

DTCP seeks stronger support for effective enforcement

Dimapur, Aug 07: The District Level Coordination Committee (DLCC) of the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) held its review meeting on Thursday at the Additional Deputy Commissioner's office chamber, Dimapur, under the chairmanship of ADC, Dr. Diana Patton. The meeting was attended by representatives from government departments, educational institutions, law enforcement agencies and civil society organisations. According to

a DIPR report, welcoming newly inducted members, Dr. Patton underscored the vital role of women and civil society organisations in strengthening tobacco control efforts. She noted that women play a significant role in addressing social issues at the grass-roots level and stressed that Nagaland, being a community-based society, requires active participation from civil society organisations to make tobacco control initiatives successful. She urged organisations to incorporate



awareness programmes on the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, not only in schools

but also in communities and villages. While enforcement squads have been constituted for effective implementation

of tobacco control laws, she emphasised that their success depends on community cooperation.

District Nodal Officer NTCP, Dr. Esther Chophy, called for stronger enforcement and greater support from the district administration to effectively implement tobacco control measures. Presenting the status of tobacco control in Dimapur, she highlighted that sustained awareness campaigns, enforcement drives and community participation have contributed to a

steady decline in tobacco use. Referring to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS), she noted that overall tobacco use in Nagaland decreased from 56.8% in 2009-10 to 43.3% in 2016-17, with smoking declining from 31.5% to 13.2% and smokeless tobacco use from 45.3% to 39.0%.

Dr. Chophy outlined key provisions of the COTPA Act, including the ban on smoking in public places, prohibition of the sale of tobacco products to or by minors and restrictions on sales within

100 yards of educational institutions. She urged schools, parents and communities not to send children to purchase tobacco products and stressed the need for regular enforcement drives involving police and district administration. Expressing concern over limited resources, she revealed that the programme receives only Rs. 10,000 for three months, which is inadequate for regular inspections and enforcement activities. She appealed for additional financial and logistical support

while thanking stakeholders for their cooperation in creating a tobacco-free environment. Highlighting progress under the Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions initiative, Dr. Chophy informed that 151 institutions in Dimapur district — comprising 138 schools and 13 colleges — have been declared tobacco-free. Additionally, four villages have also been declared tobacco-free, reflecting growing participation from both educational institutions and communities.

6th Millet Festival celebrated in Shamator

Kohima, Aug 07: The 6th Millet Festival was celebrated at the public ground in Shamator Town on Thursday under the theme "Grow Millets, Grow Wellness", bringing together farmers, community leaders, government officials and development organisations to promote millet cultivation, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture. The event was jointly organised by Millet Sisters, SEWA Shamator District, North East Network (NEN) and the Millet Network of India (MINI), in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Social Welfare, Shamator. The festival was inaugurated by president of



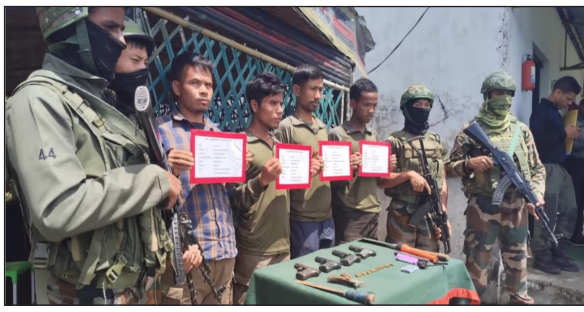
the NPF Central Farmers' Wing and managing director of Okusa Toyota Pvt. Ltd., Y. Vikheho Swu, who attended as the special guest. Touring the exhibition stalls and farmers' market showcasing locally grown millet products, traditional farm produce and indigenous crafts,

Swu commended the organisers for promoting indigenous crops. In his address, he stressed the need to uphold unity, brotherhood and truth among Naga tribes, while highlighting the nutritional and sustainable value of millets in the face of global health challenges.

Four ULFA(I) Militants Surrender In Longding, Weapons Seized

Itanagar, Aug 07: In a significant development, four cadres of the banned United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) [ULFA(I)] surrendered before security forces in Longding district today. The surrender marks another step in ongoing efforts to restore peace and stability in the region.

Officials confirmed that the militants laid down arms and expressed willingness to join the mainstream. A cache of weapons and ammunition was seized during the surrender, including assault rifles and explosives. Authorities stated that the



recovery of arms will help curb insurgent activities and reduce threats to public safety.

The district administration and security agencies welcomed the move, noting that the surrender reflects the impact of sustained counter-in-

surgency operations and rehabilitation initiatives. The cadres will be provided counseling and assistance under government schemes aimed at reintegration and livelihood support. Security officials emphasized that the surrender demonstrates

growing disillusionment among insurgents and renewed confidence in democratic processes. They reiterated the government's commitment to ensuring peace in Arunachal Pradesh and neighboring states, while urging remaining militants to abandon violence and embrace dialogue. The development is expected to strengthen ongoing peace efforts in the Northeast, where authorities continue to prioritize reconciliation, rehabilitation, and socio-economic development as part of a long-term strategy to end insurgency.

Roll observer directs voter inclusion



Itanagar, Aug 07: During a Summary Revision (SIR) review meeting in Namsai, the Roll Observer directed election officials to ensure that no eligible voter is excluded from the electoral rolls. Stressing the importance of inclusivity and accuracy, the Observer reiterated that the credibility of the democratic process depends on comprehensive voter registration.

Officials were instructed to intensify awareness campaigns, streamline verification processes, and address grievances promptly. The Observer emphasized that special attention must be given to marginalized groups, first-time voters, and residents in remote areas to guarantee their participation in upcoming elections.

The directive comes as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen electoral transparency and uphold the principle of universal adult suffrage. The Observer noted that meticulous roll management is essential to prevent disenfranchisement and to build public confidence in the electoral system.

District authorities assured that measures are being taken to enhance coordination between field officers, booth-level agents, and local communities. Training sessions and monitoring mechanisms will be reinforced to ensure compliance with the directive. The review concluded with a call for collective responsibility, urging officials to treat voter inclusion as a cornerstone of democracy.

Nagaland MP urges Centre to expedite Naga political agreements

New Delhi, Aug 07: Nagaland Member of Parliament Supongmeren Jamir has urged the Central Government to accelerate the implementation of the long-pending Naga political agreements, stressing that timely action is essential to uphold commitments made to the people of Nagaland. Speaking in Parliament, Jamir highlighted that the agreements represent years of dialogue and negotiation between Naga groups and the Government of India. He emphasized that delays in implementation risk eroding public trust and could undermine the peace process that has been painstakingly built over decades. Jamir noted that the Naga political agreements are not merely administrative measures but carry deep so-



cial and cultural significance. They are seen as a framework for lasting peace, reconciliation, and development in the region. He urged the Centre to demonstrate political will and prioritize the agreements to ensure stability and progress for Nagaland and the wider Northeast. The MP also underscored the importance of transparency and inclusivi-

ty in the implementation process, calling for regular updates and consultations with stakeholders. He reiterated that the people of Nagaland expect the Centre to honor its commitments and deliver on promises that have shaped the political discourse of the state. Jamir's appeal comes at a time when regional leaders and civil society groups

have been voicing concerns over the pace of progress. His intervention is expected to add momentum to ongoing discussions and reinforce the urgency of translating agreements into concrete action. Jamir's appeal comes at a time when regional leaders and civil society groups have been voicing concerns over the pace of progress. His intervention is expected to add momentum to ongoing discussions and reinforce the urgency of translating agreements into concrete action. In addition, Jamir called upon the Centre to integrate economic development initiatives alongside the political framework, noting that peace must be accompanied by tangible improvements in infrastructure, education, and employment opportunities.

Papum Pare DC visits schools, reviews education and projects

Itanagar, Aug 07: Deputy Commissioner Mamu Hage visited schools in Totpu, Seema, and Parang to review the state of education and interact with teachers, students, and local communities. The visit was part of a broader initiative to strengthen educational infrastructure and ensure quality learning outcomes across the district.

During the inspection, the DC assessed classroom facilities, teaching resources, and student participation, while also discussing challenges faced by schools in remote areas. She emphasized the importance of improving access to education and reaffirmed the administration's commitment to supporting teachers and students with necessary resources.



In addition to education, the DC held discussions on key developmental projects, including road connectivity, power supply, and hydroelectric initiatives. Officials and community representatives highlighted the need for timely completion of these projects to boost local development and improve living standards. The DC assured that the administration will prioritize both educational reforms and infrastructure develop-

ment, noting that progress in these sectors is vital for the district's overall growth. She also encouraged community participation in monitoring projects to ensure transparency and accountability. The visit reflects the district administration's integrated approach to governance, combining educational upliftment with infrastructure expansion to create sustainable opportunities for the people of Papum Pare.

Arunachal CM inaugurates Handloom Day celebrations in Itanagar

Itanagar, Aug 07: Chief Minister Pema Khandu today inaugurated the three-day National Handloom Day celebrations in Itanagar, marking a significant occasion to honor the rich tradition of handloom weaving and the artisans who sustain it. The event, organized by the state government in collaboration with handloom cooperatives and cultural bodies, aims to showcase the diversity of Arunachal's weaving heritage while promoting sustainable livelihoods for artisans. Exhibitions, workshops, and cultural performances are scheduled over the three days, highlighting traditional designs, indigenous techniques, and innovations in handloom production. Speaking at the inauguration, the Chief Minister emphasized the importance of preserving indigenous weaving practices and sup-



porting artisans through policy initiatives, training programs, and market linkages. He noted that handloom is not only a cultural identity but also a vital contributor to rural economies. The celebrations also include interactive sessions with young entrepreneurs, demonstrations of eco-friendly weaving methods, and stalls featuring products from across the Northeast. Officials stated that the event is expected to strengthen awareness about handloom as a

sustainable industry and encourage youth participation in preserving traditional crafts. The government reaffirmed its commitment to empowering artisans by expanding access to financial support, introducing modern technology where appropriate, and creating platforms for national and international exposure. The celebrations in Itanagar are part of a broader effort to integrate handloom into the state's development agenda while honoring the legacy of craftsmanship.

NPF Youth Wing urges public to avail free govt health services

Dimapur, Aug 07: The Naga People's Front (NPF) Youth Wing, Chümoukedima Division, in collaboration with the office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Chümoukedima, organised a free medical camp-cum-Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme (CMHIS) awareness and registration drive. The initiative, part of a statewide campaign launched by the party's central youth wing from August 1 to 10, aimed to bring healthcare services closer to the people while creating awareness about government health schemes.

The camp provided free consultations, disease screening, counselling and CMHIS registration. During a press conference, health officials highlighted the importance of preventive health-



care, early diagnosis and health insurance coverage, urging citizens to make full use of government-provided services.

NPF Youth Wing president, Chümoukedima Division, Zuchumo Mozhui, expressed gratitude to the CMO's office and healthcare workers for

their support. He informed that similar camps were being conducted across Nagaland and announced that another free medical camp would be held at the Supermarket area in Dimapur on Saturday, offering consultations, screenings and on-the-spot CMHIS card generation.

District Programme Officer-CD 2, Dr. H. Mlato Shikhu, highlighted India's commitment to eliminating tuberculosis by 2030. He explained that free TB screening services, including digital chest X-ray, CB-NAAT testing and sputum AFB examination, were

available under the National TB Elimination Programme. Medicines were supplied free of cost, while nutritional support was being provided to economically weaker patients through food baskets supported by NGOs and volunteers. He also noted that free screening and treatment for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS were available at government facilities. District Programme Officer for Non-Communicable Diseases, Dr. Lhishelo Tshuah, expressed concern over the low turnout at the camp, with only 21 people screened despite comprehensive services being offered. He urged citizens, especially those above 30 years, to undergo regular screening for hypertension, diabetes and lifestyle-related illnesses, stressing that many NCDs develop silently.

Mizoram group condemns use of women’s attire for mockery, seeks respect for Mizo traditional dresses

Aizawl, Aug 07: An influential organisation of Mizoram on Thursday condemned the trend of using women’s attire on social media to ridicule or demean individuals, saying the practice is degrading to women and should stop immediately. The condemnation by the state’s apex women’s group came days after the youth wing of the opposition Congress displayed a poster of Chief Minister Lalduhoma wearing a traditional skirt (Pawnfen), implying he does not have manly character, to protest his remarks that allegedly downplayed the significance of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) and the Mizoram peace accord. During the Youth Congress’s protest on August 4, a poster depicting Lalduhoma wearing the female garment was displayed. Addressing a press conference here, leaders



of Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) said that regardless of whether it occurs in politics or any other sphere, criticism or satire should not involve the use of women’s attire as a tool for humiliation. They asserted that using women’s clothing as a symbol of mockery

perpetuates discrimination against women and is unacceptable, irrespective of the context. The organisation also called for greater respect for Mizo cultural heritage by ensuring the proper use of traditional textiles, particularly Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged Mizo handwoven cloths. They claimed that government-prescribed guidelines governing the use of certain Mizo traditional cloths, including ‘Puanchei’ (traditional handwoven wrap-around skirt), ‘Tawhlhlohpuan’ (a type of textile) and ‘Pawndum’ (handwoven fabric), are widely flouted despite their cultural significance. MHIP specifically objected to the continued use of Puanchei as coffin coverings, tablecloths and wall decorations, describing such practices as contrary to of-

ficial guidelines. It urged the public and organisers of events to refrain from using the traditional textile for decorative purposes and to preserve its cultural value. The organisation also condemned the recent death of a 15-year-old girl at Mualthuma North village in south Mizoram’s Lunglei district, who was suspected to have been killed. It called for the immediate arrest of anyone found responsible for her death and demanded that the accused be dealt with firmly under the law. Reaffirming its commitment to protecting women’s rights, MHIP leaders said the organisation would continue to take a strong stand against violence, abuse and crimes committed against women and would not remain silent in the face of such incidents.

Thirty-Eight New Security Guards Have Graduated in Jowai

Shillong, Aug 07: Thirty-eight youths finished a 45-day security guard course at the MPSS Security Agency in Thadmathlong Phramon on Thursday. This 14th batch included 14 women. The agency holds recognition from the Meghalaya Home Police Department.



Mawkynrew MLA Banteidor Lyngdoh served as the chief guest for the passing-out parade. He praised the agency for opening doors in a tough job market. Lyngdoh plans to meet with managers at local cement factories to push for the hiring of these graduates. He said, “As long as qualified candi-

dates are available within the state, they should be given the first opportunity for employment.” The MLA emphasized that trained security staff are vital for hospitals, industrial plants, and commercial offices. He told the recruits to maintain discipline and grit on the job. Managing Direc-

tor Pyndaplang Muksor led the new guards in their pledge. The event also featured guest of honour Albinus Lamurong and Rev. RI Laloo, along with the families of the trainees. Speakers at the ceremony pushed the agency to keep improving its training standards for future recruits.

Meghalaya Intensifies Anti-Tobacco Initiative with Unprecedented Youth Involvement

Shillong, Aug 07: Meghalaya officials are pushing a state-wide crack-down on tobacco use. The campaign, branded as Tobacco: Business of Death, marks the state’s effort to observe World No Tobacco Day 2026. A follow-up event takes place today at 10 am in Shillong, featuring Health Minister Wailadmiki Shylla as the chief guest. The initiative hit massive numbers. Over six lakh students across 9,312 schools and 55 colleges joined the Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions program. This effort netted 54 lakh community signatures. South West Garo Hills stood out as a top performer. In that district alone, 625 schools held rallies with 19,916 students participating, while locals contributed 55,448 signatures. Deputy Commissioner Anendya Raajshre credited the success to teamwork between the Medical Cell,



the District School Education Office, and block-level staff. She said, “Such initiatives are vital for safeguarding children and the youth from the hazards of tobacco.” State Nodal Officer Nabaneeta D. Mawrie backed this urgency, noting that tobacco illnesses kill nearly 8,000 people in Meghalaya every year. Today’s event in the

capital includes quiz awards, cultural shows, and a prize ceremony. It serves as a capstone for the state project, which also recognized schools with awards at the block, district, and state levels. Samagra Shiksha Project Director Richa Kulkarni confirmed the scale shows a collective resolve to protect the next generation.

Laitumkhrah Hawkers Protest Relocation Dispute

Shillong, Aug 07: Laitumkhrah hawkers camped outside the Municipal Office on Wednesday for the third straight day. They refuse to budge. The group gathered to fight back against what they call a unilateral change in decisions regarding their relocation plans. These vendors want a stretch, and the Health Complex. The protesters stated they were willing to relocate if officials listened to their feedback.

