

Yhome calls for coordinated action on waste management and urban issues

Kohima, Aug 17: Coordinated action among departments is essential to address water supply, waste management, and pressing civic challenges in Kohima, stated Advisor for School Education Dr. Kekhrielhoulie Yhome during the Kohima District Planning and Development Board (DPDB) meeting held at the DPDB Hall on Monday. Chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner Ruopfikuotuo Noudi, the session focused on multi-sectoral planning and regulatory compliance for urban infrastructure in the state capital. Addressing the board, Dr. Yhome directed the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) to prepare and submit a detailed report on



proposed water-treatment initiatives aimed at enhancing clean water access across the city. Stressing the imperative of regulatory compliance, he urged the Urban Development and Municipal

Affairs departments to maintain high operational readiness in view of directives issued by the Supreme Court of India regarding municipal solid waste management. He noted that specialized

waste-management plans have already been initiated at key urban sites, including the treatment facility at Lerie and the landfill at Dzürüzou, and underlined the necessity of timely, synchronized exe-

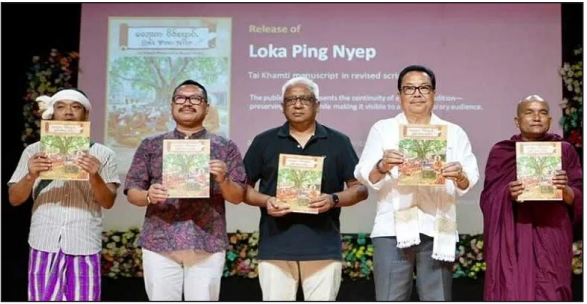
cution across all participating agencies.

Regarding Externally Aided Projects (EAPs), Dr. Yhome instructed line departments to liaise closely with their respective Heads of Departments to compile sectoral outlay details—specifically targeting solid and liquid waste management infrastructure—for presentation at the upcoming monthly DPDB meeting. Furthermore, he directed departments involved in rural development, urban engineering, and disaster management to execute a comprehensive, rapid survey of critical infrastructure bottlenecks affecting local communities and submit a consolidated assessment report.

Chowna Mein launches Tai Khamti Heritage Archive website

Namsai, Aug 17: Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein launched the first-ever Tai Khamti Heritage Archive website and released the book *Lik Loka Ping-Nyep* in Namsai, marking a major milestone in preserving the community's rich literary, cultural, and intellectual traditions. Executed by the Tai Khamti Manuscripts Documentation Committee (TKMDC) in collaboration with the Nanda Talukdar Foundation under the aegis of the Tai Khamti Heritage & Literature Society (TKHLS), the initiative integrates digital technology with indigenous heritage.

Speaking on the occasion, Mein emphasized that the website is not merely a digital intervention but a crucial step toward protecting the language, customary laws,



Theravada Buddhist philosophy, traditional medicine, and folklore of the Tai Khamti people for future generations. Under Phase-I of the digitisation project, 471 rare manuscripts comprising 28,264 pages have been digitally archived, enabling researchers, scholars, and community members to access, study, catalogue, transcribe, and translate these historical texts. Underlining efforts to safeguard the language, the Deputy Chief

Minister informed that the traditional script has been modified into a tonal script, with 37 teachers appointed to teach Tai Khamti as a third language in schools from Class I onwards. Additionally, 118 educated youths have undergone vocational training in the script and Pali language to teach in local monasteries (viharas) and schools. Mein urged families to send at least one child to classes at local viharas to keep the age-old literature alive.

Chowna Mein calls for collective effort to build Viksit Arunachal

Itanagar, Aug 17: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein called upon citizens to unite in a collective effort toward building a “Viksit Arunachal” as part of the broader national vision of Viksit Bharat@2047. Addressing the 80th Independence Day celebrations at Chongkham Circle Headquarters, Mein declared that the state has shifted from mere aspiration to robust self-confidence. He emphasized that Arunachal Pradesh sits at the “frontier of India's

future,” driven by its strategic location, rich natural resources, indigenous heritage, and dynamic youth population. Highlighting the state's economic transformation, the Deputy Chief Minister noted that the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) expanded significantly from ₹20,373 crore to ₹50,651 crore, while the annual budget rose from ₹12,533 crore in 2015-16 to ₹39,842 crore for 2025-26. He underscored major infrastructure strides, pointing out that rural road network coverage under PMGSY expand-

ed to 14,926 km and National Highways grew to 2,538 km. Mein also cited the Vibrant Villages Programme and the proposed ₹55,000-crore Frontier Highway as cornerstone projects aimed at fortifying remote border infrastructure. Outlining growth strategies, Mein announced that Namsai received approval for a new Medical College under the Aspirational District Programme, set to operate in public-private partnership (PPP) mode to overhaul regional healthcare. On the economic front, he



spotlighted youth empowerment through 156 incubated startups, alongside growth

opportunities in organic farming, agriculture, rural enterprises, and eco-tourism. He welcomed the global recognition of Glaw Lake as India's 101st Ramsar site—the state's first—and stressed the responsible development of Arunachal's estimated 58,000-MW hydropower potential while safeguarding ecological balances and indigenous community interests. During the event, Mein dedicated a new Reliance-gifted ambulance to public service, led a “Drug-Free Pledge,” and par-

ticipated in the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam plantation drive. The celebrations featured exhibition stalls by Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), a student march-past, and patriotic cultural performances. During the ceremonial event, Mein dedicated a new Reliance-gifted ambulance to public service, led a “Drug-Free Pledge,” and participated in the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam tree plantation drive.

Assistive devices distributed to PwDs and senior citizens in Kohima

Kohima, Aug 17: A mega distribution drive of free assistive devices and mobility aids was conducted for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) and senior citizens at the DPDB Conference Hall in Kohima on Monday. Organized jointly by the District Administration and District Social Welfare Office, Kohima, in collaboration with the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), the initiative was held under the central ADIP (Assistance to Disabled Persons) scheme and the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY).



citizens received support under the RVY scheme amounting to ₹59.89 lakh. The distributed equipment included 390 wheelchairs, 500 walking sticks, 646 knee braces, 541 LS belts, 457 chairs with commodes, 120 walkers, 100 hearing aids, silicon foam cushions, crutches, and specialized kits.

Advisor for School Education, Dr. Kekhrielhoulie Yhome, attended the event as the chief guest and ceremonially handed over devices to se-

lect beneficiaries. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Yhome emphasized the need for greater social inclusion and urged government departments to maintain strong inter-departmental convergence to ensure welfare benefits penetrate to the grassroots level. He noted that physical and mobility challenges often force children and elderly citizens into isolation, highlighting that functional aids play a transformative role in restoring their independence.

Kothamangalam, Aug 17: The death of a 20-year-old engineering student from Arunachal Pradesh at his rented residence in Kothamangalam, Ernakulam district, has triggered widespread student protests against the college administration, prompting the Kerala government to initiate a high-level inquiry into the incident.

