPR Korea, runners-up Japan, and semi-finalists Australia and China PR. The semi-finalists of the AFC U17 Women’s Asian Cup China 2027 will qualify for the FIFA U17 Women’s World Cup Morocco 2027. Uzbekistan will host Group B in the capital city of Tashkent between August 25 and September 6, 2026, in a centralised single round-robin format. As per the new format of the AFC youth competitions announced earlier this year, a two-phase system featuring a promotion and relegation mechanism has been introduced in the AFC U20 Asian Cup Qualifiers, according to the All India Football Federation (AIFF). In the Qualification Phase, which India is part of, 32 teams are divided into eight groups of four, with the group winners and the seven best second-placed teams among all groups advancing to the 43rd edition of the AFC U20 Asian Cup. At the same time, the six lowest-ranked fourth-placed teams among all groups will be relegated to the Development Phase of the subsequent edition. For the Development Phase in the Qualifiers, 12 teams are divided into three groups of four, with the three group winners and the three second-placed teams of each group to be promoted to the Qualification Phase of the next edition.

What If Lionel Messi Had Played for Spain Rather Than Argentina?

New Delhi: In another version of football history, Lionel Messi walks into the World Cup final wearing red. The stadium is still packed. The noise is still deafening. Argentina are still on one side and Spain on the other. But the player at the centre of it all stands in a different line. He is not wrapped in sky blue and white. He wears the colours of Spain. Before the Ballon d’Ors, before Barcelona’s golden era, before the Copa America triumphs and World Cup glory, Messi was a teenage footballer whose international future remained uncertain. Spain had discovered him, developed him, and, for a brief period, believed it could convince him to become one of its own.

As Argentina prepares to meet Spain in the World Cup final, football finds itself confronting one of the sport’s most intriguing alternate histories. What if the greatest player of his generation had chosen the other side? One of the most revealing details from that period comes from Gines Melendez, the influential Spanish youth coach who was among the first officials tasked with assessing Messi’s potential. Recalling the first tapes he watched of the teenager, Melendez admitted he barely knew who the youngster was. “In fact, I thought he was called Leonardo because everyone called him Leo,” he told ESPN, as he recalled the battle for Messi’s international allegiance. The remark has since become one of the most memorable anecdotes from football’s most famous recruitment battle. At the time, however, it reflected how early Spain’s interest in Messi really was. Officials were still trying to understand who this gifted teenager in Barcelona’s academy system might become. By then, Messi was already living in Spain. At 13, he had left Rosario and moved to Barcelona after the Catalan club agreed to fund treatment for his growth hormone deficiency. His football education took place almost entirely in Spain. He attended school there, trained within La Masia, and rose through the ranks alongside players who would later become members of Spain’s national team. Under FIFA regulations, representing Spain was a genuine possibility. Spanish football authorities quickly recognised what was at stake. The coaches and federation officials followed Messi’s development closely and explored avenues that could eventually bring him into Spain’s youth setup. Years later, Vi-



cente del Bosque, the former Spain manager who led the country to its only World Cup title in 2010, would openly acknowledge the effort. “The federation made every effort to get Messi to play for Spain,” Del Bosque said in comments later reported by AS and The Independent. In another interview, he admitted: “We tried everything.” The pursuit was understandable. Spain’s golden generation would go on to win Euro 2008, the 2010 World Cup and Euro 2012. Yet much of that success arrived after the period when Messi’s international future remained unresolved. At the time, officials were looking at a teenager who was already generating extraordinary excitement within Barcelona’s academy. Adding Messi to a side that would later feature Xavi Hernandez, Andres Iniesta, David Villa, Sergio Busquets and others remains one of football’s most tantalising hypotheticals. Imagine the dominant possession-based football of that Spanish era combined with a player who would eventually become Barcelona’s all-time leading scorer and an eight-time Ballon d’Or winner. Perhaps no international team has ever come closer to adding a player of Messi’s calibre at precisely the moment its own golden generation was emerging. But while Spain explored its options, Argentina grew increasingly concerned. Argentina’s football authorities understood the risk. Reports about Messi’s development were filtering back from Spain, yet many within the Argentine setup had never seen him play in person. Some relied on recordings, recommendations and scouting reports from contacts in Europe. The concern was straightforward: if Argentina moved too slowly, Spain could move first. Jose Pekerman, the architect of Argentina’s celebrated youth system and later the country’s national team coach, was among the first senior figures within Argentine.

India’s Hansika Lamba bags silver medal at Budapest Ranking Series 2026 wrestling tournament event

Budapest: India’s Hansika Lamba clinched the silver medal in the women’s 55kg event at the Polyak Imre, Varga Janos & Kozma Istvan Memorial 2026 wrestling tournament, also known as the Budapest Ranking Series, in Hungary on Thursday. Hansika began her campaign with an 8-4 victory over Turkiye’s Tuba Demir in the quarter-finals before overcoming Germany’s Anastasia Blayvas 10-7 in the semi-finals after staging a comeback. The Indian wrestler has enjoyed an impressive season, having also secured bronze medals at the Asian Championships and the Ulaanbaatar Open in her previous two international outings. In the women’s 50kg category, India’s Priyanshi Prajapat missed out on a bronze medal after suffering a 4-2 defeat to Ecuador’s Jacqueline Mollocana, a former Pan-American champion, in the medal bout after advancing through repechage, according to Olympics.com. Priyanshi had started her cam-