Government seeks CBI explanation over alleged temple construction on leased Mawdiangdiang campus

Shillong, Aug 07: The Meghalaya government has asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to explain the alleged construction of a temple within its Mawdiangdiang campus after complaints claimed the structure was being built without the required approval on government-leased land. The New Shillong Township Development Agency (NSTDA) has written to the Deputy Inspector General and Head of Branch of the CBI’s Anti-Corruption Branch in Shillong, seeking clarification over the reported construction. According to the NSTDA, the land was leased to the CBI under an agreement signed on November 14, 2018, exclusively for the develop-



ment of an office-cum-residential complex. The agency reminded the CBI that the lease agreement prohibits the construction or alteration of any structure on the leased

property without obtaining prior approval. Citing Clause 10 of the agreement, the NSTDA stressed that any such work must receive permission from the agency before it is undertaken. In its communica-

tion, the agency urged the CBI to adhere to the terms and conditions of the lease and take appropriate action if necessary. The letter, signed by NSTDA Member Secretary and Director of Urban Affairs P. K. Boro, was issued after the agency received representations alleging that the temple was being constructed without mandatory approval from the competent authority, officials said. The issue has also sparked political debate in the state. The opposition Voice of the People Party (VPP) has questioned whether the reported construction violates the lease agreement and has called for appropriate action if any breach of the conditions is established.

PHE Launches 850 Crore Tender Shillong Township Water Project

Shillong, Aug 07: The Public Health Engineering Department opened online bidding for the second phase of the New Shillong Township Water Supply Scheme. This project carries an estimated price tag of 850.58 crore. Contractors have 36 months to finish the work. The department expects the winner to handle the survey, design, procurement, supply, testing, and commissioning. They also mandated two years of maintenance for the winning firm. Officials structured this deal as an engineering, procurement, and construction contract. This represents a significant move after the state finished clearing 772 crore for the first phase of the water works. The department previously adjusted Phase-I costs from 538.44 crore to 772.96 crore. They blamed technical and envi-



ronmental design shifts for the price hike. Previous projects faced claims of offline bidding to a Hyderabad outfit called BAC Infratech Pvt. Ltd. The department shifted to an online process to handle this latest phase. Who will bag this Rs 850-crore project remains to be seen.

Himanta warns against coercive flood donation

Guwahati, Aug 07: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday warned against collecting flood relief donations by coercing individuals or business establishments and said the police had been directed to keep a close watch on such activities. He said the state government, along with the people of Assam, was capable of helping those affected by the floods, though voluntary contributions from anywhere were welcome. “There is no need to collect donations in the name of flood relief. People are going around on the streets with boxes, collecting donations,” Sarma told reporters on the sidelines of a programme here. He said collecting money from others and distributing it as relief under one’s own banner could not be considered genuine assistance. “If we can, we should contribute our own money. I have seen that scanners, etc. are being circulated to collect funds. That is not flood relief. I have asked the police to be vigilant so that shops, businesses and the general



public are not forced to pay donations, as the situation is under the control of the government,” he said. Sarma said the first week of the current flood wave had been challenging as many areas remained inaccessible, but the administration had now reached all affected areas and people were also able to approach government officials. He said voluntary contributions by individuals or groups pooling their own resources were welcome, but soliciting donations indiscriminately would not be appreciated by flood-affected people and could tarnish the state’s image. “I am hesitant to ask for funds

from Delhi, let alone London. I try to ensure that we can provide for ourselves and our people are helping those affected,” he said, avoiding a direct response when asked for his reaction of an Assamese actor-dancer performing live on London streets in a fund-raising endeavour. “We do not need to ask for help in London or America. But if someone comes forward on their own, we don’t have a problem. It should not be sought, but come voluntarily,” the chief minister added. He also urged people of the state to help the government in ensuring that those affected receive the due aid.

JP Nadda travels to Arunachal Pradesh, which has been affected by flooding

Itanagar, Aug 07: Union Minister JP Nadda on Thursday assured the Centre’s full support for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in flood-hit Arunachal Pradesh after visiting the worst-affected areas of Keyi Panyor district and reviewing the damage caused by recent flash floods and landslides. The Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, who toured Posa village and the adjoining NEEPCO colony, said the Centre, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stands firmly with the people of the state during the crisis, officials said. He said the Centre is closely monitoring the flood situation across the Northeast and is working in coordination with the state government to ensure timely delivery of relief materials, medical assistance and financial support to all affected families. The minister also said reconstruction of damaged infrastructure and rehabilitation of affected people would be taken up on priority after a detailed assessment of the losses. Nadda was accompanied by state Urban Affairs Minister Balo Raja, Yachuli MLA Toko Tatung, district officials of Keyi Panyor and panchayat representatives during the visit. The delegation inspected flood-ravaged residential areas, damaged public infrastructure and

civic utilities before interacting with affected families and local officials to assess their immediate needs, including healthcare and emergency assistance. Nadda also reviewed the ongoing relief operations, functioning of relief camps and the state’s plans for restoration of essential infrastructure and rebuilding of damaged houses and public assets. During the visit, Yachuli MLA Toko Tatung briefed Nadda on the July 24 cloudburst and flash floods that caused extensive damage to public infrastructure, private property and livelihoods in Keyi Panyor district. He thanked the Union minister for visiting the affected areas and said his firsthand assessment would help expedite relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Deputy Commissioner Ankita Mishra gave a detailed presentation on the relief and rehabilitation measures undertaken by the administration and highlighted the extensive damage to roads and bridges along National Highway-13, the state’s key arterial road connecting six districts. She stressed the need for its early restoration to ensure uninterrupted connectivity and essential services. NEEPCO Yazali head of project Munin Choudhary also briefed the

minister on the large-scale damage caused to the corporation’s residential colony and project infrastructure by the flash floods, besides outlining the challenges involved in restoring operations. The visit comes after widespread destruction caused by heavy monsoon rain and localised cloudbursts over the Possa River in Keyi Panyor district, which triggered flash floods and landslides. The disaster severely affected the Possa area, where floodwaters breached a retaining wall and swept away around 15 to 18 residential quarters in the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO) colony near Yazali. Later in the day, Nadda chaired a high-level review meeting in Itanagar with Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, state ministers, MLAs, and senior administrative officers to assess the situation following his visit to areas affected by the recent flash floods and cloudbursts in the state. During the meeting, the minister reviewed the ongoing relief, rehabilitation, and healthcare measures being undertaken in the affected districts. He directed departments concerned to further intensify relief operations, strengthen rehabilitation efforts, and ensure timely medical assis-

tance to meet the needs of people impacted by the disaster. Nadda reaffirmed the central government’s commitment to support the state during the recovery process. He stated that under the leadership of Modi, the Centre, in close coordination with the state government, will continue to provide swift relief, financial assistance, and all necessary support to the affected people until normalcy is restored. The ongoing spell of floods and landslides has so far claimed eight lives in the northeastern state, spreading across 28 districts and affecting an estimated 1,55,858 people. According to a report from the state disaster management department, as many as 235 roads, 40 bridges, 75 culverts, 373 water supply systems, 161 power lines, 823 electric poles, 66 irrigation projects, 122 government buildings, 41 schools, 12 hydropower projects, 26 retaining walls and 16 flood protection walls, among other public assets, have been damaged by floods and landslides in the state. The agriculture and horticulture sectors have also suffered significant losses, with crops over 1,528.626 hectares affected, including 780.716 hectares under horticulture and 747.91 hectares under agriculture, the report added.

In Balasore, Odisha, more than 70 people, including 30 children, become unwell following a communal feast

New Delhi, Aug 07: After attending a communal feast during a housewarming ceremony in Balasore, Odisha, more than 70 people—including 30 children—became unwell, according to officials on Friday. According to the news agency, the incident happened in Kharida village, where a local had planned the feast for Thursday. According to officials cited in the story, people who ate the food and water at the event started experiencing vomiting and diarrhea on Friday. Authorities believe tainted food or drinking water may have contributed to the sickness. To identify the precise cause, samples from the village have been gathered and sent for scientific analysis.



The Jaleswar hospital hospitalized about fifty patients with severe symptoms, while others received first aid treatment. All of the afflicted individuals complained of vomiting and diarrhea, according to hospital officials. According to an official, a medical team has been sent to Kharida village to keep an eye on the

situation and administer any necessary medical care. Two significant suspected food poisoning occurrences were recorded in various sections of the nation months prior to the most recent incidence. In April of this year, a pre-wedding community feast in Kamalpur Kazi village in Uttar Pradesh’s Amroha district caused over 100 individuals

to become ill. The feast was organised as part of a wedding function and was attended by guests from nearby Haivatpur Chaudharyan village as well as local residents. Within hours of eating the food, many attendees started complaining of continuous vomiting, diarrhoea and severe abdominal pain. The outbreak affected people across age groups, including children, women and elderly villagers. The incident reportedly caused panic as several people fell sick one after another. Over two dozen patients were admitted to nearby private hospitals and clinics for treatment, while many others received first aid. Another event in May was a funeral feast at

Nuadihi village under Hemgiri block in the Sundargarh district of Odisha, which resulted in four fatalities and 28 illnesses. Soon after eating food provided during the community ceremony, residents of Sundargarh villages and the nearby Jharsuguda district experienced vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach ache. According to health officials, one severely ill patient was transferred to VIMSAR, Burla, for advanced treatment, while six patients were referred to the district headquarters hospital in Sundargarh. Both Sundargarh and Jharsuguda districts reported the deaths. As part of the inquiry, food samples were gathered and sent for analysis in a lab.

A verbal spat between Vijay and Stalin over Mekedatu Dam

New Delhi, Aug 07: Chief Minister Joseph Vijay and Leader of the Opposition Udhayanidhi Stalin got into a furious argument in the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Friday over the Cauvery water problem. Udhayanidhi Stalin questioned the government’s position on the Cauvery water crisis and Karnataka’s plan to construct the Mekedatu dam, accusing the Vijay government of not doing enough to halt the project in the neighboring state. The Leader of the Opposition addressed the Chief Minister, “The government must explain in the Assembly what measures have been taken to prevent Karnataka from moving forward with the Mekedatu dam.” Chief Minister Vijay responded to the accusations by pointing out that he had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi opposing the project and that the Assembly had voted a resolution against the Mekedatu dam. The Chief Minister declared, “We will stop at nothing to protect the interests of Tamil Nadu farmers.” He then attempted to turn the tables on the DMK by pointing out that the Karnataka project was initially approved by their administration in 1969. Then, pointing to a unified front being presented by Karnataka parties, Udhayanidhi Stalin questioned the Vijay government’s opposition to an all-party meeting on the Mekedatu problem. Karnataka convened an all-party meeting emphasizing unity regarding the Mekedatu issue, which involves a long-standing dispute over a proposed dam. The Leader of Opposition criticized the Karnataka government’s refusal to join an all-party initiative supporting Tamil rights related to this concern. Udhayanidhi Stalin questioned the rationale behind a proposed visit by Karnataka’s Chief Minister, DK Shivakumar, to discuss the matter, stating that plans were leaked and subsequently denied. Shivakumar suggested delaying the visit due to rising tensions from the Cauvery water-sharing conflict, proposing a later tour of drought-affected areas.

Despite this, Vijay defended the need for dialogue with neighboring Karnataka, expressing his willingness to face potential humiliation for the benefit of Tamil Nadu’s interests. The Mekedatu dam aims to provide drinking water to Bengaluru and generate power.

1.46 lakh rupees were stolen from a Delhi man, Four People Arrested in a US Parcel Scam, One Nigerian

New Delhi, Aug 07: An interstate impersonation-based cyber fraud syndicate was busted by the Cyber Police Station of Delhi Police’s Southwest District, and four suspects—including a Nigerian national—were taken into custody for allegedly defrauding a man of Rs 1.46 lakh under the guise of a foreign package containing gold and US dollars, according to the police. Police claim that following coordinated searches in Delhi, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh, seven cell phones used in the crime have been found. On March 31, 2026, a complaint was received at PS Cyber, Southwest District, which led to the discovery of the case. According to police, the complainant said that strangers posed as Americans and approached him via phone calls and WhatsApp chats. They allegedly said that a package containing gold and

US dollars had been delivered to India under his name after building a personal relationship with him and winning his trust. According to police, the complainant was then persuaded to send money under a number of false pretenses, such as getting a Money Declaration Certificate, purchasing a plane ticket, paying for customs clearance, and releasing the purportedly recovered gold. He transferred Rs 1.46 lakh using various UPI IDs and bank accounts after believing the crooks’ claims. An e-FIR was registered at PS Cyber, South-West District under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, following which an investigation was initiated. Additional DCP (South-West) Kumar Abhishek said the arrests followed detailed technical analysis, examination of digital evidence and financial investigation.

He said four accused, including one Nigerian national, had been arrested from Delhi, Telangana and Visakhapatnam, while seven mobile phones had been recovered. After registering an FIR, investigations led to the arrest of four suspects involved in a cyber fraud syndicate, including a Nigerian national, Simeon Miracle Chinsono. The arrests occurred in Delhi, Telangana, and Visakhapatnam, with seven mobile phones recovered. The accused, including Deepak Kumar and Konda Sagar, supplied mule bank accounts to the syndicate for commissions, while Chinsono impersonated officials to manipulate victims into transferring money under false pretenses. The fraudulent funds were allegedly laundered through multiple bank accounts. Further proceedings are ongoing.

Motivated by a Web Series, a Delhi Techie Kills His Wife and Leaves Using Rs. 12,75,000

New Delhi, Aug 07: a spouse. a spouse. The narrative of HBO’s real crime series “The Staircase” revolved around a terrible death, followed by the murder weapon that disappeared forever, leaving justice hanging by a thread. However, it became yet another reality within an East Delhi home. A 62-year-old software consultant is accused of killing his wife over a long-standing property dispute, discarding the murder weapon, and attempting to deceive the detectives using a crime method he claimed to have learned from the series. The accused, Kamal Singh, and his wife, Komal Singh, were the only people in the house when the incident occurred on July 30. While their son had gone to the library, their daughter had gone to the office, and their domestic help had finished work and left. Around 12:45 pm, Komal was drying clothes on the balcony when her husband struck her on the head from behind with a sword. However, the blow was not strong enough to cause Komal to collapse. She immediately screamed and ran to the kitchen to hide. Then Kamal pulled her out into the living room by her hair and repeatedly stabbed her with scissors. The authorities said that although the victim’s screams were audible to nearby residents, no one took action. Even Kamal’s father begged his wife to go check, but she allegedly told him not to get involved. After killing his wife, Kamal packed the sword and his bloodstained clothes in a bag, took a fifteen-minute shower, and then rode off on his scooter. He discarded the bag on his way. In addition to the Rs 5,00,000 he had previously taken from his wife’s chamber, the accused then took out over Rs 7,00,000 from two separate bank accounts. He had about Rs 12,75,000 in total. During this time, the couple’s 26-year-old son, Gaurav Singh,

called his mother several times but received no response. When he reached home around 9:15 pm, he found his mother lying in a pool of blood. While one of the weapons used in the murder - the scissors - was found next to her body, the sword was missing. As Kamal was gone, the police studied CCTV footage of the neighborhood and continuously traced his location by technical surveillance and electronic proof. When Kamal first turned on his cell phone and started walking toward Gorakhpur, the police thought he had escaped to Nepal. However, while reaching Gorakhpur, he switched off his mobile phone and drove towards Mathura to deceive investigative agents. After three days of manhunt, the Delhi police nabbed Kamal near the Mathura Railway station. In addition to seizing the scooter, the police took all of his money. During interrogation, the accused, Kamal, disclosed critical information regarding the murder and his subsequent escape plan, indicating intentions to destroy the murder weapon, akin to a scenario depicted in the web series ‘The Staircase’, to diminish evidence against him. Officials reported that Kamal aimed to flee to Nepal. The investigation unveiled a tumultuous marriage between Kamal and Komal, plagued by significant strain over the past year, exacerbated by Kamal’s growing closeness to another woman during a trip to Mumbai. Although they resided in the same house, they maintained separate electricity bills. Compounding their conflicts, Kamal expressed a desire to acquire property in Jagatpuri, intending for it to be registered under his father’s name, while Komal insisted on a share, which led to frequent disputes. This property disagreement is viewed as a primary catalyst for the violent crime, according to officials.