The deceased, identified as Michi Marpu, a native of Naharlagun in Papum Pare district, was a fifth-semester BTech student at Mar Athanasius College of Engineering (MACE). According to police, Marpu was found lying on the floor with a rope around his neck by his roommates on Saturday evening. Although rushed to the Government Taluk Hospital in Kothamangalam, he was declared brought dead. Inves-

tigators recovered a three-page suicide note written in English and Hindi, indicating that academic stress and anxiety over an impending “year back” due to a low credit score drove him to take the extreme step. The Kothamangalam police registered a case of unnatural death under Section 194 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS).

The incident sparked intense anger among the student community, led by student unions including the SFI and KSU, who staged massive demonstrations outside the college. Protesters alleged that MACE, operating as an autonomous institute, enforced an excessively harsh credit policy—requiring 22 credits compared to the standard 18 credits mandated by APJ Abdul Kalam Techno-



logical University (KTU)—making students vulnerable to losing an entire academic year. Following discussions with student representatives, the college management agreed to review its credit policy and consider suspending the year-back system. Taking serious note

of the tragedy, Kerala Higher Education Minister Roji M. John ordered a comprehensive department-level investigation alongside the ongoing police inquiry. Minister John emphasized that while autonomous colleges enjoy academic leeway, they were directed to align

with KTU's decision to put the “year back” system on hold in the interest of student welfare. State authorities assured that all necessary arrangements are being made to assist the grieving family following the post-mortem examination.

Meanwhile, student organizations in Arunachal Pradesh have strongly condemned the incident and urged the Arunachal government to liaise directly with Kerala authorities to ensure a transparent investigation. Family members of the deceased have demanded a swift probe to ascertain whether institutional negligence or harassment played a role in the tragic demise, while local student bodies in Kerala continue to push for structural reforms across autonomous academic institutions.

Arunachal: Yingkiong Gets Triple Boost; MRF, Vendor Market & New GHSS Building Inaugurated

Itanagar, Aug 17: The administrative headquarters of Upper Siang district, Yingkiong, received a major infrastructure boost with the inauguration of three major development projects designed to improve public services, urban sanitation, and educational facilities. Health and Family Welfare Minister Alo Libang, alongside Upper Siang Deputy Commissioner Hage Lailang, officially dedicated a modern Material Recovery Facility (MRF), a dedicated Vendor Market, and a newly constructed double-storey academic block at the Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS).



The inauguration of the Material Recovery Facility at the district headquarter marks a significant step toward systematic solid waste management and urban cleanliness.

Built to handle municipal solid waste, the facility will facilitate segregation, processing, and recycling, helping keep Yingkiong clean and environmentally sustainable. Concurrently, the newly established Vendor Market was opened to provide local street vendors, small traders, and agricultural producers with an organized, hygienic, and safe commercial platform. Officials noted that the facility will reduce roadside congestion, streamline urban traffic, and empower local women vendors by offering a structured marketplace to sell local produce.

Addressing the educational needs of the region, the newly constructed academic building at GHSS Yingkiong will offer upgraded classrooms, laboratory infrastructure, and administrative facilities to cater to the growing student

population. Speaking at the ceremony, Minister Libang urged students and faculty to make optimum use of the improved academic environment and emphasized the government's commitment to raising educational standards across remote border districts.

Speaking at the inaugural function, Deputy Commissioner Hage Lailang highlighted that the simultaneous commissioning of these projects reflects the administration's multi-sectoral approach toward regional development. Local community leaders, district officials, teachers, and residents expressed gratitude to the state government, noting that the triple infrastructure addition will significantly enhance the quality of life, civic governance, and educational opportunities in Upper Siang.

ECl enumeration forms distributed at Bhandari

Kohima, Aug 17: As part of the ongoing electoral roll revision exercise across Nagaland, official Election Commission of India (ECI) enumeration forms were distributed at Bhandari sub-division in Wokha district on August 16, 2026. The distribution drive forms a critical component of the state-wide revision process, aimed at maintaining an accurate, updated, and transparent database of eligible electors across the constituency.

The distribution exercise was conducted under the supervision of local administrative officers and election officials, who coordinated with Booth Level Officers (BLOs) across designated polling stations in the sub-division. The primary objective of issuing the enumeration forms is to facilitate door-to-door verification, en-



able fresh voter enrollments, allow necessary corrections to existing elector particulars, and ensure the timely deletion of duplicate or deceased entries from the voter list. During the exercise, election officials instructed the field personnel to carry out meticulous verification to guarantee that no eligible citizen is left out of the electoral roll. Citizens across Bhandari were advised to

co-operate with visiting BLOs during the house-to-house enumeration drive, ensure the accurate submission of their details, and verify their identity details with supporting documents. Administrative authorities emphasized that maintaining a clean and inclusive voter registry is essential to upholding democratic principles ahead of upcoming legislative and local elections.

Residents Fuming as Transformer Sits Idle



Itanagar, Aug 17: A 25 kVA transformer has been rendered ineffective in Kaliabor, remaining inactive for the past three months. This unit was installed by the Assam Power Distribution Company Limited to address persistent low-voltage problems affecting Bamuni Pathar and Bamuni Gaon, following advocacy from a local MLA. However, power remains unavailable. Residents attribute the delay to the APDCL and the contractor, asserting that the equipment is dormant due to a lackadaisical approach. This inaction has dashed their hopes for a

dependable power grid. The community has articulated their discontent: “Residents have expressed dissatisfaction over the delay and alleged that the transformer has remained unused due to the lackadaisical attitude of APDCL and the contractor concerned.” Families in both villages continue to grapple with the same longstanding power issues. They are calling for immediate action. Villagers insist that the authorities must activate the transformer and ensure a stable power supply without further delay.

Authorities dismiss allegations regarding the aunt’s involvement in the death Murder of a teenager in Mizoram

Shillong, Aug 17: Police here on Sunday rejected a claim circulating on social media that the 15-year-old girl, whose body was found in Lunglei district more than a week ago, was killed by her aunt. While no arrest has been made in the case, an official said the probe into it was underway, and the police will come out with a statement once a breakthrough is achieved. According to police, the girl left her home around 8.30 pm on August 3 and did not return. Locals recovered her body on the morning of August 5 from the premises of a government-run school in Mualth-uam North. A case of murder and kidnapping has been registered at the Lunglei police station, and a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT)



has been formed to probe it. “An intensive investigation into the alleged murder is underway. We have not yet arrested any suspect and cannot reveal the progress in the investigation,” the officer told PTI. He also clarified that a recent social media post claiming the involvement of the victim’s aunt was factually incorrect. “Our seniors will make a state-

ment once there is a lead or breakthrough in the investigation,” the officer added. Locals claimed that the girl had stab marks on her chest. Earlier, Chief Minister Lalduhoma and Education Minister Vanlalhlana condemned the incident and sought swift justice for the victim. “Those responsible for this heinous crime must be identified and brought to justice without delay,” the chief minister said in a social media post on August 5. The state police have urged people not to circulate unverified information or rumours that could impede the investigation and requested anyone with credible information about the case to come forward and share it with the authorities.