paign by pinning Pan-American champion Katie Gomez before losing to Paris 2024 Olympic bronze medallist Feng Ziqi of China in the quarter-finals. She returned to medal contention through repechage and defeated Canada’s Katie Dutchak before falling in the bronze-medal match. It was Priyanshi’s second Ranking Series medal opportunity this year after winning silver at the Muhamet Malo tournament in February. Dipanshi, who also competed in the women’s 50kg category, exited in the pre-quarterfinals. In the men’s 125kg category, Asian Games-bound wrestler Rajat Ruhel secured a bronze medal after his opponent, Mason Parris of the USA, gave the Indian a walkover due to injury. In the men’s 125kg category, Asian Games-bound wrestler Rajat Ruhel secured a bronze medal after his opponent, Mason Parris of the USA, gave the Indian a walkover due to injury. Rajat had earlier lost to Poland’s Kamil Kosciolk in the quarter-finals



before defeating the Republic of Korea’s Gwanuk Kim 8-4 in the repechage round to qualify for the bronze-medal bout.

According to Olympics.com, Dinesh Dhankhar, India’s other wrestler in the men’s 125kg division, bowed out in the quarter-finals. Punit Kumar (92kg) and Olympian

Deepak Punia (97kg) were eliminated after losing their opening bouts in their respective weight categories. India’s medal tally at the Budapest Ranking Series now stands at five. Earlier, Olympic medallist Aman Sehrawat won gold in the men’s 57kg category, while Deepak (61kg) and Vishal Kaliramana (65kg)

claimed bronze medals. World Championships bronze medallist Antim Panghal will compete in the women’s 53kg category on Saturday. The Polyak Imre, Varga Janos & Kozma Istvan Memorial 2026 is the fourth and final United World Wrestling (UWW) Ranking Series event of the season.

Duckett backs young England squad to rise against India in crucial series

Chennai: England’s top-order may have encountered a sudden collapse after a solid start in the first ODI against India, but their template of aggressive batting might not change going forward. For a team that assembled days before the ODIs and had one day of training, England got off to a good start against Jasprit Bumrah and Co before going from 61/0 to 80/5 in a mini collapse. Though they went on to lose the match, expect Harry Brook and his men to stick to their approach at the top, led by



opener Ben Duckett. The left-hander, who scored a breezy 43 off 45 balls on Tuesday, had hoped for a smooth transition after the New Zealand Tests. And that is exactly what happened despite the result.

Calling it a “relatively new side”, Duckett felt winning against India could be a massive confidence boost for a team that does not play as many ODIs. “I think obviously it’s still a relatively new side. We don’t play a load of one-day cricket. But I think playing against India is always one of the, alongside Australia, biggest series we can play. We have already spoken about the incredible names that India has on their side. We, as a youngish team, could win this series, which will be massive confidence for us

moving forward. It’s a world-class side, one of the best in the world. We’ll certainly be looking at it to try and win the series and hopefully take that confidence moving forward,” Duckett had said in a select-media interaction facilitated by Sony Sports Network before the first ODI. The left-hander backed skipper Brook to take the team forward. “Brook just leads by example in the way that he plays,” he said, before adding, “He wants us to play an aggressive, kind of fearless brand of cricket and he goes out there and

does that every time. We are very fortunate to be playing under him. He’s a great captain. He’s always looking to take wickets in the field and trying to have funky fields and always trying to get one over the batsman. Look, as a batter, I mean, there’s not many better all-format players in the world right now than him. He’s pretty frightening on his day and I think he showed that in the T20 series that when he gets going he can hit the ball anywhere he wants. We’re very lucky to have him by our side,” Duckett said.

Patrick Vieira blames France stars after Spain defeat in World Cup semifinal

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday sought a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss concerns surrounding E20 petrol, urging the Centre to provide consumers with the option to choose between pure petrol and ethanol-blended fuel at petrol stations. In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, Kejriwal said he wanted to discuss the technical aspects associated with E20 petrol and share feedback received from citizens regarding its usage. He said the government should ensure that consumers have the freedom to select the type of fuel they wish to purchase. “If someone wants pure petrol, they should get that option, and those who want E20 should also have that choice,” Kejriwal said while highlighting the need for greater consumer flexibility at fuel outlets. The AAP chief also raised concerns over the pricing of E20 petrol, stating



that ethanol-blended fuel reportedly provides lower mileage compared to conventional petrol. He suggested that the price of E20 petrol should be reduced to account for the difference in efficiency and mileage experienced by some vehicle owners.

Kejriwal said his decision to approach the Prime Minister followed interactions with citizens who had expressed concerns about the impact of E20 petrol on vehicle performance and fuel economy. He added that public feedback would be shared with the Centre during the proposed meeting. The former Delhi Chief Minister also announced that the AAP has launched an online petition to collect responses from people across the country about their experiences with E20 petrol. The petition seeks feedback, particularly related to mileage, vehicle performance and other concerns raised by consumers. Kejriwal appealed

to citizens to participate in the campaign and share their views, saying that the collected responses would be presented before Prime Minister Modi if the meeting takes place. He also urged AAP workers and supporters to visit petrol pumps and automobile service centres to interact with consumers, understand their concerns and document their experiences.

The party asked volunteers to share videos and feedback on social media platforms as part of its outreach campaign. Kejriwal expressed hope that the Prime Minister would grant him an appointment soon and said the issue required discussion in the interest of consumers. The demand comes amid an ongoing debate over the use of ethanol-blended fuels as India moves towards reducing dependence on imported crude oil and promoting alternative energy sources.