Ministry of Defense issues Vande Mataram lyrics and invitations for Independence Day



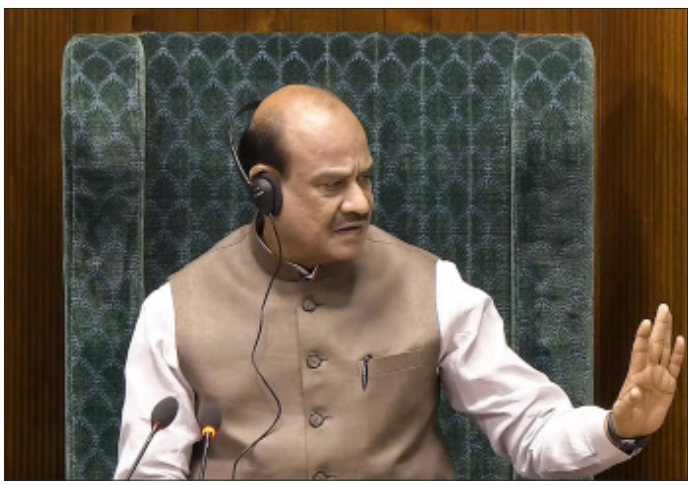
New Delhi, Aug 07: The lyrics of Vande Mataram, which will be played for the first time at the yearly celebrations during the hoisting of the national flag, are included in invitation cards sent out by the defense ministry for this year’s Independence Day ceremony at the Red Fort, authorities with knowledge of the situation said on Friday. According to the government, the cards contain the words to each of the national song’s six stanzas. At the 80th Independence Day celebrations, the song will be played prior to the national anthem. Invitation cards are given to top

ministers, military officers, bureaucrats, diplomats, students, and special visitors who have achieved success in a variety of disciplines. Last week, a bill to give the national song the same standing as the national anthem was approved by Parliament. Any impediment or insult to the national hymn is now illegal under the Prevention of Insults to National Honor (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which carries a maximum three-year prison sentence and a fine for violators. The Constitution, the national anthem, and the flag are currently protected by law. The decision was announced in the midst of Vande Mataram’s 150th anniversary festivities, months after the Center mandated that all six of the song’s stanzas be sung, in contrast to the long-standing custom of performing the song’s first two stanzas, which were designated as the national anthem in 1950. “People know the national anthem by heart, but few can sing the national song. The lyrics have been provided so that people can sing along,” said one of the officials cited above. The invitation cards also feature an image of Seva Teerth (housing the Prime Minister’s Office, the Na-

tional Security Council Secretariat and the Cabinet Secretariat), and a list of fundamental duties. The invitation cards last year carried the watermark of Jammu and Kashmir’s Chenab bridge, depicting the rise of ‘Naya Bharat.’ Vande Mataram was the subject of the 77th Republic Day celebrations, which commemorated the song’s 150th anniversary. The same concept served as the foundation for the state and ministry tableaux. The Indian Army organized band performances in eighteen places throughout the nation to commemorate the Vande Mataram milestone. Military bands played in Naihati, West Bengal, the birthplace of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, who wrote Vande Mataram in the 1870s. Three months after Indian forces struck military and terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the wake of the April 22 Pahalgam terror assault, which claimed 26 lives, the success of Operation Sindoor was celebrated at the Independence Day festivities last year.

Speaker of the Lok Sabha Om Birla chastises the opposition for delaying House business

New Delhi, Aug 07: Speaker of the Lok Sabha Om Birla urged Opposition members to let the House continue on Friday as demonstrations over the alleged theft of donations from Ram temples and the leak of NEET papers persisted in the House. Birla remarked that debate and discussion might promote democracy and asked members to adhere to parliamentary etiquette. However, the Lok Sabha was postponed until 12 p.m. due to the ongoing protests. “The world, not just India, recognizes the contributions of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gand-



hi,” Birla said in a speech to the lower house of Parliament. The

world looks to him for inspiration because of this. He should serve as an inspiration to you as well. Participate in conversations, dialogs, and voice your opinions here to strengthen and empower democracy in the nation. Question Hour is a crucial period. Birla invoked the contributions of Mahatma Gandhi and the views of BR Ambedkar, saying that members should express their views through discussions in the House. “Baba Saheb Ambedkar put out the notion that debate and discussion are the best ways to promote and empower democracy in the na-

tion. I always implore you, but your behavior is inconsistent with parliamentary etiquette. You ought to think about this. The purpose of the House is to facilitate conversation and dialog, particularly during Question Hour, when the honorable members can ask significant questions. Please allow Question Hour to continue. You don’t want the House to run. Your actions and mannerisms are inappropriate. Please take a seat and let the Question Hour to continue. He went on, “The House proceedings are adjourned until 12:00 PM today.” According to

the Revised List of Business, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Amendment) Bill, 2026 and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 will be considered and passed by the Lok Sabha. The bill to further amend the Rajya Sabha-passed Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006 will be introduced by Minister of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Jitan Ram Manjhi. The Kashmiri Pandits (Recourse, Restitution, Rehabilitation and Resettlement) Bill, 2025 will also be considered by the House.

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The false scientific consensus behind COVID origins

The global discourse surrounding the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic stands as one of the most profound institutional failures of the twenty-first century. For years, the public was fed a rigid, neatly packaged narrative: the virus was exclusively the result of a natural zoonotic spillover, leaping innocently from bats to an intermediate animal host and finally to humans at a wet market in Wuhan. Anyone who dared question this official orthodoxy, or suggested that a laboratory leak from the Wuhan Institute of Virology was a plausible hypothesis, was immediately sidelined, labeled a conspiracy theorist, and censored across mainstream and social media platforms.

Yet, as inconvenient facts continue to bubble to the surface, the carefully constructed facade of an airtight scientific consensus is cracking. Much like Hans Christian Andersen’s fable, the emperor truly has no clothes. The authoritative scientific gatekeepers, elite medical journals, and powerful bureaucratic institutions have been exposed not as neutral arbiters of truth, but as active participants in a sprawling, multi-layered cover-up. The chronology of this engineered consensus dates back to the very dawn of the pandemic. As early as February 2020, prestigious publications like The Lancet published letters signed by prominent scientists emphatically declaring that COVID-19 had a purely wildlife origin and that any lab-based scenario was a fringe conspiracy. Other esteemed journals, such as Nature Medicine, ran peer-reviewed articles arguing that the virus was not a laboratory construct. These declarations effectively slammed the door on rigorous, open scientific debate before it could even begin. In retrospect, the harm these actions inflicted on science journalism and public trust is deeply damaging. For decades, Western scientific institutions have lectured the developing world—particularly nations like India and China—about research ethics, academic transparency, and the gold standard of peer-reviewed publishing. Yet, when faced with a planetary health crisis, these very same gold-standard journals allowed themselves to be co-opted by institutional self-preservation.

As investigative reporting and subsequent congressional hearings have revealed,

the resistance to the lab-leak theory was driven less by objective evidence and more by institutional protectionism. It is now evident that Western agencies—most notably elements within the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH)—pioneered and heavily subsidized high-risk "gain-of-function" research on coronaviruses. Through complex bureaucratic workarounds, including routing taxpayer funds via intermediaries like the EcoHealth Alliance, American institutions actively collaborated with the Wuhan facility. When the pandemic broke out, the realization that Western taxpayer money and institutional collaboration might have inadvertently midwived the pathogen triggered panic among key bureaucrats. Admitting a potential lab leak meant admitting to years of risky, under-regulated virus manipulation. Consequently, a defensive reflex was triggered. The apparatus labeled the lab-leak hypothesis an "evil conspiracy," orchestrating a coordinated campaign to suppress dissenting virologists and epidemiologists. Proponents of the zoonotic theory spent years scouring wildlife populations, yet despite exhaustive efforts, they failed to find the elusive intermediate animal host that supposedly sparked the global catastrophe. The fallout from this episode goes far beyond academic embarrassment; it represents a catastrophic erosion of public trust. Science thrives on skepticism, open inquiry, and the constant challenging of assumptions. When science is co-opted by statecraft, institutional defensiveness, and corporate-style PR management, it ceases to be science and becomes dogma. Greek tragedies traditionally conclude with catharsis, where all hidden truths are brought to light and justice is served. But the twenty-first-century saga of COVID-19 origins offers no such clean closure. The institutional machinery responsible for the cover-up remains largely entrenched, and a full, unfiltered accounting of how research was conducted across borders is still obstructed. As hearings and independent investigations slowly drag historical mistakes into the daylight, the illusion has shattered. The scientific establishment can no longer hide behind appeals to "consensus" when that consensus was manufactured to protect institutional reputations.

Why public spaces need public participation

Parks, lakes, playgrounds, and community centres thrive when local residents take an active interest in them. Cleanliness drives, tree-planting initiatives, neighbourhood events, and volunteer groups often succeed because communities choose to participate rather than simply observe. Governments can create public spaces, but communities give them life.

Shared responsibility encourages greater care and helps preserve these spaces

for future generations. A public place becomes truly public when people feel a sense of ownership towards it. Ultimately, experts stress that a truly successful city is measured not just by its infrastructure, but by how well its people can shape their lived reality. Transforming public spaces through active public participation is no longer a luxury; it is a fundamental requirement for building resilient, inclusive, and democratic cities of the future.

CJP protests signal a turning point for Indian Muslims to voice as citizens

The cockroaches have crawled back to the crannies from which they emerged like a swarm. They left rejoicing after a protest that was a reel-fest and made the government acquiesce to their demands. But not everyone is happy. Those who dreamt of pulling off a Bangladesh and Nepal in India are despondent. They were delulu if they dreamt of flying back to power on the fragile wings of cockroaches. The ancien régime is gone for good. All the usual suspects—the dynastic opposition, along with their left-liberal loyalists, the left-anarchists and urban Naxals—who hoped for a revival of the pre-2014 era and openly asked for a return to the “Bure Din”, are disappointed even as they pretend to celebrate “our children’s” victory.

There is one group, however, that is covered in gloom at the withdrawal of the protests “without achieving the goal”. Long accustomed to revelling in sulk, they are doing what they do best. Across social media, they are displaying shock, hurt and consternation at the perfidious retreat just as the goal had come into sight. They didn’t participate in the protests not directly, not as a group, and not with their pet slogans that reverberate like war cries. While some did join in as individuals, they took care not to brandish their identity markers. You have guessed who I am talking about: the Muslim thought leaders, opinion makers, podcasters and social media warriors. Those who pontificate in Hinglish what ulema preach in Urdu. The wheelers and dealers of the Muslim vote, whose ideas are not a whit different from those of the Muslim League, even if their language is made up of Constitutional vocabulary. As a group, they remained at a distance from the protests. Possibly a sign of evolving strategic prudence. Or perhaps the organisers kept them at arm’s length. However, teetering on the brink of jumping in, they couldn’t help hovering at the periphery—managing logistics and supplying endless packets of biryani. It has been a rare anti-BJP movement that wasn’t about “communalism” or the marginalisation and political irrelevance of Muslims. If anything, it recognised, normalised and institutionalised all of this. Crucially, this was done with the tacit approval of Muslims themselves, who, in the interest of the “larger cause” of bringing Hindutva down, happily agreed to make themselves invisible and remain backstage.

A too-clever-by-half broker of votes remarked, “We have outsourced the fight.” Be that as it may, the moral of the story is that Muslims can’t be in fighting mode all the time. Though subconscious and unarticulated, a realisation has begun to dawn on Muslims that something has fundamentally shifted in the political tectonics of India. It seems that Muslims, as a separate political bloc, no longer command the same heft as they did during the Secular Raj of the pre-2014 era. Their ideological concerns find no resonance with a non-ideological Gen Z. This process has been underway for quite some time. Even the political parties that survive on the Muslim vote bank have read the electorate’s fatigue with Muslim-centric non-issues and are increasingly shy of approaching voters in the name of “secularism”. Muslims are less and less bracketed with SCs, STs and OBCs. Interestingly, in the discourse of secular parties, the word Muslim has largely been replaced with the euphemism “minority”.

Muslims themselves are, deep down, fed up with the stridency of the narratives that envelop their lives, from mosque and market to workplace and WhatsApp groups. They feel the need to break free, but for want of an alternative discourse, they are unable to. If only they had an intellectual class, or even a handful of so-so intellectuals, they wouldn’t remain so addicted to the gory narrative of victimhood and the psychosis it breeds. But, unfortunately, they don’t have even a few genuine intellectuals who could analyse their situation, and suggest the way forward. One often hears the plaint about Muslims being leaderless. I wish they were. They have had far too many political leaders. All they did was keep the community on the warpath. As for their thought leaders—the ulema in pulpits, the poets at mushairas, the academics at seminars, the journalists in newspapers and sundry other experts on YouTube channels—they have been even worse. Instead of calling the community’s attention to what ailed it, they took to justifying the wrongs of its history, politics and society. India’s Muslims need a new generation of thought leaders who help the reality sink in that their identity and destiny are Indian—not Arab, Persian or Turkish—and that they must embrace their Indianness beyond the demand for proportional representation in Parliament and the state Assemblies. It is for this reason

that the Cockroach agitation might become an inflection point for Muslims. Their distance from it—strategic or otherwise—could be the beginning of a much-needed climbdown from the hyper-politicisation that has reduced the community to a bundle of nerves—angry, volatile and inflammable. Depoliticisation of the Muslim mind is the prerequisite for de-communalisation. In this light, their quietude during the commotion was not passivity, but a pragmatic impulse that could serve as the framework for ending the politics of conflict so reminiscent of medieval India’s religious wars.

Political quietude is the ethic that befits a minority. We may call it The Minority Dharma. The first and foremost dharma of a minority is to be at peace with the majority. For, if a fight breaks out, the minority would lose all the rights and guarantees granted to it by the Constitution. The harsh reality that the nation is conceptualised, the state constituted, the Constitution promulgated and the government run by the majority would stare it in the face; the minority would lose the ground beneath its feet. The concept of ‘minority’ is a by-product of the nation-state. Muslims are a minority in the Indian nation. Each one of them is constitutionally equal to each member of the majority. But the very concept of majority and minority entails that there is no parity between the two as collectives. Any denial of this reality would be a denial of the idea of the nation and the nation-state. It’s hard for Muslims to accept minority status given the fact that they were rulers in the medieval period and, during British rule, became a nation unto themselves through the Two-Nation Theory. In independent India, they regularly invoke minority status when it serves their opportunistic agenda—as in the legal fight over the minority character of Aligarh Muslim University—but, overall, they behave as equals, antagonists and rivals to the majority. In his classic Awaze-Dost, Mukhtar Masood recounts a poignant post-Partition anecdote. Welcoming Sarojini Naidu, then Governor of Uttar Pradesh, to Aligarh Muslim University, a student leader remarked: “Ya to hum aapke bade dushman hain, ya chhote bhai. Beech ki koi aur raah nazar nahin aati” (Either we are your mortal enemies or your younger brothers. There is no middle ground.) The choice is theirs. However, they cannot have their cake and eat it too. It is a minority’s dharma to be friends with the

majority, just as it is the majority’s dharma to be generous to the minority. And one can be sure that India’s majority cannot be faulted on the score of generosity.

But the indignation with which Muslim leaders react to any suggestion of earning the goodwill of Hindus lays bare the mentality of the class that ruled India for centuries. They consider it beneath their dignity to earn the goodwill of their former subjects. They invoke Constitutional equality to offhandedly reject any suggestion of friendliness. One could only wish they remembered Fraternity from the Preamble. They might, if they had made the Constitution. It is also the dharma of a minority not to add fuel to the majority’s fire. India is a big country, and Hindus are a billion-plus people of infinite diversity, for whom dissent is the order of the day. A lot of churning goes on all the time. Inevitably, there are flare-ups too. Caste, gender, region and language can all become combustible. Eventually, every tumult settles, thanks to India’s civilisational genius for adjustment and accommodation. But when an issue burns, the minority should not meddle in the majority’s mess.

During the 1990s, in the aftermath of the implementation of the Mandal Commission’s recommendations, caste came to define the political landscape, and caste-based parties dominated the scene in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and elsewhere. Muslims sided with them, and the MY formula became the sacred electoral talisman that kept the Yadav parties in power in India’s most populous states. Muslims voted for them en bloc. They still do. Not because of their love for social justice, but because it is fun to see Hindu society divided and weakened. If Muslims were actually for social justice, they would first recognise caste inequality among themselves and worry more about Ashrafism than Brahminism. It’s not the minority’s dharma to indulge in divide and rule. If you cannot be the glue, do not be a wedge either. When Muslims used their collective vote-bank power to support one party against another, they were actually playing one section of society against another. It is a secret ballot, and nobody knows who voted for whom. If Muslims voted according to their individual conscience, there would be no problem. But the vote bank is a sinister device by which the minority divides the majority, skews the electoral process and perverts democracy.

Partisan politics must not exploit military prestige

In the United States of America, military service commands immense respect. Equally revered, however, is the principle that the Armed Forces must remain above partisan politics. This is why retired veterans are generally expected to separate the symbols of military service—such as the uniform, medals and insignia—from political campaigns, debates and party contests. The purpose is not to diminish their rights as citizens, but to preserve a more important democratic compact: that the authority of the armed forces belongs to the Constitution and the nation, not to any political faction or partisan ideology.

This distinction is so deeply embedded in American political culture that some of the country’s most celebrated military figures have warned against weakening it. Republicans such as John McCain and James Mattis have expressed concern about attempts to blur the boundary between military prestige and partisan politics, particularly when certain political leaders (such as incumbent President Donald Trump) seek to portray senior officers as personal extensions of their own movements. The concern is not about the political opinions of individuals who have served in uniform; it is about preventing the institution itself from appearing to take sides. India, on the other hand, presents a more complicated picture. The country’s retired military officers enjoy the same democratic freedoms as all other citizens, yet the conventions separating military symbolism from political advocacy are less firmly established. Increasingly, retired officers have appeared in political settings and toxic television debates wearing regimental

attire, medals or other visible markers of military identity. Such appearances have triggered a debate over whether the stature earned by military service is being transferred, intentionally or otherwise, into partisan political contests.