Arunachal Deputy CM Opens New Facilities at Mahabodhi Lord Buddha College

Itanagar, Aug 17: Arunachal Pradesh’s Deputy Chief Minister, Chowna Mein, inaugurated new facilities at the Mahabodhi Lord Buddha College in Namsai. He conducted the ceremony in the presence of Namsai MLA Chau Zingnu Namchoom. This expansion introduces six significant enhancements to the campus infrastructure. Students now benefit from an extension to the college building, an exhibition hall, a con-

ference hall, and a college library. Additionally, the project has provided a seminar hall and the Maitri Girls Home. These facilities are designed to foster research, cultural initiatives, and overall academic learning, with the goal of enhancing the environment for youth across the district. The Deputy Chief Minister commended the staff and students for their contributions. He emphasized that the in-

stitution successfully integrates academics with fundamental values. “Mahabodhi Lord Buddha College is particularly important as it strives to merge quality education with the enduring principles of knowledge, compassion, discipline, and peace, as inspired by the teachings of Lord Buddha,” he remarked. He anticipates that the college will evolve into a center for holistic development.

Mizoram Wins Opener as Forfeits Shake Junior Hockey Nationals

Itanagar, Aug 17: Mizoram kicked off their run at the 16th Hockey India Junior Women National Championship 2026 with a 2-0 shutout against Kerala. The August 15 Division B, Pool A match marked the fourth day of tournament play. Mizoram walked away with three points. In the same pool, Assam erased a one-goal deficit to knock off Andhra Pradesh 2-1. Division B saw lopsided scores elsewhere. Karnataka dismantled Uttarakhand 6-1 in Pool B. Bi-

har cruised past Goa with a 6-0 scoreline. Action in Division C proved just as decisive. Gujarat bested Puducherry 3-1 during their Pool B fixture. Meanwhile, the combined side of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu blanked Hockey Arunachal 2-0 in Pool A. Administrative issues shifted the standings as well. Rajasthan and Jammu & Championship 2026 with a 2-0 victory over Kerala,” the report noted.

IMCLS has placed four researchers on its blacklist due to violations of community research ethics

Itanagar, Aug 17: The Idu Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society (IMCLS) has blacklisted four researchers from National Center for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Indian Foundation for Butterflies Trust (IBFT), and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), for alleged breach of the Idu Mishmi Community Research Code of Ethics (IMCRE). The blacklisted researchers are Dr Krushnamegh Kunte from NCBS, Fahim Khan from IBFT, Rajkamal Goswami affiliated with the ATREE, and Aavika Danda, formerly affiliated with ATREE. They will not be permitted to undertake any research activities in Idu Mishmi-inhabited areas hereafter. The Idu Mishmi community has its own community code of research ethics, the IMCRE, framed in 2024 and launched by Chief Minister Pema Khandu. As provided under the IMCRE, a Research Ethics Review Board (RERB) has been constituted to review research proposals seeking permission to undertake research activities in all Idu Mishmi inhabited areas. According to IMCLS, the objective of the IMCRE is to meaningfully engage with the wider research community while taking into consideration the concerns of the indigenous community through the basic principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), data regulation, ethical research, doing away with parachute research and decolonising research methodologies before research is undertaken in the indigenous community. IMCLS has stated that, despite repeated communications, members of ATREE, who worked in the Mekola Community Conserved Area (CCA), failed to obtain prior approval from IMCLS and did not seek the required consent from the RERB before un-

dertaking what the society describes as unethical research practices. “Such activities included the use of camera traps and the sharing of community-related data with the Forest Department and placing such data in the wider public domain without proper community consent,” they said. The society has further alleged that such actions contributed to complications relating to land matters in the Hunli-Desali circle, without the researchers fully understanding the legal landscape surrounding the issue. IMCLS alleged that these activities were undertaken by Rajkamal Goswami and Aavika Danda without prior informed consent, in what the society described as a race to complete their tasks and enhance their academic credibility. IMCLS further stated that Danda was called in writing for a meeting with the society but did not attend the meeting and subsequently left ATREE after completing the work, including collection of data, which the society alleges was undertaken through unethical means. The society stated that many villagers have complained about the issue and that the matter is currently pending before the appropriate district-level competent authority. IMCLS stated that the members associated with NCBS and IBFT were also blacklisted because, while their research permission was still pending before the RERB, they proceeded to a sensitive border area in Dibang Valley for their research work. According to IMCLS, when its members interacted with the researchers in Dibang Valley and requested them to obtain prior permission from the RERB, the researchers initially agreed to do so. However, they subsequently did not appear before the RERB despite the board waiting for them at Roing for

more than two hours, the IMCLS said. It further alleged that the team, thereafter, left Lower Dibang Valley directly from Dibang Valley without appearing before the RERB or obtaining the required permission. “This is not the first occasion on which it has blacklisted researchers for alleged violation of the community’s research ethics framework. In the past too, a researcher from Germany and a researcher from IIT Gandhinagar had also been blacklisted despite repeated requests and written communications asking them to comply with the community’s research ethics requirements, the IMCLS stated. The IMCLS said it is taking the matter of alleged breach of the IMCRE very seriously, and stated: “In order to meaningfully engage with researchers and clarify any confusion regarding the community’s research ethics requirements, we organised several internal meetings, shared written representations and copies of the IMCRE with competent district authorities and the PCCF, Itanagar, held meetings with community stakeholders, and placed details of the matter and the community’s research ethics framework on its website.” The society reiterated that its objective is not to oppose genuine scientific research, but to ensure that research undertaken in Idu Mishmi areas respects the rights, consent, knowledge systems, customary institutions and data sovereignty of the indigenous community. IMCLS further said that villagers across Dibang Valley are supporting its efforts through Gram Sabha resolutions to establish reasonable regulation of research practices and to oppose, in particular, extraction-based research in Dibang Valley undertaken without the informed participation and consent of the community.

DCEF Celebrates Two Years of Service at Naga Hospital

Itanagar, Aug 17: Arunachal Pradesh’s Deputy Chief Minister, Chowna Mein, inaugurated new facilities at the Mahabodhi Lord Buddha College in Namsai. He conducted the ceremony in the presence of Namsai MLA Chau Zingnu Namchoom. This expansion introduces six significant enhancements to the campus infrastructure. Students now benefit from an extension to the college building, an exhibition hall, a conference hall, and a college library. Additionally, the project has provided a seminar hall and the Maitri Girls Home. These facilities are designed to foster research, cultural initiatives, and over-

all academic learning, with the goal of enhancing the environment for youth across the district. The Deputy Chief Minister commended the staff and students for their contributions. He emphasized that the institution successfully integrates academics with fundamental values. “Mahabodhi Lord Buddha College is particularly important as it strives to merge quality education with the enduring principles of knowledge, compassion, discipline, and peace, as inspired by the teachings of Lord Buddha,” he remarked. He anticipates that the college will evolve into a center for holistic development.