The attraction for political actors is fairly obvious. At a time when confidence in many public institutions has been weakened, the armed forces remain among the few national institutions that command broad public trust. A former officer speaking with the authority and language of the regiment carries the kind of credibility that politicians and other commentators often struggle to match. Military symbolism therefore becomes a powerful political asset—one that can lend emotional force and moral weight to arguments far removed from matters related to defence and national security. But this is a risky exchange. The short-term benefits of borrowing military prestige may come at the cost of a longer-term institutional erosion. The strength of a professional military in a democracy lies not only in its battlefield capability but also in its perceived impartiality. Once citizens begin to associate military identity with a particular political position or political party, the institution risks losing the broad-based confidence on which its legitimacy depends. This does not mean, of course, that veterans should withdraw from public life. On the contrary, their experience in leadership, administration, national security and public service can enrich the democratic debate. They have every right to join political parties, contest elections, campaign for causes and express their personal views. The crucial distinction is that they do so as individuals



al citizens, not as representatives—real or implied—of the armed forces on active service.

The concern arises when personal political expression is accompanied by the visual language of the institution itself. A retired officer appearing in regimental gear, displaying service symbols or invoking military identity while advancing a partisan argument, may unintentionally create the impression that the armed forces share that position. That perception, even if incorrect, can be damaging because it weakens the separation between the personal convictions of veterans and the constitutional neutrality of the military. Military regulations and traditions do recognise circumstances in which veterans may appropriately display their service identity, particularly during ceremonial, commemorative or official occasions. The difficulty emerges when these symbols migrate into

overtly partisan environments—such as political rallies, television battles and ideological campaigns, where the uniform risks becoming less a reminder of national service and more a prop in political theatre. The phenomenon has extended beyond questions of defence policy into wider political controversies. Retired military voices have featured prominently in debates on issues ranging from national security operations to domestic political disputes such as economic policy, religious questions and public protests. The danger is not that veterans participate in these conversations; it is that their military credentials may be used to imply institutional authority in areas where the armed forces themselves have no constitutional role.

The “uniform” carries power precisely because it represents something larger than the individual who wears it. It symbolises discipline,

sacrifice and service to the entire nation. That symbolic capital must therefore be handled carefully. When it is repeatedly drawn into partisan contests, the immediate beneficiaries may be the political actors seeking credibility, but the eventual cost may be paid by the institution whose strength depends on standing apart from the political competition. The restraint associated with the “uniform” was never merely a matter of tradition or etiquette. It was a recognition that the armed forces are the sword arm of the republic, and that a sword entrusted to the State must never appear to belong to one side of a political battlefield. Preserving that distinction is not a limitation on the democratic rights of military veterans; it is a safeguard for the military institution itself. Once public trust in its political neutrality begins to fade, restoring it becomes an impossible task.

Hero MotoCorp Sees Strong Two-Wheeler Growth in FY27

Mumbai: Hero MotoCorp expects India's two-wheeler industry to register near double-digit volume growth in the 2026-27 financial year, driven by steady demand for both conventional petrol-powered vehicles and electric models.

The company's Chief Executive Officer Harshavardhan Chitale said the sector recorded a 14 per cent year-on-year rise in retail sales during the first quarter of FY27. Internal combustion engine vehicle sales grew 11 per cent, while electric vehicle registrations jumped 67 per cent. The positive trend continued in July, with industry retail sales increasing 28 per cent.

Hero MotoCorp has raised its annual growth forecast from the high single-digit estimate projected earlier,



despite expectations of a higher base effect in the second half of the financial year following the reduction in automobile GST rates introduced last year.

For the April-June quarter, Hero MotoCorp reported a 36 per cent increase in standalone revenue from operations at ₹12,998.82 crore, while profit after tax rose 29 per cent to ₹1,454.48 crore. The company sold 16.77 lakh vehicles during the quarter, compared with

13.67 lakh units in the same period last year.

The company also reported strong growth in its Vida electric scooter business, with wholesale volumes rising 151 per cent during the quarter. To meet growing demand, Hero MotoCorp has increased monthly EV production capacity from 15,000 units at the end of FY26 to around 30,000 units and plans to expand it further to 45,000 units per month.

HDFC Bank Shares Face Pressure Amid Margin and Deposit Concerns

Mumbai: HDFC Bank's shares have remained under pressure through 2026, declining more than 22 per cent in the past six months and approaching their 52-week lows despite resilience in the broader domestic equity market. Analysts have attributed the weakness to a combination of margin challenges, deposit growth concerns and changing investor strategies.

The biggest challenge for the private sector lender has been the pressure on net interest margins following its merger with HDFC Limited. In the first quarter of FY27, the bank's net interest margin stood at 3.26 per cent, below market expectations and significantly lower than the pre-merger



levels of nearly 4 per cent. The slower pace of margin recovery has raised concerns among investors, prompting some brokerages to revise their outlook

and target prices.

The bank's profitability has also been affected by changes in its deposit mix. Slower growth in low-cost Current Account Savings

Account (CASA) deposits has resulted in greater dependence on higher-cost term deposits to support credit expansion. The elevated credit-to-deposit ratio has added further pressure on funding costs and remains a key area of focus for analysts.

Investor sentiment has also been impacted by institutional portfolio adjustments in the banking sector. Foreign portfolio investors have reduced exposure to major private banks as part of wider market rebalancing, with concerns around near-term earnings growth, post-merger adjustments and broader economic conditions influencing investment decisions.

The banking sector has

also been operating in an environment of steady interest rates, limiting opportunities for immediate improvement in margins. Analysts believe that a more favourable rate cycle, along with stronger deposit mobilisation, could support profitability recovery over time.

Despite the recent decline in share value, market experts continue to view HDFC Bank's fundamentals as stable, citing its strong balance sheet, extensive customer base and established market position. A sustained improvement in deposit growth, better liquidity management and gradual margin expansion are expected to be critical factors for restoring investor confidence in the stock.

Tata Technologies Shares Rally 15% After Reported Honda Vehicle Platform Deal

Mumbai: Shares of Tata Technologies surged 15 per cent over two trading sessions, touching a fresh 52-week high of ₹867 during intra-day trading on Friday after reports suggested that the company had secured a major international vehicle platform outsourcing agreement with Japan's Honda Motor.

The sharp rise in the stock price was driven by reports that Honda has outsourced the complete development of a new vehicle platform to Tata Technologies, the engineering and digital services arm of the Tata Group. The platform is expected to support multiple powertrain technologies, including conventional internal combustion engine vehicles, hybrid models and electric ve-

hicles, as global automakers increasingly rely on external engineering partners to reduce development time and costs.

Following the market movement, the Bombay Stock Exchange sought clarification from Tata Technologies regarding the reported agreement. The company's shares witnessed strong investor interest, with combined trading volumes on the BSE and NSE crossing nearly eight million shares, around five times higher than the stock's average daily trading activity.

During Friday's session, Tata Technologies shares traded 7.8 per cent higher at ₹865.25 by midday, outperforming the broader market where the benchmark BSE Sensex declined 0.56 per



cent. The latest rally has significantly improved the stock's performance, with shares recovering around 71 per cent from the 52-week low of ₹507.50 recorded on March 30, 2026.

The development comes at a time when the automotive industry is witnessing rapid transformation, with manufacturers increas-

ing investments in electric mobility, software-driven vehicle technologies and digital engineering capabilities. Companies like Tata Technologies are benefiting from rising demand for outsourced research, development and design services from global original equipment manufacturers.

During its first-quar-

ter earnings briefing, Tata Technologies management said the company expects strong double-digit organic revenue growth in FY27 after a transition phase in FY26. The company identified artificial intelligence, software-defined vehicle engineering and deeper partnerships with global automobile manufacturers as key areas that could support future expansion.

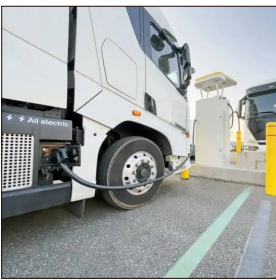
The reported Honda engagement has further strengthened investor optimism around Tata Technologies' growth prospects, with market participants closely tracking developments related to new global partnerships and the company's ability to expand its presence in the evolving automotive technology sector.

Electric Truck Sales Surge as Fuel Costs Drive Shift to EVs

New Delhi: Electric truck registrations in India witnessed a sharp increase in July, rising nearly twelvefold as higher fuel costs and global supply disruptions encouraged commercial operators to explore cleaner alternatives.

Data from the government's Vahan portal showed that 208 electric trucks were registered across the country in July 2026, compared with just 17 units during the same month last year. Between January and July, total electric truck registrations reached 821 units, marking a more than fivefold rise from 156 units recorded during the corresponding period in 2025.

The growing focus on reducing operating expenses has encouraged more com-



panies to enter the electric commercial vehicle segment. Hyderabad-based EV manufacturer Olectra Greentech has announced plans to launch electric trucks by the end of the current financial year, aiming to tap into rising demand.

Olectra Greentech Managing Director Mahesh Babu said electric trucks could account for 8 to 10 per cent of total commercial truck sales within the next three to five years. The company is targeting annu-

al sales of around 1,000 electric trucks by the 2027-28 financial year.

The electric truck market currently includes manufacturers such as Tata Motors, Sany Heavy Industries, IPL Tech Electric and Energy in Motion. Industry experts believe that although electric trucks involve significantly higher upfront costs compared with diesel vehicles, rising crude oil prices have improved their long-term cost advantage by reducing the time required to recover the initial investment.

With businesses increasingly focusing on fuel savings, sustainability and lower operating costs, the electric heavy vehicle segment is expected to see faster adoption in the coming years.

SBI Shares Rise After Strong Q1 Profit Growth, Net Profit Climbs 10%

Mumbai: Shares of State Bank of India (SBI) gained more than 3 per cent on Friday after the country's largest lender reported a stronger-than-expected financial performance for the first quarter of FY27, with standalone net profit rising 10.23 per cent year-on-year to ₹21,121 crore.

The bank had recorded a standalone net profit of ₹19,160 crore in the same quarter a year earlier. On a sequential basis, profit increased 7.30 per cent from ₹19,684 crore reported in the March quarter, reflecting improved earnings momentum.

SBI's core income also witnessed healthy growth

during the quarter. Net Interest Income (NII), which represents the difference between interest earned and interest paid, increased 14.88 per cent year-on-year to ₹46,992 crore from ₹40,907 crore in the corresponding period last year.

The lender's domestic net interest margin stood at 3 per cent during the quarter, improving by 7 basis points compared with 2.93 per cent in the previous quarter. The improvement in margins supported overall profitability despite a challenging interest rate environment.

The bank continued to witness strong growth in lending activity, with total



advances across its operations rising 18.63 per cent year-on-year to ₹50.47 lakh crore. Deposits grew 9.73 per cent during the period to ₹60.06 lakh crore, taking SBI's total business beyond the ₹110 lakh crore mark.

Asset quality also showed improvement during the quarter, strengthening investor confidence. Provisions for non-performing assets declined 32 per cent to ₹3,359 crore from ₹4,934 crore in the first quarter of FY26, helping

boost profitability.

The bank's gross non-performing asset ratio improved both annually and sequentially, declining by 36 basis points year-on-year to 1.47 per cent. The improvement reflected better recovery trends and continued strengthening of the lender's balance sheet.

Following the announcement of the quarterly results, SBI shares climbed in the market and touched an intra-day high of ₹1,124.50 on the National Stock Exchange. Investors responded positively to the strong earnings performance, supported by growth in loans, stable margins and improved asset quality.

AI Safety Frameworks Must Match Rapid Adoption in Finance Sector: CEA Nageswaran

Mumbai: Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran has called for greater focus on artificial intelligence safety and security as financial institutions across India increasingly adopt AI-driven technologies. He cautioned that banks, fintech companies and other financial organisations must build strong risk management systems before potential challenges emerge, rather than responding only after disruptions occur.

Addressing the ASSOCHAM India International Fintech Festival, Nageswaran said artificial intelligence has the potential to bring major improvements to the financial ecosystem by enhancing credit evaluation, strengthening fraud detection mechanisms, identifying early indicators of financial stress and improving operational efficiency. However, he stressed that the benefits of AI can be fully realised only when innovation is supported by effective safeguards.

He said the rapid pace of technological advancement requires financial institutions to focus equally on productivity and protection. According to him, security frameworks, governance mechanisms and regulatory approaches must evolve alongside AI deployment to ensure that new technologies do not create vulnerabilities within the financial system.

Nageswaran highlighted that organisations often



tend to recognise risks only after they become visible or directly affect operations. However, he warned that the financial sector operates in a highly sensitive environment where delayed responses could have wider consequences. With AI systems becoming increasingly sophisticated, he said institutions need to anticipate possible challenges and prepare preventive measures in advance.

Referring to the growing use of autonomous AI agents, the Chief Economic Adviser said the development of advanced systems has increased the importance of reliability, transparency and accountability. While such technologies can improve efficiency and decision-making, they also require careful monitoring to prevent errors, misuse or unintended outcomes.

The financial sector has been among the early adopters of artificial intelli-

gence, using the technology in areas such as automated customer support, credit scoring, risk assessment, fraud prevention and personalised financial services. As digital transactions and fintech platforms continue to expand, the role of AI in financial operations is expected to increase further.

However, experts have raised concerns over issues including data protection, cybersecurity threats, algorithmic bias and excessive dependence on automated decision-making systems. Ensuring that AI models are accurate, explainable and aligned with regulatory requirements has become a major priority for financial institutions worldwide.

Nageswaran also advised caution over the expectations surrounding the immediate economic impact of artificial intelligence. While acknowledging its long-term potential, he said the actual benefits and costs

of the technology would become clearer only after current market excitement and valuation trends begin to settle.

He urged industry leaders to maintain existing systemic safeguards while adopting AI-based solutions. According to him, strong regulatory oversight, responsible innovation and effective risk mitigation strategies will be critical for ensuring that technological advancement supports sustainable growth.

The comments come at a time when India's financial sector is undergoing rapid digital transformation, with banks, non-banking financial companies and fintech firms investing heavily in emerging technologies. Industry stakeholders believe that balancing innovation with safety will be essential for building public trust and maintaining stability as AI becomes a larger part of financial services.

Titan Company Posts 6.5% Profit Growth in Q1, Revenue Climbs to Rs 18,101 Crore

Bengaluru: Tata Group consumer products company Titan Company reported a 6.5 per cent year-on-year increase in standalone net profit to ₹761 crore for the first quarter of FY27, supported by steady performance across its key businesses, particularly jewellery and watches.

The company's total income rose sharply by 28.5 per cent during the April-June quarter to ₹18,101 crore, compared with ₹14,082 crore in the corresponding period of the previous financial year. The growth was driven by strong consumer demand,

expansion of retail operations and improved performance across major business segments.

Titan's jewellery division, which includes brands such as Tanishq, Zoya and CaratLane, remained the largest contributor to revenue. The segment recorded total income of ₹16,380 crore, marking a 29 per cent increase compared with the first quarter of FY26. Domestic jewellery operations grew 27 per cent during the period, supported by wedding season demand and the company's continued expansion of its store network.

The watches and wearables business also reported healthy growth, with revenue rising 19 per cent year-on-year to ₹1,220 crore.

Titan's eyecare division contributed ₹240 crore during the quarter, adding to the company's overall performance.

As part of its growth strategy, Titan expanded its retail presence by opening 68 new stores during the quarter. With this addition, the company's global retail network increased to 3,250 outlets across markets.

Titan Managing Director C.K. Venkataraman said

the company delivered strong revenue growth across major business categories despite fluctuations in international gold prices. He highlighted that continued investments in retail expansion, customer experience and product innovation have helped strengthen Titan's brand presence in both domestic and international markets.

The company expects its diversified portfolio, expanding retail network and focus on premium offerings to support future growth as consumer demand remains resilient across lifestyle and jewellery categories.

Explosions Near Iran’s Qeshm Island Raise Fresh Tensions in Strait of Hormuz

Tehran: Fresh explosions near Iran’s Qeshm Island have heightened tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, further worsening the already fragile security situation in one of the world’s most strategically important waterways. The explosions are being viewed as a warning to Tehran at a time when Iran is preparing legislation aimed at restricting the movement of what it describes as hostile foreign vessels.

According to reports by Gulf News and Al Jazeera, citing Iran’s Tasnim News Agency, the Iranian Parliament has discussed a proposed bill intended to strengthen Tehran’s control over the Strait of Hormuz. Under the proposed legislation, vessels belonging to countries such as the United States and Israel would be prohibited from transiting the waterway, while violations could result in financial penalties.

Meanwhile, Iranian Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf once again commented on the lack of trust between Tehran and Washington through a social media post. He accused the United States of alternating between military threats and calls for diplomacy. Separately, Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence announced the arrest of 21 individuals in Kerman Province on allegations of working for Israel’s intelligence agency, Mossad.

According to the reports, two explosions occurred on Thursday night near Qeshm Island in Iran’s southern Hormozgan Province, close to the entrance of the Strait of Hormuz. The reports said the blasts followed an earli-



er confrontation involving Iranian armed forces and what officials described as enemy forces. Ahmad Nafisi, Hormozgan’s Deputy Governor for Political, Security and Social Affairs, said authorities have launched an investigation to determine the cause of the explosions.

Earlier on Thursday, Saudi news channels Al-Hadath and Al Arabiya reported that Iran and Oman had reached a preliminary framework agreement to reopen the Strait of Hormuz for 60 days. According to China’s Xinhua News Agency, the proposed arrangement still requires approval from Iran’s Supreme National Security Council.

Under the reported framework, vessels entering the Strait of Hormuz would use the shipping lane adjacent to Iran, while outbound vessels would transit through the channel closer to Oman. No transit fees would be imposed under the arrangement. Following approval by Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, the United States and Iran are expected to resume discussions on a broader peace understanding and jointly announce the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz for the safe passage of commercial shipping.

Reports also suggest that indirect contacts between Iran and the United States are continuing through mediators and that the negotiations have entered their final phase. US President Donald Trump has expressed hope that the conflict with Iran will end soon. Meanwhile, Iran has tightened internal security measures in Tehran amid the evolving situation.

Diageo to nearly double Guinness production and cut jobs in turnaround plan

Diageo’s new chief executive has unveiled plans to nearly double Guinness production while hacking back a “significant” proportion of its 30,000-strong workforce, in a strategic overhaul worthy of his nickname, “Drastic” Dave Lewis.

Shares in Diageo bounced on Thursday, as the former Tesco boss faced down the first big test of his initial half-year in the job, after being parachuted in last November to revive the flagging fortunes of the UK-based drinks company.

Speaking after the company announced a decline in sales but slightly better-than-expected operating profit, Lewis said his turnaround plan would involve job cuts, adding that the “consequences of that are not great for anybody”.

But he added: “Nobody [inside the company] is saying to me that this is the wrong thing to do.”

Lewis declined to give a figure for the expected reduction in the worldwide headcount.

However, Diageo has told investors that it expects to incur \$514m (£382m) in charges relating to employee severance and Lewis said he had discovered “massive” duplication in roles since becoming CEO.

Lewis, who earned the “Drastic Dave” moniker in the City for his cost-cutting zeal, promised to deliver \$1bn of annual savings over two years through a restructuring that would cost \$1.2bn and was aimed at making the company more agile.

While this will involve slashing jobs, Lewis vowed to harness the seemingly unstoppable popularity of Guinness around the world.

A \$1bn investment in the brand is aimed at increasing global sales, particularly in North America, and helping the company avoid a repeat of shortages reported in the UK in recent years, including during the important festive period.



“We’re going to double the capacity of Guinness during the course of this plan [by 2031],” said Lewis, adding that the future of the brand was “very bright”.

Production capacity is slated to increase from 8.2m hectolitres (mHL) today to 15.7m by 2031, an increase equivalent to 300 Olympic-sized swimming pools of the black stuff a year. In the months after his appointment, some City pundits speculated that he might take the radical step of selling Guinness to raise up to £8bn. The company moved quickly to quash any suggestion of selling its best-performing big brand.

Diageo was not actively seeking to sell less well-performing brands, Lewis said.

In the past decade, the company has focused on “premiumisation”, banking on discerning drinkers choosing upmarket brands. That strategy has left Diageo with an overloaded stable of more expensive labels, just as cash-strapped consumers stopped drinking from the top shelf.

Lewis said Diageo would not be “hawking our brands” and was not looking to buy assets either, but would focus

more on a broader portfolio, including mid-market brands and smaller-pack sizes that were likely to suit cost-conscious drinkers.

He also promised to amend Diageo’s failure to cash in on the so-called ready-to-drink category, such as premade cocktails or “gin in a tin”. “We’re just going to roll our sleeves up and get on with our own business,” Lewis added. Shares in Diageo rose by more than 6% in afternoon trading after the release, indicating early contentment among investors with the early fruit of the turnaround plan.

Lewis’s appointment was announced last November after a lacklustre period under his immediate predecessor, Debra Crew, a former captain in US military intelligence who took over after the sudden death of the longtime chief executive Sir Ivan Menezes. The global purveyor of brands such as Johnnie Walker and Smirnoff had thrived in the period immediately after the Covid-19 pandemic, but fell out of favour with investors as Crew’s tenure was tainted by strategic errors and a surprise profits warning, leading to her exit. Diageo’s share price jumped last year after the ar-

rival of Lewis, who came with a reputation built during five years in charge of Tesco and nearly three decades at the global household brands company Unilever.

But investors punished Diageo in February after he slashed the dividend and reported weak demand in the US and China, eroding some of the market gains.

On Thursday, the company said annual pre-tax profit fell by 26%, from \$3.5bn to \$2.6bn, including \$900m one-off charges related to Lewis’s restructuring of the business and a \$1.5bn hit from its Turkish business.

Without the one-off impact and other charges such as debt interest, operating profit was slightly ahead of analysts’ forecasts at \$5.7bn.

Sales were down by 2% to \$19.6bn amid continued weakness in China and the US. Lewis said he expects the North American business, Diageo’s largest region by revenue, to take two years to return to growth.

The annual dividend remains at \$0.50 a share, slightly less than half the level before Lewis slashed the payout to fund his turnaround strategy.

Airline workers reportedly decline to help US agents as Trump migrant crackdown accelerates

America: A dramatic increase in immigration enforcement at US airports has reportedly placed the airline industry at odds with the Trump administration as workers decline to help federal officials arrest their targets – many of whom have pending applications for visas, asylum or green cards.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) – both part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – have expanded their collaboration to make as many as three dozen daily arrests at US airports last month, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Some of the people who have been taken into federal immigration custody include a former au pair, an asylum seeker with sickle cell anemia who uses a wheelchair, and women who are married to US citizens and in the process of applying for lawful permanent residency, according to the New York Times.

“It’s not people with criminal records,” said Ghassan Shamieh, a San Francisco-based immigration lawyer who had four clients detained at airports over 10 days. “You are talking about people with



legitimate pending applications.”

The latest crackdown represents another policy shift for the DHS, which has generally avoided immigration enforcement at airports so as not to disrupt domestic travel. But with a goal of 2,000 daily immigration arrests, ICE has started detaining people – many of whom have overstayed visas after coming to the US legally and have pending applications for immigration relief – in public places far from security checkpoints, whether at ticket counters or near gates.

“This administration is working diligently to ensure that aliens in our country illegally can no longer fly unless it is out of our country to self-deport,” a DHS spokesperson told the New York Times.

At one point, in Dallas, a federal agent went so far as to try to board a plane in search of a target. But the Southwest Airlines gate agent reportedly refused to allow the officer to do so without a warrant signed by a judge, and airline employees blocked ICE from seeing a computer screen while passengers were boarding.

Southwest told the Wall Street Journal that it follows the law and has protocols “to ensure appropriate legal documentation is presented by law enforcement personnel before any information about customers is shared”.

Still, hundreds of immigration arrests have already taken place at airports since the

TSA and ICE began cooperating with one another last year. Members of the airline industry met with DHS in July to discuss their discomfort with the policy change.

On top of the immigrants being detained, experts have raised concerns that the tense encounters could lead to escalation and unsafe conditions for bystanders or airline employees.

“The actions that federal enforcement authorities have taken in our workplaces have raised glaring workplace, safety and legal concerns for flight attendants,” Sara Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants, wrote in a letter to carriers in March.

Butterflies around the world are changing habitats-and experts say it’s ‘signalling a warning’

Australia: Butterflies, often considered a “sentinel of change”, are on the move across every continent they inhabit, shifting to survive as global heating reshapes their environment.

About one in 10 species have already expanded or contracted their geographic range, or shifted in altitude, according to a global study published in Nature Ecology & Evolution.

Lead author Dr Shewan Chowdhury, head of Monash University’s Global Change Ecology Lab, said the study, which analysed shifts in 1,758 species across 105 countries, revealed the “astonishing” scale of change, largely driven by climate change and extreme weather.

“Butterflies are early-warning indicators and are signalling a warning across the entire planet. If their ranges shift this dramatically, it signals profound changes across ecosystems,” he said.

Some moved surprisingly fast, he said. The tawny coster butterfly – originally

native to India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka – entered Australia in 2012 and has moved at a rate of 135km per year since. An expanding range wasn’t necessarily good news, he said, particularly if the insect was moving into less suitable habitat and populations were low.

About 80% of butterflies that shifted expanded their ranges, often moving into newly suitable areas as temperatures rise. About 27% of species – including Cupido minimus, the United Kingdom’s smallest butterfly – saw their ranges shrink, disappearing from areas they used to occupy. Others moved altitude, shifting to higher or lower elevations.

Range expansions occurred across all continents, particularly in the tropics, while contractions were mainly in Europe and North America, the paper said. Shifts in elevation were almost exclusively in the northern hemisphere.

Climate change and severe weather were the main

drivers, although other factors played a role, such as habitat loss and agriculture. In Germany, a species known as the cranberry fritillary (*Boloria aquilonaris*) has lost much of its original habitat due to bog drainage. In Romania, agricultural intensification drove a contraction for the Danube clouded yellow butterfly (*Colias myrmidone*). In Brazil, the blue butterfly *Godartiana byses* has expanded from the states of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia to São Paulo in response to climate warming. Some species experienced range expansion in one part of their distribution and contraction in another, Chowdhury said, which was “quite concerning”.

“You don’t really know what’s going to happen for that species, whether they’re going to be endangered or whether they are going to be least concern in the long term.”

Globally, butterfly conservation plans would need to respond to species on the move, particularly in re-

sponse to climate change, Chowdhury said.

“We urgently need coordinated global monitoring, especially in the tropics, to understand what species are doing, where they’re going, and how we can protect them,” he said.

In Melbourne, one endangered butterfly has shown promising signs of recovery.

Before its rediscovery in 1986, the Eltham copper butterfly – small, burnished and roughly the size of a coat button – was thought extinct. Its survival depends on an intricate three-way relationship with a native shrub known as sweet bursaria and the *Notoncus* ant, which lives in the root of the plant.

Following years of replanting and habitat restoration by the local community, the Friends of the Eltham Copper Butterfly, Nillumbik Shire and water company Yarra Valley Water, ecological surveys have recorded nearly a five-fold increase in larvae numbers on native plants.

Protest Held Outside Indian High Commission in London

London: A protest was held outside the Indian High Commission in London on Wednesday to mark the anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir. The demonstrators also raised Kashmir-related slogans and observed the day as “Youm-e-Istehsal Kashmir” (Kashmir Exploitation Day).

On August 5, 2019, the

Government of India, through a Presidential Order, effectively revoked most provisions of Articles 370 and 35A, ending the erstwhile special status of Jammu and Kashmir. Since then, the region has witnessed significant administrative changes and, according to the Indian government, an improved security environment.

According to Paki-

stan-based Dunya News, protesters waved Pakistani and Kashmir flags during the demonstration. Some participants declared that Pakistan would continue its claim over Kashmir.

The protesters also alleged that the Indian High Commission in London was involved in anti-Pakistan and anti-Kashmir activities. Demonstrators accused India of human

rights violations in Kashmir and called on the international community to take notice of the situation. The protest was attended by members of the British-Kashmiri and Pakistani communities.

Such demonstrations, supported by pro-Pakistan groups, have been organised annually on August 5 since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

7 compact sofa cum beds designed for small residences that ensure comfort while maximizing space

A sofa cum bed is one of the most practical furniture pieces you can own, especially if you live in a compact home with less space. A sofa cum bed serves as a comfortable sofa during the day and transforms into a cosy bed whenever needed. Whether you have a studio apartment, a guest room or simply want to make the most of your living space, a sofa cum bed is a worthwhile investment.

Some of these sofa cum beds are made from soft cushioned materials, offering the perfect combination of practicality and style. And if you too are looking to buy a sofa cum bed to maximise comfort and save space. Here are some of the best sofa cum beds available on Amazon that combine comfort, functionality and style.

- Top 7 sofa cum beds
1. Wakefit Flexia Sofa Cum Bed | 3 Yr Warranty | Convertible 3 Seater, Lightweight, Space Saving Design, Perfect for Home, Living Room: The Wakefit Flexia Sofa Cum Bed is designed to maximise comfort and functionality in compact homes. Made with a sturdy engineered wood frame, it features high-density foam cushions upholstered in premium polyester fabric for everyday

durability. The easy pull-out mechanism converts it into a spacious bed within minutes. Its modern design complements most interiors, while the supportive cushioning ensures comfortable seating and sleeping. This sofa cum bed is ideal for apartments, guest rooms, or multipurpose living spaces.

2. Sleepyhead Napster Designed by Duroflex - 3 Seater Foldable Sofa Cum Bed with 2 Cushions| 5-in-1 Convertible Sofabed: The Sleepyhead Napster Sofa Cum Bed combines modern aesthetics with everyday practicality.

Crafted using a durable engineered wood frame, it is upholstered in soft, breathable polyester fabric and padded with high-resilience foam for superior comfort. The fold-out design transforms it into a cosy bed, making it suitable for overnight guests. Its compact footprint makes it an excellent choice for smaller homes while offering comfortable seating during the day and restful sleep at night.

3. Adorn India Premium New Aspen 3 Seater Sofa Cum Bed 4X6 Velvet Suede with 2 Cushions and Suitable for All Indoor: The Adorn India Sofa Cum Bed offers a blend of el-

egance and convenience for modern households. Built with a strong solid wood and engineered wood frame, it is upholstered in premium fabric with plush foam cushioning for enhanced comfort. The convertible design allows it to function as both a stylish sofa and a practical bed. Its sturdy construction ensures durability, while the contemporary finish blends effortlessly with various home décor styles, making it suitable for daily use.

4. Amazon Brand - Solimo Casaan 3 Seater Foldable Sofa Cum Bed: The Amazon Solimo Sofa Cum Bed is a practical furniture solution for homes that need extra sleeping space. Constructed with a robust engineered wood frame, it features durable polyester upholstery and comfortable foam-filled cushions for everyday support.

The simple pull-out mechanism allows quick conversion into a bed for guests. Designed for durability and ease of maintenance, it offers a balance of comfort, affordability, and functionality, making it suitable for living rooms, guest rooms, and studio apartments.

5. AMATA Eagle Solid Wood 3 Seater Sofa Cum Bed Camel Suede velevt



Fabric with Two Cushions Perfect for Home Living Office Room and Guests: The AMATA Eagle Solid Wood 3 Seater Sofa Cum Bed is crafted from premium solid wood, offering exceptional strength and long-lasting durability. It comes with comfortable foam-filled cushions covered in high-quality fabric upholstery for a refined appearance. The sturdy wooden frame easily converts from a three-seater sofa into a spacious bed, making it ideal for multifunctional spaces. Its timeless wooden finish adds

warmth to interiors while providing reliable comfort for both seating and sleeping.

6. Casaliving Danny 3 Seater Sofa Cum Bed for Living Room Premium Fabric Sofa for Living Room: The Casaliving Danny 3 Seater Sofa Cum Bed is designed for modern homes seeking versatility without compromising on style. Built with a durable engineered wood frame, it features soft fabric upholstery and supportive high-density foam cushions for lasting comfort. The convenient pull-out

mechanism converts it into a bed for guests within minutes. Its sleek silhouette complements contemporary interiors, while the sturdy construction ensures reliable everyday use as both a sofa and a comfortable sleeping solution.

7. Home Centre | Helios Woodland Fabric 3-Seater Sofa Bed | Sofa for Living Room: The Home Centre Helios Sofa Cum Bed offers a stylish combination of comfort and practicality. Made with a durable engineered wood frame, it is upholstered in premium-quality polyes-

ter fabric and cushioned with high-density foam for enhanced support. The easy conversion mechanism transforms it into a comfortable bed whenever required. Its clean, contemporary design blends seamlessly with modern interiors, while the robust construction ensures dependable performance, making it a practical choice for living rooms and guest spaces. Benefits of a sofa cum bed

1. Saves space: A sofa cum bed combines two essential furniture pieces into one, making it ideal for apartments and smaller homes.
2. Perfect for guests: Instead of keeping a dedicated guest bed, you can simply convert your sofa into a comfortable sleeping space whenever visitors arrive.
3. Cost-effective: Buying one sofa cum bed is often more affordable than purchasing a separate sofa and bed.
4. Stylish designs: Modern sofa cum beds are available in a wide variety of colours, fabrics and finishes to match different interior styles.
5. Multi-purpose furniture: Use it for watching television, reading, relaxing or sleeping. It adapts to different needs throughout

the day.

6. Storage options: Many sofa cum beds include hidden storage compartments where you can keep blankets, pillows or extra bedding.
7. Easy to operate: Most modern designs feature simple folding or pull-out mechanisms that require very little effort.