Gaurav Gogoi slams Centre and Assam over unspent disaster relief funds

Itanagar, Aug 17: Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi took to X on August 16 to blast the Union and Assam governments for failing to use disaster relief funds. He pointed to a new Comptroller and Auditor General report showing widespread mismanagement. Money sits idle. Citizens suffer. Gogoi highlighted that the Union government approved Rs 11,474 crore for the National Disaster Response Fund in 2024-25. Officials only sent Rs 5,356 crore to the states. That leaves Rs 6,118 crore stuck in federal coffers. Beyond that, 75 percent of the National Disaster Mitigation Fund and over 83 percent of special state assistance remain unspent. These numbers align with CAG findings that disaster cash in Assam sat unused as of March 2025. Gogoi mocked the government’s Maximum Governance, Minimum Government slogan in the face of the ongoing flood crisis. Assam continues to reel from this year’s deluge. The disaster has hit multiple districts and killed



over 100 people. The Congress leader claims the state and central leadership are failing the public. “The reality is a double-engine government unable to ensure that disaster funds reach people when they need them most,” he stated. He insisted that the Assam government has repeatedly failed to put allocated disaster cash to work.

Supreme Court Denies Bail for Shyamkanu Mahanta in Zubeen Garg Death Case

Itanagar, Aug 17: The Supreme Court rejected the bail plea of Shyamkanu Mahanta on Monday, August 17. Mahanta remains in custody while facing murder charges linked to the death of Assamese singer Zubeen Garg. The court kept the matter pending and set the next hearing for October 5. Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice R Mahadevan heard the petition, filed as SLP (Crl.) No. 11523/2026. Mahanta, who organized the North East India Festival in Singapore, was arrested in October 2025. He is one of seven suspects in the case. A fast-track court in Assam has already framed murder charges against four of them, including Mahanta. All seven defendants have pleaded not guilty. The Assam government reported that trial proceedings began on June 8. Out of 394 listed witnesses, the court has recorded statements from 94



as of August 14. Mahanta’s counsel argued that the trial still needs to examine several key witnesses located in Singapore. The state responded that these individuals had already provided statements to the investigating officer. Authorities ex-

pect to record these testimonies within the next two to three weeks. The legal battle follows the Gauhati High Court’s May 29 decision to deny Mahanta’s initial bail request. The prosecution has consistently opposed his release. The Special Investigation Team has submitted various electronic devices and digital materials to the trial court to support their chargesheet. Garg died on September 19, 2025, during a yacht trip in Singapore. While the local coroner ruled the death an accidental drowning and found no evidence of foul play, the investigation in Assam led to a separate criminal case. The Supreme Court offered a stern instruction during the proceedings: “The Supreme Court orally advised the Assam government to expedite the trial process as far as possible.”

Smriti Irani’s Significant Return in the BJP Makeover Before Important Elections

New Delhi, Aug 17: In front of numerous state elections, the BJP today unveiled a new team led by national chief Nitin Nabin. There is a major emphasis on regional representation, and important positions are held by a combination of younger and seasoned executives.The return of former Union minister Smriti Irani to a key organizational position as one of the BJP’s national general secretaries is a significant step.

Vasundhara Raje, a former chief minister of Rajasthan, is still the national vise president of the BJP.There is a desire for greater representation of women in the party’s key positions, as evidenced by the fact that six of the thirteen national vise presidents are female. In addition to two members of the Muslim community, there are four fe-



male secretaries and a female general secretary.

With major secretary and vice-president positions going to leaders from Kerala, West Bengal, Odisha, and the northeast, the selections show a drive toward the southern and eastern states. After leaving the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Sandeep Pathak was appointed national secretary. The coordinator for the northeast has been

named Sambit Patra.In addition to Raje, the BJP’s national vise presidents include Tirath Singh Rawat from Uttarakhand, Ram Madhav from Delhi, Baijayant Jay Panda from Odisha, D Purandeswari from Andhra Pradesh, Rekha Verma from Uttar Pradesh, and Sardar Manpreet Singh Badal from Punjab. Varshaben Narendrabhai Doshi (Gujarat), Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar

(Maharashtra), Lal Singh Arya (Madhya Pradesh), M Nagaraj (Karnataka), Tariq Mansoor (Uttar Pradesh) and Madhuchhanda Kar (West Bengal) are also part of this senior leaders’ group. With assistance from joint general secretaries Shiv Prakash (Mumbai) and Saudan Singh (Chandigarh), BL Santhosh continues to serve as national general secretary (organization) from Delhi.

Anil Baluni is the media coordinator assigned by the BJP to oversee its communications strategy. Joint coordinators Ashish Usha Agarwal, Pradeep Bhandari, and Siddharth Yadav will support him. Deepak Mhaske has been appointed social media coordinator, with assistance from Priti Gandhi, Shivanand Dwivedi, Alok Bhatt, and Arun Yadav.

Gujarat: Five Years on the Run A BJP employee was detained in a liquor case

New Delhi, Aug 17: Mukesh, also known as Tina Pargi, a BJP employee and the spouse of a BJP District Panchayat member, was apprehended by Gujarat police in relation to an illegal booze sale case. Mukesh had been on the run for five years. Following specific information obtained by local law enforcement of-

ficials, Santrampur police made the high-profile arrest. He is the spouse of Shantaben Pargi, a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the district panchayat’s Salra seat. The accused had been on the run for the past five years in connection with an open prohibition case (illegal alcohol sale). Despite continuous efforts by cops

over the years, Pargi managed to evade arrest until a targeted, intensive operation led police directly to his location. Interrogating the long-absconding suspect is anticipated to provide crucial leads for the continuing investigation. Potential local networks that might have helped him evade capture during his time on the run

are currently being investigated by police.The arrest has immediately sparked a great deal of debate and political intrigue throughout the area because it involves the husband of a prominent local political figure. Official legal actions against Pargi are presently under progress, according to local authorities.

According to the Supreme Court, crop damage is not justification for blocking elephant corridors

New Delhi, Aug 17: The Supreme Court emphasized the need of safeguarding elephant corridors on Monday, ruling that states cannot obstruct elephants’ passage just because crops are being harmed.The court ordered the Center to conduct a new survey of elephant corridors throughout the nation and emphasized the need to protect wildlife’s natural migration.Chief Justice of India Surya Kant noted throughout the hearing that elephant herds are known to travel great distances and need continuous paths between habitats.He emphasized that local problems cannot overshadow conservation concerns, saying, “We are very clear that there cannot be obstacles in the way of wildlife.”Elephant herds frequently travel great distances.No state may claim that there must be barriers in their way just because crops are being damaged. The court was informed that the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has already issued mandatory guidelines aimed at ensuring the smooth movement of elephants through designated corridors. However, it was brought to the court’s notice that several corridors have been impeded or blocked because of local factors. The Union En-

vironment Ministry was instructed by the Supreme Court to carry out a new examination of elephant corridors in various states and submit a thorough status report in response to these concerns.”We have been informed that the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change has issued mandatory guidelines to ensure seamless and unobstructed elephant corridors passing thru different States,” the court stated in its decision. However, the elephant routes have been hindered, stopped, or obstructed due to specific local causes. It added, “We direct the Union of India, the Ministry concerned of the Union of India, to conduct a fresh survey and submit a comprehensive survey report, including the initiatives and necessary steps taken by them to prevent such obstructions. The status report shall also point out the position on use of firearms or any other coercive action.”The directions came amid concerns over the methods used to drive elephants away from human settlements and agricultural areas. During the hearing, counsel pointed to instances where elephants are chased by groups of people, saying such actions often worsen the situation rather than resolve it: “They are chased in a very



mob-like situation, which in fact exacerbates the situation, aggravates the situation,” counsel told the court. The use of guns and other forms of coercion against elephants as they are traveling along customary routes has also drawn criticism. Stronger regulations were required, according to counsel, to stop these kinds of actions.It is necessary to take action to stop the use of guns [against] the elephants’ natural migration. In particular, prohibitions against hulla parties, etc., are necessary in this regard,” the attorney continued.The Chief Justice responded to the submissions by stating that the court should be informed via the status report and that the appropriate actions should be taken.Therefore, such actions should be conducted, and this Court should be informed thru the progress report,” the CJI stated.