How to choose the right sofa cum bed

Measure your space

Check both the folded and fully extended dimensions before buying to ensure it fits comfortably in your room.

Choose a strong frame

Solid wood or high-quality engineered wood frames usually offer better durability than cheaper alternatives. Check the mattress quality

High-density foam provides better support and comfort for both sitting and sleeping.

Select durable upholstery

Choose fabrics that are easy to clean and resistant to daily wear, especially if you have children or pets.

Look for easy conversion

A smooth folding or pull-out mechanism makes daily use much more convenient.

Consider storage

If you need extra storage, choose a model with built-in compartments.

Why comfort is currently the greatest luxury in footwear



While comfort has emerged as a prominent trend in fashion, Unnati Sinha, the Founder and CEO of VENII, asserts that modern footwear encompasses much more than just soft soles and cushioned footbeds. It emphasizes craftsmanship, versatility, sustainability, and the creation of shoes that individuals truly desire to wear in their daily lives. As consumers move away from trend-led shopping and towards investment pieces that last, footwear is quietly becoming one of the most exciting categories in fashion. Luxury labels are reinventing classic silhouettes, Indian craftsmanship is finding a global audience, and comfort is finally being treated as a design feature rather than an afterthought.

Sharing his take on the industry's biggest shifts, Sinha explains that footwear is evolving alongside changing lifestyles.

"Footwear is no longer just an accessory but has become a major part of contemporary fashion, combining comfort, practicality and style. Today's designs range from casual flip-flops and sporty slides to elegant sandals and minimalist strappy designs. Fashion brands are increasingly blending innovative materials, ergonomic features and bold aesthetics to create footwear that suits a wide variety of occasions."

Here are the biggest footwear trends he believes are shaping the industry:

Work-to-weekend shoes are replacing occasion-specific pairs

Consumers are increasingly looking for footwear that transitions effortlessly between office hours, travel plans and weekend outings.

Instead of buying multiple pairs for different occasions, people now want

shoes that feel polished enough for work while remaining comfortable enough for long days on their feet.

According to Sinha, designers are responding with smarter, more versatile silhouettes.

"Designers are collapsing the line between formal and casual with sneakers featuring premium leathers, loafers with hidden comfort cushioning and boots built with more flexible construction. It's a direct response to blurred remote and professional lifestyles."

Comfort is no longer optional

Luxury fashion is embracing comfort like never before.

Brands including Bottega Veneta, Moschino and Versace have all introduced cushioned sandals, clogs and relaxed footwear silhouettes that prioritise wearability alongside aesthetics.

Consumers are no longer willing to compromise on comfort, especially when footwear is worn for hours every day. Ergonomic footbeds, softer materials and flexible construction have become baseline expectations rather than premium add-ons.

Handcrafted details are becoming the new luxury

Logos are gradually making way for craftsmanship. Braided leather, woven textures and artisanal finishing techniques are increasingly becoming symbols of luxury because they highlight the work behind every product.

Sinha points to global fashion's renewed appreciation for handcrafted detailing.

"Bottega Veneta is doing exactly what VENII does by taking its signature braided leather technique into footwear. Hand-braiding has become the luxury signifier."

VENII's own sandals feature handcrafted leather braids, responsibly sourced full-grain Argentinian leather uppers and anti-skid rubber soles, combining traditional craftsmanship with everyday practicality.

Earthy colours continue to dominate footwear trends

When it comes to colour, subtle shades are winning over seasonal statement hues.

Rich cognac, tan, café brown, chestnut and sand remain favourites because they're timeless, easy to style and align perfectly with the "quiet luxury" aesthetic that continues influencing global fashion.

"Earthy tones are trending because they work beautifully with most wardrobes while representing classic minimalism," says Sinha.

Traditional Indian footwear is getting a contemporary makeover

Indian craftsmanship is also experiencing a stylish revival.

Kolhapuri sandals, leather flats and handcrafted silhouettes are no longer reserved for festive occasions. Designers are updating them with improved comfort, better grip and modern construction techniques that make them practical for everyday wear.

"Indian footwear like Kolhapuris is no longer reserved for weddings and festivals. We've incorporated anti-skid rubber into leather soles to improve comfort while maintaining a premium fashion aesthetic," says Sinha. Sustainability is becoming part of the design conversation

Consumers today aren't only asking how footwear looks, they're asking how it's made. Responsibly sourced materials, longer-lasting construction and timeless designs are becoming increasingly important as shoppers move away from fast fashion.

For brands like VENII, this means focusing on natural leather, handcrafted production and designs that improve with wear rather than deteriorate over time. As Sinha sums it up: "As consumers increasingly prioritise comfort and sustainability along with style, modern footwear continues to evolve, reflecting changing lifestyles while offering versatile options for people of all ages."

The biggest footwear trend of 2026, then, isn't one particular silhouette or colour. It's the shift towards thoughtful design; where comfort, craftsmanship and longevity matter just as much as style.

5 cushioned running shoes to think about If your top priority is comfort

Cushioning is a feature I never compromise on when selecting running shoes.

Regardless of whether you are preparing for your first 5K, fitting in a brief morning run, or just standing for extended periods, a properly cushioned pair can significantly enhance your experience. Effective cushioning aids in impact absorption, alleviates stress on your knees and ankles, and ensures that each stride feels considerably smoother. With the Great Freedom Sale on Amazon currently underway, now is the ideal opportunity to purchase shoes. That said, more cushioning doesn't always mean better. The ideal pair depends on how you run, where you run, and how often you'll wear them. After looking through some of the most popular options available online, these are five cushioned running shoes that stand out for comfort, everyday usability, and overall value.

Best running shoes on sale

1. Nike Men's Revolution 7 Running Shoes: The Nike Revolution 7 is one of the strongest entry-level running shoes if comfort tops

your priority list. The soft foam cushioning absorbs impact well, making it suitable for beginners who are easing into regular runs or brisk walks. Despite the cushioning, the shoe remains lightweight, so your feet don't feel weighed down after longer sessions. The breathable upper improves airflow, while the clean, versatile design means you'll probably end up wearing these beyond your workouts too.

Best for: Beginner runners, daily walks, gym sessions and casual wear.

2. U.S. Polo Assn. Men's Ruben 3.0 Sneaker: Not everyone needs a dedicated performance running shoe. If your routine includes light jogging, walking and everyday errands, the Ruben 3.0 strikes a nice balance between comfort and versatility. The cushioned sole feels comfortable for shorter runs, while the understated design makes it easy to pair with everyday outfits.

Think of this as an all-rounder rather than a marathon shoe.

Best for: Casual runners, college, commuting and everyday movement.

3. Campus Men Refresh



Pro Running Shoes: Campus has become a reliable choice for affordable sports footwear, and the Refresh Pro continues that trend. The cushioning is balanced—not overly soft, yet comfortable enough for daily use. Its lightweight construction also helps reduce fatigue during longer periods of walking or standing.

If you're shopping on a budget but still want a dependable running shoe, this pair offers impressive value.

Best for: Beginners, students, walking, light jogging and daily wear.

4. Reebok Courtflex Sports Shoe: Although designed as a sports shoe, the Reebok Courtflex works particularly well for treadmill runs and gym workouts. The sole feels stable underfoot, while the cushioning offers decent shock absorption during controlled indoor runs. The non-marking outsole also provides reliable grip across gym flooring.

If your workouts involve strength training alongside cardio, this pair offers good versatility.

Best for: Gym sessions, treadmill running and in-

door training.

5. Campus Men Jive Running Shoes: The Campus Jive focuses on lightweight comfort without stretching your budget. Its cushioned midsole feels soft enough for everyday runs, while the breathable upper keeps your feet comfortable during humid weather. The sporty design also makes it suitable for college, travel and casual outfits when you're not exercising.

It's a practical choice for anyone looking for a comfortable everyday running shoe that doesn't feel overly technical.

Best for: Everyday runs, walking, travel and casual wear.

The right running shoe should support your feet rather than distract you from your workout. If maximum cushioning is your priority, the Nike Revolution 7 remains my top recommendation for beginners thanks to its excellent balance of comfort, lightweight construction and versatility. If you're working within a tighter budget, both Campus Refresh Pro and Campus Jive deliver impressive everyday comfort without a premium price tag.

ENTERTAINMENT

‘Korean Kanagaraju’ movie review: formulaic and unsaved by humor

Hyderabad : After a string of disappointing outings, Varun Tej returns with Korean Kanagaraju, hoping to reinvent himself with an action-packed horror-comedy. Unfortunately, despite an interesting premise and a few entertaining moments, the film ends up as a routine entertainer that never fully realizes its potential.

Varun Tej attempts a larger-than-life role, moving away from his familiar romantic image. His transformation into an action hero with supernatural elements shows promise, but weak writing and an under-developed screenplay prevent the character from leaving a lasting impact. The ghost angle feels more like a gimmick than an emotionally engaging narrative. His sword-wielding avatar inevitably reminds audiences of Pawan Kalyan’s look in OG, but it lacks the same intensity and commanding screen presence.

The film’s biggest asset is Satya, whose impeccable comic timing and effortless expressions inject life into an otherwise predictable nar-



ative. Whenever the film threatens to lose momentum, his scenes generate genuine laughs. Even Varun Tej manages a few humorous moments, but they are not enough to compensate for the film’s inconsistent storytelling. Ritika Nayak, who impressed in Mirai, is saddled with an underwritten role that offers little scope to showcase her talent. Horror-comedy has traditionally been one of Telugu cinema’s safest commercial genres because a mix of scares

and laughter usually appeals to family audiences. Tamil actor-director Raghava Lawrence turned the genre into a successful franchise with films like Kanchana and Ganga. Korean Kanagaraju, however, only partially succeeds. While the comedy works in patches, the horror lacks impact and the emotional core remains surprisingly weak.

One of the film’s refreshing aspects is its unusual Kia-Penukonda-Korea backdrop, a setting rarely explored in

Telugu cinema. However, the novelty fades quickly as the narrative slips into familiar territory. The village conflict, romance and predictable screenplay make the first half feel formulaic. Director Merlapaka Gandhi delays introducing the central conflict until just before the interval, resulting in sluggish pacing and diminishing audience engagement. The story revolves around a small urn containing the ashes of a Korean man that mysteriously travels

from Korea to Penukonda. Kanagaraju accidentally consumes the ashes after mixing them with liquor and becomes possessed by the ghost. What follows is his journey to Korea and the mystery behind the restless spirit. While the premise offers enough scope for an entertaining supernatural adventure, the execution is weighed down by convenient writing, repetitive situations and predictable twists, preventing the film from becoming a memorable entertainer.

Technically, the production values are decent and the Korean episodes are mounted on a fair scale. However, Thaman’s music is largely forgettable, with only “Kam-sahamnida” making a modest impression. The background score does little to elevate the horror or emotional moments.

Beyond the laughs, it offers little in terms of thrills, emotion or originality. Despite an interesting premise and an unusual backdrop, the film ends up as yet another formulaic entertainer that fails to make a lasting impact.

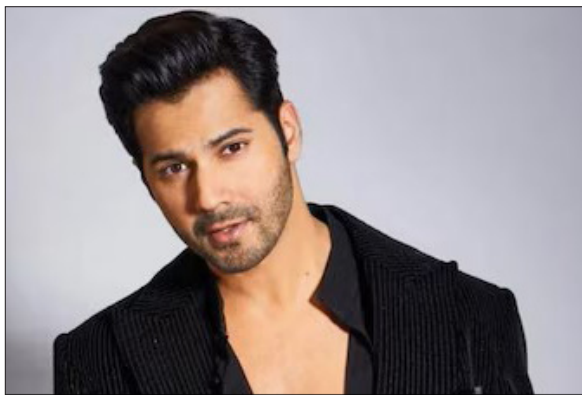
Varun Dhawan signed for Yash Raj films' first horror feature

Mumbai : Yash Raj Films is stepping into uncharted territory. After building its legacy across romance, action, drama and thrillers, the production house is now gearing up for its first theatrical horror film. Varun Dhawan has been brought on board to lead the project, which will be directed by Rocket Boys fame Abhay Pannu.

The yet-untitled film is expected to begin production later this year, with its theatrical release planned for 2027. Confirming the development, an industry source said, “Varun has come on board as the lead for YRF’s first horror film.”

The project marks Varun’s reunion with the banner years after Sui Dhaaga: Made in India. The 2018 film, co-starring Anushka Sharma, saw him play Mauji, a small-town tailor attempting to build a business with his wife. This time, however, the actor will enter a completely different world as YRF experiments with horror on the big screen.

Sharing further details, the source said, “Yash Raj Films is entering the horror genre



for the first time with a feature film directed by Abhay Pannu, strategically championed by Akshaye Widhani, and now headlined by Varun Dhawan as the lead. YRF has made films across almost every genre except horror. Come 2027, and the banner will finally step into this genre. Further details about Varun’s character, the film’s story and the remaining cast are currently under wraps.

The film will also mark an important career move for Abhay Pannu, who is making his theatrical feature directorial debut. Pannu earned widespread recognition for directing Rocket Boys, the acclaimed series centred on Indian physicists

Homi J Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai. The show featured Jim Sarbh and Ishwak Singh in the lead roles. For YRF, bringing Pannu on board also continues the studio’s recent push to work with filmmakers offering distinct voices and storytelling styles.

That is set to change with the Varun Dhawan-starrer. Abhay has also written the screenplay, giving him creative control over the story as he makes the transition from streaming to theatres. Production is scheduled to begin later in 2026. The makers are currently targeting a 2027 theatrical release, with more announcements about the cast and title expected closer to filming.

Aditya Dhar's rs 10 crore detail investment in Dhurandhar

Mumbai : Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar franchise has been as much a talking point online as it has been at the box office. Beyond the films’ scale and performances, viewers have been obsessed with the tiny details tucked into different scenes, giving rise to the now-viral phrase “peak detailing” on social media. The joke-turned-trend has seen fans dissecting everything from props and character references to seemingly insignificant moments. Now, R Madhavan, who plays Ajay Sanyal in the films, has revealed just how seriously Dhar took this aspect of filmmaking. In a recent interview, Madhavan claimed that the filmmaker spent an additional ₹10 crore on the detailing alone, highlighting the lengths he went to while putting the films together. While speaking to Glu-

te.com, R Madhavan highlighted the scale of Dhurandhar and the effort that went into its detailing. He said, “Can you imagine a project that is so lengthy, like eight hours, in which you have to invest time to add details you have in your mind, but which might be missed? Now, if somebody was told before the film that they spent ₹10 crore extra only towards this peak detailing, they’d say, ‘You’re mad. Who sees all that? Nobody sees. It won’t be seen.’ I would have said it.” The actor also revealed that the overwhelming success of Dhurandhar “shook him up.” He added, “For me, it shook me up because... no, actually I won’t say it shook me up. I think it reiterated what I’ve been believing for the longest time. I needed an endorsement that I’m going in the right direction.

Vedang Raina and Sharvari’s ‘Main Vaapas Aaunga’ set for direct-to-digital release

Mumbai : After a successful theatrical run, filmmaker Imtiaz Ali’s latest outing ‘Main Vaapas Aaunga’ is set to reach a wider audience with its digital debut. The film will premiere on Netflix on Friday, August 7. Sharing the news on Instagram, the OTT platform wrote, “8 saal pehle jo kahaani adhoori reh gayi thi, woh ab poori hogi. Watch Main Vaapas Aaunga, out 7 August, on Netflix!”

Earlier, director Imtiaz Ali marked a special milestone

as ‘Main Vaapas Aaunga’ completed 50 days in theatres. In a nod to the milestone, Imtiaz Ali penned a long note. “50 days in cinemas!! this is a rare feat for any film. Main Vaapas Aaunga achieves this today and my first thought is of gratitude towards the audience - the good people that watch cinema, who invested emotionally in the film and convinced others to watch it, who created the extraordinary word of mouth -for

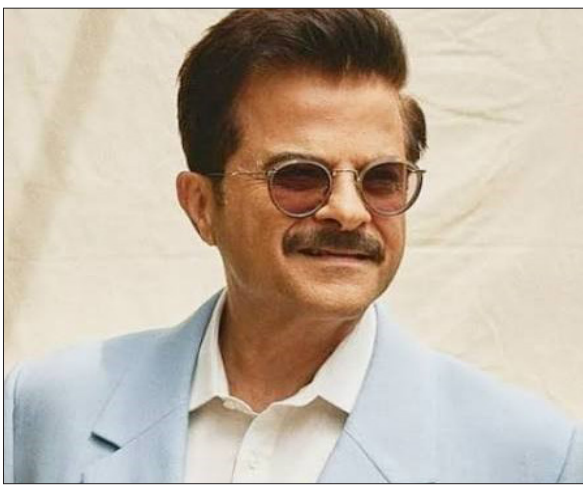


no reason except that they liked the film. may the tribe increase!” The filmmaker expressed gratitude toward the audience’s response, adding that it inspires him to make more entertaining cinema. “The positive reaction of the audience to MVA is a

beacon of hope for all contemporary filmmakers. The love that the audience has shown us will always be in my heart and inspire me to make better and more entertaining cinema in its service. The love that the stellar cast and crew put into the film has been reciprocated by the audience and I am very happy about that. The support of exhibitors and distributors to this film that did not have a good opening was crucial for its unusual success.

Many thanks to all there,” he continued. Directed by Imtiaz Ali, ‘Main Vaapas Aunga’ stars Diljit Dosanjh, Naseeruddin Shah, Sharvari and Vedang Raina in pivotal roles. Set against the backdrop of personal history and Partition-era memories, the period drama follows 95-year-old Ishar Singh Grewal, played by Naseeruddin Shah, who suffers a stroke while attempting to travel to Sargodha in present-day Pakistan.

Anil Kapoor announced as host of new reality show ‘India ke top 1%’, premiering September 5



Mumbai : After winning over audiences across the globe in countries including the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Greece, Australia, Israel, Turkey, Ukraine, Mexico and the USA, the internationally acclaimed format ‘The 1% Club’ is now mak-

ing its much-awaited debut in India as ‘India Ke Top 1%’. Hosted by Bollywood icon Anil Kapoor, the show offers a refreshing take on the quiz genre, where it’s not about how much you know, but how you think.

The show was recently

announced at an event in Mumbai attended by distinguished dignitaries and industry leaders. Unlike traditional quiz shows, India Ke Top 1% is built around logic, observation and common sense. Designed for everyone, the format allows people of every age to play along from home, turning every living room into a shared family game night. Sharing his excitement ahead of the grand premiere, Anil Kapoor said, “I’m thrilled to announce that India Ke Top 1% premieres on 5th September. Witnessing the grand launch of the show in such a spectacular setting made this announcement even more special. India Ke Top 1% is unlike anything audiences have seen before. It will surprise you and keep

you on your toes because it’s not about how much you know; it’s about how you think. Every challenge tests your observation, logic, presence of mind and your ability to stay calm under pressure.”

“The best part is that everyone at home can play along with every question and discover how their own minds work. There will be moments that amaze you, moments that make you question your first instinct, and moments that remind you that intelligence comes in many forms. If you think you have what it takes to be among India’s Top 1%, register now and take on the challenge,” the actor added. India Ke Top 1% will premiere on September 5, 2026. It will air on Star Plus.

Netflix scraps plans for David Fincher’s American ‘squid game’ series

Agency : For years, fans believed Squid Game was all set to get a Hollywood makeover with David Fincher at the helm. But fresh reports suggest the streaming giant has now changed its game plan.

Needless to say, the Korean drama Squid Game is easily one of the most popular franchises on Netflix. There were also talks about a Hollywood remake of the survival show in English since years. In the latest news, the American spin-off by David Finche has reportedly been scrapped by Netflix. According to The Playlist, Netflix is no longer moving ahead with David Fincher’s rumoured Squid Game series. Internally referred to as Heckler, the project had Utopia creator Dennis Kelly attached as its writer. Kelly had previously teamed up with Fincher on another HBO venture as well, but that project also never made it to production.

The report further claimed that the project slowly lost steam over time. A combination of leadership changes within Netflix, Fincher’s busy slate of high-profile projects, and the streamer’s evolving vision for expanding the Squid Game universe reportedly contributed to the decision to shelve the series. Moving forward, Netflix will now probably be making its own versions of Squid Game for other nations including France and Norway, among others. Notably, these are just in talking stages as of now and there is no confirmation regarding this.

Meanwhile, David is busy currently with a string of projects in the pipeline. He recently finished the shooting of The Adventures of Cliff Booth, which is the sequel to Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, penned by Quentin Tarantino and starring Brad Pitt. Created, written and directed by Hwang Dong-hyuk, Squid



Game is a South Korean dystopian survival thriller that became a global phenomenon after its Netflix debut. The story follows 456 cash-strapped contestants who agree to take part in a mysterious competition, where childhood games turn deadly and the lone winner walks away with a staggering ₩45.6 billion (around US\$39.86 million) prize. The series is led by Lee Jung-jae, who plays its central character, Seong Gi-hun, alongside an ensemble cast.

Mahesh Babu spotted covered in blood in leaked video from Varanasi



Hyderabad : Superstar Mahesh Babu’s Varanasi has been trending on social media, having stayed in the

Babu from Varanasi recently leaked and quickly went viral online.

In the clip, Mahesh Babu is seen shooting a scene in the water near a temple, covered in blood along his right cheek and neck. Despite multiple leaks, anticipation for Varanasi remains huge. Fans are hoping the makers will unveil a teaser or first-look poster of Mahesh Babu on the occasion of the actor’s birthday on August 9. Whether the team will officially release content from the movie following this leak remains to be seen.

Varanasi is directed by SS Rajamouli, and Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra is returning to Indian silver screens with this project after a long time. The release date of the film: 7 April 2027.

Harshvardhan Rane and Sanjeeda Shaikh spark fresh romance speculation with vacation snaps

Mumbai : Harshvardhan Rane and Sanjeeda Shaikh have once again caught the attention of fans after sharing photos that appear to have been taken at the same location. Their latest social media posts, reportedly from Panshet near Pune, have sparked fresh speculation about the two actors spending time together. The duo has been linked romantically for years, although neither has publicly confirmed their relationship.

Harshvardhan and Sanjeeda recently shared glimpses from what appeared to be the same getaway on Instagram. Although the photos were captured from different



angles, the backdrop looked identical, prompting fans to speculate that they may have been holidaying together and further adding fuel to dating rumours surrounding them. Harshvardhan gave fans a glimpse into his stay, sharing pictures of himself making tea and cooking eggs.

Sanjeeda, on the other hand, posted pictures of herself enjoying a cup of tea, with two cups visible on the table. In another photo, someone could be seen preparing omelettes using what appeared to be the same pan and stove-top featured in Harshvardhan’s pictures. The setting

also seemed to match, with the same green surroundings, prompting fans to connect the two posts.

The comments section of their posts was flooded with fan reactions. One fan wrote under Sanjeeda’s post, “Aap aur Harshvardhan ek saath.” Another fan wrote, “Sanam Teri kasam2... harshavardhan is also there.” A third fan wrote, “So it means both are dating.” Meanwhile, people under Harshvardhan’s post commented, “Who’s the second tea cup for?” Another fan wrote, “Guys why are many of you are talking about who he could be with and all that stuff. It doesn’t matter. We have to respect his privacy.

Rahul Gandhi’s Funny Batman Reaction, “Let’s Just Say” Goes Viral

New Delhi, Aug 07: Rahul Gandhi, the head of the Congress, conducted a “Ask Me Anything” session on Instagram on Thursday as part of a new outreach to Generation Z. He responded to a number of questions, including one about the Jharkhand student movement, and declared that all governments should pay attention to what students have to say.Gandhi said, “Students, Gen-Z -- I’m here to listen,” along with a link to his Instagram project on X. I’ll respond to as many inquiries as I can on Instagram. Videos of some of the questions he responded to were released by the Congress.When asked about the student protest in Jharkhand, which is run by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, an ally of the INDIA bloc, Gandhi said that the nation’s educational system has failed. ”The student protests that are happening in the country are against the education system. I have stated it clearly, in Kota, Dehradun and will say it in Allahabad, that our education system has collapsed, it is unaffordable and oppressive.”Every government, be it the central government, Congress government or Jharkhand government, should listen to what students are saying and take action to change the education system,” he said.The protest against the alleged irregularities in recruitment exams in Jharkhand entered its 13th day on Thursday with six demonstrators on a hunger strike. Agitating students and job aspirants have formed an 11-member delegation to hold talks with the state government to resolve the impasse. One of the largest student-led demonstrations in the state in recent years, the protest started on July 25 at Jaipal Singh Munda Stadium under the name of the JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch. Gandhi responded, “India’s women are our strength, our biggest asset and frankly I do not appreciate the way women are



treated in society, the way our education system treats our women, and the way our corporate system treats our women,” when asked about his message to young women fighting for their right to an education. In every aspect of life, women should have equal room. In fact I believe they deserve more than equal space in every sphere of life.”The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said: “You be confident, you be brave, you be powerful, exactly how you are and we are there to fully support you.” Asked who is his favourite politician from the BJP, Gandhi named Captain Amarinder Singh.“I get along with him, he is cool. He is an expert on military history. Hello, uncle Amarinder,” Gandhi said. Asked whether the education system in India is producing enough thinkers, Gandhi said the education system is busy destroying thinkers.“The USP of our education system now, especially since the RSS has captured it, is how not to make young Indian people think for themselves,” he said. Asked if he was Batman, Gandhi, in a lighter vein, said, “Let’s just say that no one has ever seen me and Batman in the same room together!” To a question on which phi-

losophy interests him the most, Gandhi said, “All the different philosophies that have shaped our Constitution from Lord Buddha, Guru Nanak Dev, Basavanna ji, Sankardev ji Dharti Abba, Birsa Munda, Periyar, Mahatma Phule, Narayana Guru ji, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Gandhi-ji, and so many more.” The initiative comes a day after Gandhi met a group of students who had protested last month seeking then education minister Dharmendra Pradhan’s resignation over the NEET paper leak and were at the receiving end of the police crackdown on July 20.On Wednesday, Gandhi alleged that Union Home Minister Amit Shah was responsible for the violence against protesting youngsters and that he does not have the courage to explain in Parliament what happened with the students.Gandhi has been regularly posting snippets from his interaction with students and parents on Instagram recently. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi spearheading a concerted effort to appeal to Generation Z, along with a number of Union ministers and party leaders, Instagram has become a crucial political communications tool for political leaders in recent weeks.

“Hello, Uncle”: Rahul Gandhi Addresses His “Favourite” BJP Leader

New Delhi, Aug 07: When asked which politician from the opposing BJP was his favorite, Rahul Gandhi instantly said, “It is Amarinder Singh.”Definitely, Captain Amarinder Singh. I really like him because I get along with him, he’s nice, and he knows a lot about military history. “Hello, Uncle Amarinder,” Gandhi remarked during an Instagram “ask me anything” session with Gen Z students while wearing his signature white T-shirt and camel-colored pants.Gandhi visited a group of students who had protested last month demanding the resignation of then-education minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET paper leak. The students were subjected to a police raid, using tear gas and pellet guns, and Gandhi saw them the day before the outreach to Gen Z. Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, has been regularly posting snippets from his interaction with students and parents on Instagram recently.

More than half of India’s population of 1.4 billion consists of those younger than 35, and Gen Z is expected to form one of the largest voting blocs by the time the general election is held in 2029.Former Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, popularly known as “Captain”, joined the BJP in 2022, nearly a year after he quit the Congress following his abrupt sacking as Chief Minister before the Punjab assembly elections. Amarinder Singh also merged his Punjab Lok Congress with the BJP. He had formed the party last year, soon after exiting the Congress, his party of five decades. In June, Amarinder Singh, a former Congress leader, shared that Rahul Gandhi wished him on his birthday and also condoled the loss his brother - gestures he said were absent from the BJP.

“I Was 12th Man For 2 Years” Ajinkya Rahane Discusses Team India’s “Tough Phase”

New Delhi: Ajinkya Rahane, a former batter for the Indian cricket team, described one of the most difficult times in his career and recalled how frustrating it was to travel with the national team but not play a single game. Rahane didn’t participate in his maiden Test match for another two years after making his white-ball debut in 2011. Despite being a member of the team on several occasions, he spent a considerable amount of time as the 12th man. In 2013, he eventually played his first Test match against Australia. Rahane acknowledged that the two years were quite challenging for him, but he also said that he eventual-

ly came to love the job. ”The first two years, when I entered the team for the first time in 2011. I had to wait 20 games for my Test debut, and I was there as a 12th man for two years. That was a challenging phase, but I learnt a lot from it. I had two choices: either to gain sympathy or try to improve myself.

There is nothing bad about being a 12th man or serving water or helping your teammates. I took it positively. I would look at everything, and because of that, I could play for a long time. Observing helped my attitude and mindset. It would be easy to gain sympathy, but I never expected that,” Rah-

ane also explained how patience played a key part in his journey before admitting that it did not always come naturally to him. However, experience helped in shaping his outlook and he revealed how much senior players helped him. ”It existed previously, but as I continued to play and acquired expertise, it also evolved. It’s difficult to go by local train in Mumbai, so I won’t claim I was very patient from the beginning. That’s when patience starts to grow. You unintentionally believed that your name should be called up for India when I began playing domestic cricket and continued to score regularly. I felt the same way.

Aftermath of the Datia Bypoll: Congress Highlights Former BJP Leader Uma Bharti’s Mysterious Post



New Delhi, Aug 07: Madhya Pradesh politics are still being affected by the Datia byelection outcomes.Senior BJP leader and former chief minister Uma Bharti has publicly demanded a review of her party’s electoral strategy following the defeat, while the Congress has rewarded a former BJP leader for helping the party hold onto the politically important Datia assembly seat in northern Madhya Pradesh. Senior Datia politician Avadhesh Nayak has been chosen General Secretary of the state Congress by Pradesh Congress Committee chairman Jitu Patwari, after the proposal of AICC Madhya Pradesh in-charge Harish Chaudhary. Despite being turned down for the party ticket twice in

less than three years, Nayak’s commitment and organizational effort in the Datia byelection are being recognized by the appointment.After a protracted dispute with then-Home Minister and Datia MLA Dr. Narottam Mishra, Nayak, a powerful Brahmin politician from Datia, left the BJP prior to the 2023 Assembly elections. Nayak was the Vice-Chairman of the Madhya Pradesh Textbook Corporation under the Shivraj Singh Chouhan administration.

The Congress had initially fielded Nayak against Mishra in the 2023 Assembly elections but replaced him within days with former MLA Rajendra Bharti, reportedly after internal consultations. Bharti went on to defeat

Mishra by over 77,000 votes, while Nayak was assured that he would be considered for the next election from Datia. However, when the Datia byelection was announced after Bharti’s disqualification, the Congress again overlooked Nayak and instead nominated two-time former MLA Ghanshyam Singh. Despite the disappointment, Nayak stayed with the party and campaigned extensively. Party leaders credit him with mobilising Brahmin voters, particularly in the Basai region, where the community has traditionally leaned towards the BJP.Ironically, while Nayak remained with the Congress despite repeated setbacks, Rajendra Bharti, whose disqualification had necessitated the byelection, was suspended from the party’s primary membership on August 2 over allegations of colluding with the BJP. Explaining Nayak’s appointment, state Congress chief Jitu Patwari said, “Avadhesh Nayak worked with complete dedication for the organisation during the Datia byelection. The party recognises commitment, and this responsibility reflects that.” Congress Media Department Chairman Mukesh Nayak said: “The Congress has entrusted Avadhesh Nayak with

Tanvi Sharma advances to the quarterfinals of the Korea Masters, but Anmol Kharb withdraws

Asan: Anmol Kharb of India’s Korea Masters career ended on Thursday in the pre-quarterfinals with a fierce defeat to Olympian Vu Thi Trang of Vietnam. Here at Asan Yi Sun-sin Gymnasium on Thursday, Anmol lost against an Olympian 23-21, 15-21, and 21-18. Vu Thi Trang had an early edge since the Indian shuttle was in control for a large portion of the first game but lost four game points.

In response, Anmol used her 11-9 advantage at the half to force a decider in the second game. In the decider, the Indian found herself trailing 19-9 before mounting a late surge with eight consecutive points. However, it was a little too late for a comeback as Vu Thi Trang closed out the match



and moved into the next round.Elsewhere, fresh off her title triumph at Taipei Open, Tanvi Sharma continued her impressive run by defeating her compatriot Shriyanshi Valishetty 21-16, 17-21, 21-13.After falling behind 11-7 in the

first game, Tanvi wrestled back control, reeling off a string of points to take the opener. Shriyanshi Valishetty bounced back in the second game, racing to an 11-6 lead at the interval, before sealing the second game to force a decider.

The deciding game, however, saw Tanvi in control from the outset as she edged into an 11-9 lead at the interval before pulling away decisively, conceding just four more points en route to sealing victory in 57 minutes.Moreover, Ashmita Chaliha and Rakshitha Ramraj also joined Tanvi Sharma in the women’s singles quarter-finals.Ashmita beat home favourite Kim Min-ji 21-17, 21-6, while Rakshitha defeated Japan’s Manami Suizu 22-20, 21-10. However, fifth seed Isharani Baruah’s and Mansi Singh’s Korea Masters campaign came to an end. Isharani lost 17-21, 21-18, 21-19 against Kim Min-sun of Korea, while Mansi suffered a 21-12, 14-21, 21-17 defeat against fourth seed Han Qianxi of China.