Tripura starts a skill-training program to help ex-insurgents get back on their feet



Agartala, Aug 17: For former radicals who have occasionally returned to normal life, the Tripura government has started a short-term skill development training program. The Construction Workers Training Institute Tripura (CWTIT), Khumulwng, in the West Tripura district, hosted the program’s debut by the Tripura gov-

ernment’s Directorate of Skill Development (DSD). Dr. Vishal Kumar, District Magistrate of the West Tripura district; Pradeep K, Director of Skill Development; Utpal Debbarma, MDC; Er Sumit Majumdar, Principal, CWTIT; and Biswamohan Debbarma were among the officials, trainers, and trainees who attended the program’s in-

auguration.

In collaboration with the relevant training providers, the Directorate of Skill Development (DSD), Government of Tripura, is organizing the training programs at CWTIT, Khumulwng. The programs’ objectives are to give the recipients useful, career-focused skills and to encourage self-employment and sustainable livelihoods. The program covers two employment roles. Tripura Small Industries Corporation Ltd. (TSICL) is offering a 60-day Self-Employed Tailor training program to 25 participants. CWTIT, Khumulwng is conducting a 75-day Brick Mason training program for thirty candidates.

The two residential training programs are being attended by 55 candidates in total. The goal of the training is to improve the recipients’ chances for work, self-employment, and sustainable lives by giving them useful skills.

Before village council elections, the Tripura BJP starts a booth verification



Agartala, Aug 17: In preparation for the next village council elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Tripura unit will start a statewide booth verification exercise on August 18. The party will instruct its organizational units to identify weak and inactive booths and bolster its ground-level teams.State BJP president Abhishek Debroy instructed all district presidents to start the verification process throughout the State in a notification released by the Tripura BJP State Executive Committee. As part of the exercise, inactive and weak booths

At the Nagchandreshwar Temple in Madhya Pradesh, a crowd rush injured three people

New Delhi, Aug 17: Amid a huge influx of pilgrims for Nag Panchami on Monday, at least three devotees were hurt close to the Nagchandreshwar Temple in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, despite the temple authorities denying allegations of a stampede-like situation. Thousands of devotees flocked to the temple for darshan, which is only open to the public once a year on Nag Panchami, when the incident was reported.The crisis started during a busy rush in a blocked location across from the Harsiddhi temple, according to news agency IANS. For medical attention, the wounded devotees were transported to a local hospital. Reports of mayhem and a stampede-like situation at the shrine, however, were refuted by the temple administration. Temple Administrator Pratham Kaushik said “misleading reports” about chaos at the temple

were being circulated on certain media and social media platforms. Due to the fact that this year’s festival fell on the third Monday of Sawan, a remarkably high number of devotees attended. “The allegations regarding chaos at the shrine are false,” he added, noting that 6.19 lakh pilgrims had already visited the temple and that all essential preparations had been made to guaranty their safety and a seamless darshan. Sagar, one of the injured, revealed that he had been standing in line for several hours prior to the tragedy. ”I was in the queue at Mahakal Mandir for the darshan. After seven to eight hours, I reached Harsiddhi Chauraha. We stood there for two hours. The crowd was swelling and since it was time for the aarti, we were stopped there. Suddenly, the barricades were opened and a chaos broke out,” he said.A large num-

ber of pilgrims have gathered in Ujjain for darshan of Lord Mahakal and Lord Nagchandreshwar, leading to heavy crowding inside the Mahakal temple complex and on roads in the surrounding areas.The Nagchandreshwar Temple, located on the third floor of the Mahakaleshwar Temple complex, opens to devotees only on Nag Panchami each year, attracting pilgrims from across the country. Divisional Commissioner Ashish Singh and Collector Roshan Kumar Singh examined the plans before to the celebration and gave officials instructions to guaranty proper barricading, drinking water, sanitation, medical facilities, and emergency response procedures.According to the district administration, specific arrangements have been made and officials have been deployed to control the movement of devotees during the intense rush.

Assam provides 31,951 additional households in four districts with temporary disaster aid

Guwahati, Aug 17: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on August 17 that the Assam government has expanded its temporary flood relief program to 31,951 more people in Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat, and Golaghat, bringing the total number of recipients receiving one-time financial assistance of Rs 15,000 to 96,842.With the most recent payment, the government has spent Rs 145.26 crore on the aid. Sarma stated that while the Sivasagar Assembly constituency’s enumeration was still in progress, the distribution was almost finished.He indicated that a third phase might include an additional 3,000 to 4,000 people, bringing the total number of beneficiary families to around one lakh. The Chief Minister said the cash assistance had been prioritised as families affected by the floods required immediate financial support to return to their homes and begin rebuilding.“People in Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat, and Golaghat need cash assistance the most because they require financial support to return to their homes after the floods,” Sarma said. As part of the wider relief package, the government has also extended support through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Sarma



said Rs 2,500 had been provided to Orunodoi beneficiaries in the affected areas.The state government is simultaneously conducting a Rapid Damage Assessment across Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat to assess the extent of flood-related damage. 1,144 teachers have been assigned to help with the evaluation, according to Sarma. The government portal currently has information on 26,681 damaged homes and 18,887 damaged cow barns.Additionally, the study has documented damage to 5,98,691 animals and 41 raw material incidents related to handlooms. There are currently about 99,256 farmers in the agriculture sector whose lands have been damaged by flooding. An evaluation of the harm done to fisher-

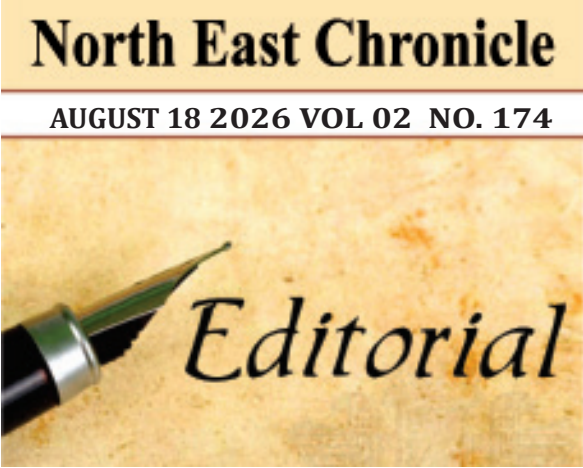
ies is also in progress.According to Sarma, the survey’s initial phase should be finished by August 28 or 29. After then, the information would be posted online so that anyone who is impacted may confirm it and report any inconsistencies. The government anticipates omissions or inaccuracies in the first beneficiary list, prompting a second round of field verification scheduled for September 1-2. This round aims to directly address affected individuals rather than require complaints. It is expected to conclude by September 10-11, with a final list published by September 15-16. A third assessment will follow if necessary, all aiming to complete the assessment and disburse eligible assistance before Durga Puja.