Testing Agency Errors That Caused The NEET Paper Leak: No Live CCTV, No Frisking

New Delhi, Aug 07: The National Testing Agency’s (NTA) exclusive paper-setting procedure has a number of flaws, according to the CBI chargesheet in the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak case. These flaws allowed subject matter experts to access, save, and eventually leak examination material.According to the organization, the procedure allowed several specialists to work on final question papers from various phases of preparation. “The visibility of all the final question sets to any one expert should be avoided to prevent the chance of a leak,” according to the chargesheet. However, investigators assert that “in the process actually followed for the NEET-UG 2026 examination, it is found that many experts were involved in multiple stages.” It also states that “from the moderation stage onward, the experts concerned had full access to the final sets of questions, while in the translation/back-translation stage a single expert could see all four of the final master sets.”The chargesheet states that plain papers for preliminary work during translation and back-translation were given to specialists inside the secret sector. During the translation process, accused chemical expert PV Kulkarni reportedly used these papers “to note down, on small chits, all 135 questions of Chemistry in brief.” The agency says for the simpler questions the accused “could simply remember them and write them down in a book once he returned to his room in the hotel at the end of the day.”

In another instance, investigators allege that NTA botany expert Manisha Mandhare repeatedly referred to NCERT textbooks while translating the paper, noting down paragraphs that corresponded with confidential questions. “Due to

her decades of experience with the same material, she was able to correlate the questions with the NCERT textbook material,” the chargesheet states.The CBI has also flagged serious surveillance lapses at the NTA headquarters in Delhi’s NSIC Building in Okhla area. According to the chargesheet, the Confidential Section where NEET-UG papers were handled had CCTV backup for only 20-25 days. Since the confidential work ended on April 7 and the case was registered on May 12, footage from the relevant period was no longer available. Investigators also found that the NTA had no dedicated CCTV monitoring control room, allowing activities inside the confidential section to go unnoticed.“There was no dedicated CCTV live feed monitoring control room in NTA, as a result of which the activities of the experts in the confidential hall went unnoticed,” the chargesheet said.The investigation also revealed that experts working in the NTA’s confidential section were not subjected to frisking while entering or leaving the premises. “There was no practice of checking/frisking of experts during entry/exit from the confidential section at NTA.”

According to the CBI, the accused experts, despite signing confidentiality declarations, retained, reproduced and circulated confidential questions before NEET-UG 2026, forming the basis of the alleged paper leak conspiracy.The 94-page CBI document details how three subject experts who were part of the National Testing Agency (NTA) team tasked with framing the question paper allegedly leaked the questions. PV Kulkarni, Manisha Mandhare, and Manisha Havaladar were identified as the primary sources of the document leak in the chargesheet.

Following Gianni Infantino’s crisis meeting, UEFA continues to threaten a boycott of the World Cup

Madrid: Despite FIFA’s apology for its botched attempt to sell World Cup stakes, the governing body of European soccer has maintained its threat to boycott FIFA events. UEFA reaffirmed on Thursday that it had lost faith in Gianni Infantino, the president of FIFA, and that the requirements to revoke its boycott threat had not been fulfilled. “UEFA’s associations were very clear about the conditions attached to the non participation in FIFA competitions,” it stated in a statement.First, it was necessary to drop the plans to sell off the big contests. Secondly, it was necessary to guaranty that such attempts to defame the game in this manner would never occur again. ”These conditions have not been met. In addition, UEFA made it abundantly clear in its statement on Saturday that it has lost confidence in Gianni Infantino’s presidency.

That position holds.”It was another bruising day for Infantino, with global soccer players union FIFPRO accusing him of “a profound abuse of presidential power.”The English Football Association has also withdrawn its support for Infantino’s re-election.



Even Amnesty International said the “current crisis spotlights the need for governance reforms.”FIFA and Infantino tried to present a united front following a high-level summit in Morocco on Wednesday when it announced the president had the full support of top staff in attendance. The world governing body also apologized for errors made over its controversial plan to sell profits in the World Cup through a commercial subsidiary and committed to “ensure they do not happen again.”FIFA said it hoped its meeting would “help restore confidence” in the organization after

the turbulence created by Infantino’s now abandoned project, which provoked widespread condemnation. UEFA voted to abandon FIFA competitions if it went ahead. And even after Infantino’s hasty change of course, Europe’s governing body said it had lost confidence in FIFA’s leadership - paving the way for a challenge to his presidency.In its defiant statement, UEFA made it clear its position still held.“Yesterday’s announcement that some people employed by the FIFA president (and whose careers depend on his favor) agree with him changes nothing,” it said.

Sachin Tendulkar Retains Spot Among India’s Top Five Celebrity Brands

New Delhi : Legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar remains one of India’s most influential celebrity brands, ranking among the country’s top five in the Kroll India Celebrity Brand Valuation 2025 report with a brand value of USD 125.9 million. The former cricketer is also the only retired athlete to consistently feature among India’s top 10 celebrity brands, with his value continuing to grow year after year. His enduring reputation, trust, and authenticity have kept him highly attractive to brands across various industries. Tendulkar was the most complete batter of his time, the most prolific run-maker of all time, and arguably the biggest cricket icon the game has ever known.He holds the record for the most centuries in



both Tests and ODIs, a remarkable feat, especially considering he didn’t register his first ODI hundred until his 79th match. With a staggering 34,357 international runs, Sachin Tendulkar stands as the most prolific batter in cricket history. Throughout his illustrious international career, he rewrote the record books time and again, setting

milestones that remain unchallenged to this day.With his unwavering patience and resilience, the ‘Master Blaster’ has 200 Test appearances to his name, the most by any player in the format. Tendulkar amassed 15,921 runs, 51 centuries, and 2,058 fours, the most by any player in red-ball cricket. Revered as India’s “God of Cricket,” he also

became the fastest to 15,000 Test runs, reaching the milestone in just 300 innings, a distinction he holds exclusively. With a career that spanned over 22 years and 91 days, the 53-year-old has the longest career in ODIs. With a staggering 1,894 runs and nine centuries in 1998, Tendulkar holds the record for the most runs and centuries scored in a single calendar year in the format, a feat that still stands unrivalled. During his run in the 50-over format, Tendulkar raised his bat to celebrate 145 half-centuries and found the fence for a four on 2,016 occasions, the highest by any player that the world of cricket has ever seen. The undisputed icon, Tendulkar, became the fastest to 18,000 ODI runs, reaching the milestone in just 440 innings.

Odisha, Madhya Pradesh Enter Junior Men’s National Hockey Championship Final After Dominant Wins



Coimbatore : Hockey Association of Odisha and Hockey Madhya Pradesh secured impressive victories in their respective semi-finals to book their places in the Final of the 16th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship 2026 - Division ‘A’, being played in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. In the opening semi-final, Hockey Association of Odisha defeat-

ed Hockey Punjab 6-4 in a thrilling high-scoring encounter, according to a press release. Odisha displayed attacking flair throughout the match, with Bilkan Oram emerging as the star performer after completing a brilliant hat-trick. He found the back of the net in the 28th, 41st and 52nd minutes to lead his side to victory. Alok Kujur opened the scoring for

Odisha in the 11th minute, while captain Deepak Pradhan added another in the 37th minute. Amit Kiro rounded off the scoring with a goal in the 59th minute. Hockey Punjab fought hard and kept the contest alive with goals from Amandeep in the 7th and 42nd minutes, Mandeep Singh in the 8th minute and Ajaypal Singh in the 34th minute. Despite their spirited effort, Odisha maintained their composure and sealed an entertaining 6-4 win to advance to the championship clash. In the second semi-final, Hockey Madhya Pradesh registered a disciplined 2-0 victory over Hockey Jharkhand. After a closely contested match for much of the game, Hockey Madhya Pradesh broke the deadlock in the 56th minute through Rajveer Singh. Just two minutes later, Aashir Aadil Khan doubled the lead in the 58th minute, ensuring their team secured a well-deserved place in the final. Both teams showcased strong defensive discipline before Hockey Madhya Pradesh capitalised on their late opportunities to finish the contest in commanding fashion. With the semi-finals concluded, Hockey Association of Odisha and Hockey Madhya Pradesh will face each other in the Final of the tournament on 8th August 2026, where the coveted 16th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship 2026 title will be at stake. Earlier in the day, Hockey Punjab the 3rd/4th.

Gold Medalist Para-Athlete Misses Raj Thackeray Despite Invite, Coach Claims

Shillong: Para-athlete and Commonwealth Games gold medalist Dilip Gavit could not meet MNS chief Raj Thackeray here even after waiting for nearly two hours, his coach has claimed. Gavit, who won the gold in the men’s 100m T47 final in the recently concluded Glasgow CWG, had been invited to meet Thackeray, who was touring Nashik, on Thursday, said his coach Vaijanath Kale. A video showed MNS workers placating Kale and asking him to wait for some more time. “We were waiting for quite some time....Sir (Thackeray) is busy. We will meet him later,” Kale is heard saying. A reaction from MNS was not immediately available. India scripted history in



para athletics at the Commonwealth Games, securing a historic one-two finish in the men’s 100m T47 final as Dilip Gavit won the gold and Mohammed Basil Morssinganakath claimed the silver. During the meet-

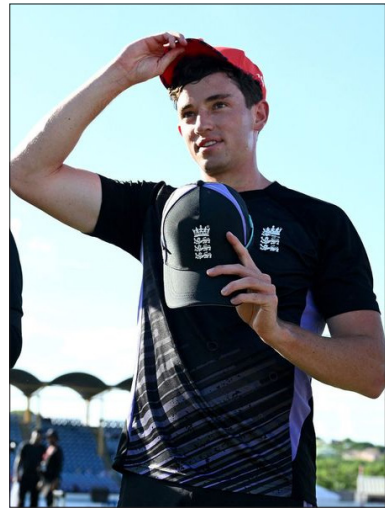
ing, Yogesh Sharma sought Shri Devendra Jhajharia’s valuable guidance on various aspects of para sports development and athlete welfare. The discussion covered ways to better support para athletes, identify

emerging talent, and create a stronger ecosystem for their growth and success. Drawing from his vast experience as one of India’s most celebrated Paralympians and sports administrators, Shri Devendra Jhajh-

England Pacer John Turner Announces Shock Retirement at Just 25, Stuns Cricket World

London : John Turner, the Hampshire fast bowler who represented England in four internationals in 2024, has announced his shock retirement from professional cricket at the age of 25. The Johannesburg-born pacer, who still had two years remaining on his Hampshire contract and held an ECB development contract until late last year, made two ODI and two T20I appearances during England’s tour of the West Indies in late 2024, claiming three wickets. Turner also built an impressive record across the domestic circuit before deciding to bring his professional career to an unexpected end. “It was always my dream to play professional and international cricket, and doing so for Hampshire and England has been nothing short of living out those same childhood dreams,” Turner said in a statement as per Cricinfo. “I have, however, decided to retire from the game, and as you can imagine, this has been one of the hardest decisions I’ve had to make. The stress fracture, which has sidelined me for over

a year, as well as my injury record, naturally made me think of my future both as a cricketer and away from the game, and subsequently, I decided now was the right time to pursue my next challenge. The five years I have been able to call myself a professional cricketer for Hampshire have been the greatest five years possible. From the day I joined the club in pursuit of a dream, everyone was extremely welcoming, and this never changed,” he added. “The opportunity and belief the club showed in me are something I could never thank them enough for. I have experienced more over the last few years than I could ever imagine, and none of that would be possible without the support from everyone at the club,” he concluded. Turner studied at Hilton College, one of South Africa’s most prestigious schools, before moving to the UK for university with the benefit of his British passport through his English mother. He joined Hampshire in 2021 after impressing during a trial and earned his first England call-up



in 2023 following a strong showing in The Hundred. However, he found opportunities limited in Hampshire’s County Championship side, making just seven first-class appearances for the club. He also featured in three matches on loan at Lancashire in early 2025 before injuries once again disrupted his progress.

Argentine Football Association Backs FIFA President Infantino, Praises His Leadership Tenure

Buenos: The Argentine Football Association (AFA) extended its support to FIFA president Gianni Infantino and the work done under him during the last 10 years, pointing out that the main focus was the “development of football throughout the world and institutional strength based on a clear, stable and transparent governance model.” Infantino has received support from one of the most powerful associations in the world as he battles to retain his presidency ahead of the elections in Morocco next year. The FIFA Forward Enterprise, aiming at bringing outside participation/investment in FIFA-related competitions, had invited the wrath and words of concern from massive football bodies like UEFA, FA, CONCACAF, among others, and was withdrawn following the backlash. Soon, in another statement, Infantino and FIFA General Secretary Mattias Grafst-



romapologised for the errors and pledged that they would not be repeated, a review would be done, and findings would be submitted to the FIFA Council during the next meeting. Responding to it, AFA has now written in a statement, “On behalf of the Argentine Football Association (AFA), and its Executive Committee, we address you, dear President, and through you, the FIFA board, to express our support for the management carried out during the last 10 years, which had as its main focuses the development of football throughout the world and institu-

tional strength based on a clear, stable and transparent governance model.” In this regard, with respect to the recent events that are public knowledge, we must acknowledge the Administration’s decision to withdraw a project that, within the football family and from its inception, generated far more uncertainties than certainties.” “Therefore, it is worth highlighting the acknowledgement of the errors made in that process and the apology expressed in the heartfelt message sent to FIFA’s 211 member associations. Prioritising governance standards is

a fundamental pillar for strengthening good relations between FIFA, its member associations, and the confederations,” the statement continued. AFA said that Infantino is leading a management that has brought a “profound transformation of FIFA; that has opened the doors of the organisation to all member associations and confederations”, so that through frank and direct dialogue, football at all levels and disciplines could be promoted. AFA said that the transformation brought under Infantino was based on a “transparent governance model, respect for statutory structures, and adherence to democratic procedures--essential principles for the football family to be united, strong, and working to continue generating improvements in both sporting and institutional aspects, which translate into a better quality of life for millions of people who practice our beloved sport.”

Harbhajan Singh Felicitated by DDCA President Rohan Jaitley During DPL

New Delhi: Former India cricketer Harbhajan Singh attended the ongoing Delhi Premier League (DPL) fixture today, where he was felicitated by Delhi & District Cricket Association (DDCA) President Rohan Jaitley. The felicitation ceremony took place during the match, with Rohan Jaitley welcoming Harbhajan Singh and acknowledging his immense contribution to Indian cricket. The gesture was met with applause from players, officials, and fans present at the venue, according to a release. Harbhajan Singh, one of India’s most celebrated off-spinners, graced the occasion, adding to the excitement surrounding the Delhi Premier League. His presence further highlighted the league’s growing stature and its commitment to bringing together icons of the game while promoting cricketing



talent in the capital. The Delhi Premier League continues to attract enthusiastic crowds and prominent personalities from the cricketing fraternity, reinforcing its position as one of the country’s premier domestic T20 competitions. Earlier, Outer Delhi Warriors produced a dominant all-round performance to register a convincing 39-run victory over South Delhi Superstarz

in a rain-curtailed 10-over contest at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi. Batting first, the Warriors piled up an imposing 132/2 in their 10 overs, courtesy of a sensational unbeaten knock from Yajas Sharma. The aggressive batter smashed 64 off just 29 balls, hammering five sixes and five fours, and anchored the innings brilliantly from start to finish.

South Africa Adds Three T20Is Against India Ahead of Champions Trophy Preparation

Johannesburg: South Africa has added a trio of T20Is to their home multi-format series with India at the end of the year in order to ramp up preparations for the inaugural ICC Women’s Champions Trophy event next year. The three 20-over contests will take place just after Christmas this year, just weeks prior to the start of the Champions

Trophy event that is slated to be played in February 2027. It means India will play a total of seven fixtures in South Africa in December, consisting of a one-off Test in Gqeberha from December 9, a three-match ODI series from December 16 and the trio of T20Is contests from December 26, as per the ICC. The matches will continue the recent rivalry

between the two sides, with India having beaten South Africa last year in the final of the ICC Women’s Cricket World Cup as they claimed their first 50-over title. Cricket South Africa CEO Pholetsi Moseki welcomed the new schedule and believes the visit of India across December will help his side prepare well for the Champions Trophy event

in February. We are delighted to confirm the revised schedule for India’s tour of South Africa, with the addition of the T20 International series over the festive period, ensuring our Proteas Women have the best possible preparation ahead of the inaugural ICC Women’s Champions Trophy in Sri Lanka early next year,” Moseki said in a statement as

quoted by ICC. “India remain one of the strongest teams in world cricket, and the opportunity to compete against them across all three formats will provide invaluable competition as we continue building towards another major ICC event,” the CEO added. Towards the end of the innings, Monu Shukla provided the perfect finishing touch with an

unbeaten 21 off 13 balls. His partnership with Yajas ensured the Warriors crossed the 130-run mark and set a daunting target. Chasing 133 in just 10 overs, South Delhi Superstarz endured a disastrous start. The Warriors’ bowlers struck early, reducing them to 5/2, and continued to pile on the pressure as the batting side slipped further to 16/4.