Abhishek Banerjee, a TMC MP, challenges the freezing of his bank account in Calcutta High Court

New Delhi, Aug 17: Abhishek Banerjee, a member of the Trinamool Congress, petitioned the Calcutta High Court on Monday to have his case against a private bank’s purported freezing of his bank account heard immediately. He also stated that he will soon travel overseas for medical reasons with approval from the Supreme Court.Judge Krishna Rao requested that Banerjee’s attorney send notice to the parties while he hears the case on Wednesday. According to Ayan Bhattacharjee, Banerjee’s attorney, the private bank froze his personal bank account without following the correct protocol.According to Bhattacharjee, the Supreme Court has permitted the TMC MP to travel overseas for medical reasons. In order to challenge the bank authority’s purported action of blocking his bank account, the Diamond Harbor MP petitioned the court for an urgent hearing. In response to Justice Rao’s question about whether Banerjee is the subject of any current investigations, Banerjee’s attorney said that he is abiding by the rules set forth and that the high court has protected him from coercive action in ongoing investigations.Additionally, Bhattacharjee asserted that no police action was taken to freeze Banerjee’s bank accounts.Last Wednesday, the Supreme Court authorized Banerjee to spend three weeks overseas for medical care. The Supreme Court last week pulled up the West Bengal government for oppos-



ing Banerjee’s request to travel overseas for an eye surgery, asserting that every individual has a right to travel abroad and choose their medical treatment.A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana said it saw “no serious impediment” to Banerjee travelling abroad for three weeks for the treatment and allowed him to do so, subject to conditions aimed at ensuring his availability to the investigating agency. ”Everyone is entitled to travel overseas. During the hearing, the bench stated, “Everyone has the right to choose the medical treatment of their choice.”The court also emphasized Banerjee’s right to privacy with relation to his health, noting that it is unrealistic to expect someone to make their medical records public.The state rejected the request, with assistant solicitor general SV Raju claiming that Banerjee had at least 15 cases against him and that this increased his likelihood of not returning to India.



The case for free UPI transactions

On 6 August, the Lok Sabha passed a bill amend- ing the Payment and Set- tlement Systems Act, 2007. This amendment removes the statutory ban on impos- ing the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) on banks and other payment providers for UPI and other notified elec- tronic payments. However, the government has stated that this will not impact con- sumers, and both making and receiving UPI payments will remain free of charge for them.

While UPI payments up to Rs 2,000 will continue to be free, the amendment allows for the imposition of MDR on banks and payment providers for transactions exceeding the amount. This cost would be recovered from the payment recipient — the merchant. Although the exact fee structure is not yet finalised, proposals under discussion suggest that the MDR for high-value trans- actions could range between 0.25 per cent and 0.5 per cent. Nevertheless, the gov- ernment has reiterated that the UPI facility will remain free for small merchants and consumers. The reason cited by the government for this change in UPI payment reg- ulations is that while UPI has been free until now, the as- sociated costs must be borne by someone. Proponents of imposing fees on UPI ar- gue that banks, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), and payment companies incur significant expenses — not just on servers, but also on cybersecurity and infrastructure expansion — that must be covered. The Reserve Bank of India Gov- ernor, Sanjay Malhotra, has also said that someone must bear the cost of keeping UPI secure and reliable.

According to economic principles, there are certain services whose consumption is non-rival; that is, one per- son’s consumption does not diminish others’ ability to consume them, and they are available to everyone with- out exclusion. These kinds of services are called ‘pure pub- lic good’. Sometimes, some services are non-rival, but exclusion is possible. Such goods, though, may also be called public goods, but are not pure public goods. Ex- amples of pure public goods are law and order, defence, parks, streetlights, and roads. UPI comes under the second category, which is non-rival in nature, but by charging a

fee, the service becomes ex- cludable. Generally, public goods and services are such that though they are bene- ficial to society, they do not attract private sector invest- ment — even when access to them could theoretically be restricted. Had UPI not been developed by the gov- ernment, no private sector entity would have created such a wonderful product. The government invests in public goods, because they are beneficial to people. UPI is one such public good; which is non-rival in nature, but where exclusion is possi- ble. But does it mean that we should start charging a fee for it? Such decisions should be guided by a cost-benefit analysis. We should under- stand that if the benefits are enormous relative to the cost, and the cost is not exorbitant, it is best to keep the good or service free of charge. Log- istics costs in India have historically been very high, preventing our products from competing effectively on the global stage. Howev- er, over the past decade or so, a significant reduction in logistics costs has been recorded. According to data from NCAER and DPIIT, the logistics cost that stood between 8.8 per cent and 10 per cent of GDP in 2012-13 dropped to 7.8-8.9 per cent in 2021-22. The fact that UPI transactions are free of charge is a major factor that contributed to this decline. It is important to note that In- dia’s UPI currently accounts for 49 per cent of the world’s real-time payment transac- tion volume, all of which are free so far.

Fourth, if UPI charges drive people back to using cash, the RBI would have to bear the associated costs. This would reduce the RBI’s profits and, consequently, the dividend transferred to the government, resulting in a loss to the exchequer. Nota- bly, the RBI spent Rs 4,875 crore on printing currency notes in the financial year 2025-26. Additionally, huge sums are spent on replac- ing torn, soiled, or damaged notes. Thus, from the per- spective of the exchequer as well, imposing charges on UPI does not appear to be a prudent move. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has consistently maintained that there is a need to make the economy “less-cash” and eventually “cashless”; but the move will certainly run contrary to this goal.

The radical joy of women who play sports just for fun

To deal with the grief of the sudden death of her husband at the age of 44, Ancy Alex- ander’s counsellor suggested she try some physical activity. It would, she explained, take her mind off things and release those famously feel-good endorphins that would help her better cope with her sense of loss.

This is how, aged 37, Ancy found herself googling football for adult women for the first time in her life. She had never played any sport, not even as a schoolgirl. But her husband Aneesh Ananth had been athletic and enthusiastic, playing cricket and watch- ing tennis and football. Watching with him, Ancy began to understand and appreciate the nuances of the game. So, when she was advised to take up physical activity she thought, why not honour his memory with football? “It would have given him such a kick to have seen me play,” she said on the phone from Bengaluru where she works as a software engineer. The Google search eventually led her to Sisters in Sweat (SIS), an organisation set up to promote the some- what radical concept—in much of South Asia at least—of women playing sport for fun. Set up eight years ago by Swetha Sub- biah, a former national hockey player and a Nike-certified instructor and Tanvie Hans a national-level football player, SIS came about when a group of women wanted to get together to play football. “It was about com- ing together, having fun and breaking into a sweat,” said Swetha. That first session for 17 women in November 2017, supervised by a fitness instructor and followed by breakfast, proved to be such a hit that the women said they wanted a repeat every weekend.

What began as a Whatsapp group where sessions would get booked within minutes of being announced, is now more organised

with multiple sport formats including bas- ketball, pickleball, swimming, tennis, a run club, and yoga and pilates. It has a presence in seven cities and a community of over 12,000 women and girls aged 16 to 60, said Kriti Kanthi, chief operating officer at SIS.

The problem wasn’t so much that girls and women didn’t want to play; the problem was access to sport at turfs are dominated by men. Women like Ancy who were play- ing for the first time were self-conscious and intimidated by the idea of playing with men. “For many women, the barrier to movement is confidence and belonging,” said Kanthi. Some come because they want physical activity, others to escape from their day-to- day routines. Many feel seen and empow- ered. “The life of an Indian woman can be fairly scripted, leaving her with very little decision-making power. But with sport they get to decide where to hit the ball. They are seen. They get called by their names,” said Swetha. “It’s like they’re getting their iden- tity back.”

If organised recreational sport for women is making its tentative beginnings, then com- petitive women’s sport has had more than a moment in recent times. It’s not just wom- en’s cricket where the team won the 2025 ICC World Cup and, this summer, made his- tory with a 270-run victory over England in a one-off Test at Lord’s. It’s not just Shafali Verma who began playing cricket for her local team in Haryana by disguising herself as a boy because “girls didn’t play”. It’s a whole generation of Manu Bhaker (shoot- ing), P.V. Sindhu (badminton) and Lovlina Borgohain (boxing) who are now inspiring a new generation of girls to take up sport. Proof and validation of this new generation

could be seen at the recent Commonwealth Games in Glasgow where women took eight of the 13 gold medals won by India. On the podium was 23-year-old Asmita Dey, the medal around her neck marking an end to India’s wait for a gold since 1990 when judo was introduced in Auckland. But it also marked the end of a personal journey of the daughter of a cycle mechanic who earned barely ₹300 a day who took loans to attend camps overseas. “I am from a very small village in Tripura. People there don’t dream this big,” she said. Equally powerful is the story of Sharmila Dhanker who won gold in para-athletics shot put. Born into a poor farming family in Haryana, afflicted with polio as a child, she was married young to an abusive man and eventually returned home with her two daughters. It was her sec- ond husband Ajit Singh who came up with the idea of taking up para-athletics, specifi- cally shot put. “I’d never played any sport,” she told Sportstar. “I was also 34 years old. I was going to start at an age where everyone else was ending their career.”

Whether playing professionally in the hope that a medal will lead to a steady job and financial security or playing for fun, women’s sport is growing. There is no lon- ger any debate that for women and girls, sport is the key to identity, confidence and a sense of self. “When we invest in women through sport, we are not simply creating athletes. We are nurturing confidence, cour- age, leadership and the quiet belief that no dream is out of reach,” said shooter Abhinav Bindra who won India’s first ever individual Olympic gold medal in Beijing, 2008. “That changes far more than sport. It changes a nation.” A report by EY found that 94% of C-suite women had played sport as girls and

young women. Sport is linked also to better grades in school, stronger career prospects and delayed pregnancy, according to UN Women. And, yet, girls drop out of playing sport at twice the rate of boys. A study by Women in Sport suggests more than one million teenage girls “fall out of love” with sort after a certain age due to several factors including fears of being evaluated by others, a lack of confidence and an overwhelming feeling of uneasiness outside.

In India, the sight of women and girls who play for fun, kicking a ball at their neigh- bourhood park, remains rare despite the suc- cess of women in competitive sport in recent years. Stereotypes, lack of confidence and inadequate infrastructure, including clean loos, all play a role in why women don’t play, said Swetha: “Once girls leave college, their access to sport is abysmal.” And yet, there are signs of change. Nandita Anand’s Ready Set Girl is a digital community and resource platform focused on women’s sport and athletes that challenges the assumption that when we talk about sport, we mean men’s sport. Like SIS, Ready Set Girl aims to build a community of women and girls who want to play. It’s not easy said Anand. Apart from running, most traditional sports require basic infrastructure, a pitch for in- stance.

But perhaps the biggest drawback is a mindset that looks at a larger goal—a medal, playing for the state or the country—rather than the simple pleasure of playing for fun, to have a bit of competition, to build your own community, and to have a space where for a few hours a week you can just be a woman who wants to kick a ball, unmind- ful of the expectation that girls should stay home, because sport is not “for girls.”

The architect of modern China: how Zhu Rongji forged the nation’s 21st-century rise

During my first visit to China in the early 1990s I was taken around a village across the riv- er from Shanghai and told that this area would one day become a modern metropolis. Viewing all the plans that I was shown, I returned to write a column ti- tled “A Manhattan of the East”. The plans were for nothing less. Revisiting Pudong across the Shanghai bund a decade later, I stood in awe of the transforma- tion planned and executed within a decade. In April 2001 leaders from around the world arrived in Pudong New District to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Coop- eration (Apec) summit meeting.

The man who was placed in charge of the transformation of Shanghai by Deng Xiaoping, the architect of China’s modernisa- tion and globalisation, died last week at the age of 98. To an In- dian unfamiliar with China’s re- cent history, Zhu Rongji would be best described as a combi- nation of Manmohan Singh, P. Chidambaram and Montek Singh Ahluwalia, all put together, for his contribution to China’s eco- nomic transformation. From the late 1980s till the early 2000s, Zhu Rongji was responsible for a wide range of national policy initiatives including trade lib- eralisation, fiscal stabilisation and privatisation of state-owned

enterprises. Equally, Zhu was re- sponsible for the transformation of Shanghai from a colonised port town through which British imperialists pushed opium to dope and enslave a nation into Asia’s Manhattan, a bustling globalised metropolis. Zhu was able to do more for Shanghai in a decade then what a half a doz- en chief ministers have been able to do so far for a city like Hy- derabad. Trained to be an econ- omist, Zhu joined the faculty of economics at Tsinghua Univer- sity. Like many intellectuals and members of the Communist Par- ty of China, Zhu had also been forced to quit his job and go to a village to work as a labourer during the Cultural Revolution. At the end of the Mao Zedong era Zhu, like Deng and hundreds of others, was rehabilitated and allowed to return to his earlier profession.

As Deng’s biographer Ezra Vo- gel records in his monumental tome, Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China: “Deng had known Zhu in Beijing earlier, when Zhu had been deputy head of the State Economic Commis- sion, and Deng recognised that he was a rare talent who com- bined bold political leadership skills, a strategic understanding of how to improve the econo- my, and an unusual confidence

in pursuing reforms.” Return- ing from a visit to Shanghai in February 1990, Deng had told China’s Prime Minister Li Peng to prioritise the development of that port city and suggested that Zhu be made responsible for this task. As Vogel records, Deng told Prime Minister Li and Chinese President Jiang Zemin: “Why do people support us? Because over the last ten years our econo- my has been developing... If the economy stagnated for five years or developed only at a slow rate What effects would be pro- duced? This would be not only an economic problem but also a political one.” He then went on to speak about the need for sus- tained economic reform and end- ed by observing: “It is of prime importance to develop Shanghai. That city is a trump card.”

The man who monetised that trump card was Zhu. He was then named governor of the People’s Bank of China, during which term he was required to manage the consequences of the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98. Chi- na’s regional and global financial profile grew as a consequence. In 1998, Zhu succeeded Li as Prime Minister and in his five-year term (1998-2003) he undertook wide-ranging economic and fiscal reforms at home and over- saw China’s entry into the World

Trade Organisation. If Deng was the political and intellectual ar- chitect of post-Mao China, Zhu was the technocrat who attended to the details. It is not surpris- ing that Zhu’s obituaries have appeared across the world duly noting his contribution to the modernisation and globalisation of the Chinese economy.

In an essay I wrote on “Hen- ry Kissinger and the Selling of China” in a volume I co-edited titled, A New Cold War: Henry Kissinger and the Rise of China, I discuss in detail the bargaining that went on between the United States and China for China’s ad- mission into the World Trade Or- ganisation. With Kissinger’s sup- port on the US side, Zhu played a key role in persuading the Clinton administration to agree to China’s admission into the WTO, a decision that accelerated China’s rise as a global trading superpower. As I record in my 2021 essay, Kissinger played an important role in convincing the US leadership at the turn of the century that the US ought to treat China as a “normal trading” na- tion and agree to its entry into the World Trade Organisation. The US and China were at the time in the midst of negotiations on the terms of that entry. Kissinger lent his weight to China’s admission stating that China’s membership

of the WTO “should be in the interest of China, of the United States and of the world commu- nity”.

Kissinger concluded his ad- dress stating: “I cannot consider that we can have stability and progress in Asia if China and the United States are in a cold war with each other.” Zhu and Kissinger convinced Washing- ton DC that maintaining a co- operative relationship between China and the US would be in the interest of both nations and, indeed, the entire world. Things have come a full circle after a quarter century with President Donald Trump talking about a “G-2” with China on the eve of his last meeting with President Xi Jinping even as he launched a trade war. While the world has changed dramatically over the past two decades, one of its foundational features today is the place China has acquired for it- self in world affairs. In the public mind, most well-informed people are now aware of the leadership that Deng Xiaoping provided to enable this rise of modern Chi- na. Few, however, are aware of Zhu’s role. Unlike most politi- cians he went into retirement in 2003 after just one term as PM. He has rarely made public ap- pearances since then. A modest man with a superhuman legacy.

The radical impact of belonging in an increasingly isolated world

Questions about employ- ee attrition have become increasingly common in leadership discussions. Organisations invest heav- ily in understanding why talented people leave and what it takes to persuade them to stay. During one such conversation recently, I found myself reflecting on a very different work- place culture I had expe- rienced more than four de- cades earlier, when I began my career in the Railways.

A senior officer accom- panied me during the dai- ly rounds of the mainte-

nance shed for the first two weeks. At the end of the fortnight, he simply said, “From Monday, you are on your own.” The shed and its staff were now my respon- sibility. Yet I was never re- ally alone. Whenever diffi- cult issues arose—whether with the trade unions or the Headquarters—I knew the senior officers stood firm- ly behind me. That cul- ture remained consistent throughout my years in the Railways. Senior officers backed difficult decisions, corrected mistakes without humiliation and encour-

aged me to take on unfam- ilar responsibilities with confidence. These experi- ences made me feel that I belonged. I realised later that these small gestures influenced me more than I recognised at the time. I found myself offering the same support to younger colleagues, not because anyone asked me to, but because someone had once done the same for me. When I entered the private sector nearly twenty-five years later, the workplace had changed considerably. Car- eers had become more

mobile, organisations more dynamic, and restructur- ing more common. These changes brought many advantages—greater op- portunities, faster growth and increased flexibility. I sensed that something less tangible—but equally important—was becoming harder to preserve: the sense of being connect- ed to something larger than oneself. Many em- ployers invest significant resources in designing performance management systems, incentives and retention strategies. These

have an important place in every organisation. But they sometimes under- estimate the influence of small human gestures—an encouraging conversation, thoughtful guidance, gen- uine appreciation or a se- nior taking an interest in someone’s growth. Such moments create something that policies alone cannot: a lasting emotional con- nection with the organisa- tion. Belonging cannot be mandated through organi- sational charts or employ- ee handbooks. It develops when people feel that they

matter beyond the role they perform. Employees who experience that con- nection are often willing to contribute more than what is contractually ex- pected because they begin to identify with its purpose as their own. Perhaps this becomes even more im- portant during mergers and acquisitions. Structures, reporting lines and systems can be integrated relatively quickly. Trust, identity and belonging cannot. Unless people feel seen during periods of change, uncer- tainty often weakens com-

mitment long before per- formance indicators begin to reflect it.

These experiences also made me reflect on a broader question. In a world where careers are increasingly fluid and professional relationships often shorter than before, organisations may need to invest as much in creat- ing belonging as they do in improving efficiency. Technology can make work faster. Incentives can im- prove performance. But it is often another human be- ing who determines wheth-

er someone merely works for an organisation—or truly feels part of it. Looking back, I realise that what has stayed with me is not a policy, a promotion or even a particular achievement. It is the confidence others placed in me, often quietly. Perhaps that is what people remember longest—not the advice they receive, but the trust they are shown and the feeling they were val- ued. Organisations change, careers move on, but those experiences continue to shape how people lead, work and inspire others.

Centre to Set Up High-Powered Panel to Chart Banking Reforms for India’s 2047 Growth Vision

New Delhi: The Union government is preparing to constitute a high-powered committee to examine the future direction of India’s banking sector and align it with the country’s long-term objective of becoming a developed economy by 2047. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the panel would be announced soon as the government seeks fresh recommendations on the role banks should play in supporting the next phase of economic expansion.

Speaking at the two-day Public Sector Banks Conclave 2026 in New Delhi, Sitharaman called on banking leaders to submit concrete suggestions on reforms and said the ideas emerging from the conference would be placed before the proposed committee. The panel is expected to examine these recommendations and help determine the future course of banking reforms, with the government seeking to move quickly on measures emerging from the review.

The proposed committee was announced in the Union Budget 2026-27 as the High Level Committee on Banking for Viksit



Bharat. The Budget said the panel would undertake a comprehensive review of the financial sector and align it with India’s next phase of growth while safeguarding financial stability, financial inclusion and consumer protection.

The review comes as the banking sector enters the next phase of reforms from a significantly stronger position. Sitharaman highlighted that non-performing assets have fallen to their lowest level ever, while banks have strengthened their balance sheets and improved their ability to absorb risks. The government sees this improved

financial position as an opportunity to consider deeper reforms rather than simply focusing on repairing stressed assets.

The committee is expected to look at how banks can support the financing requirements of India’s growth over the next two decades. The broader reform agenda is linked to the government’s Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, which will require greater access to credit and a banking system capable of supporting infrastructure, businesses, households and emerging sectors. The Finance Minister has also stressed the need for banks to anticipate

future economic requirements rather than respond only to existing challenges.

The two-day conclave is therefore expected to serve as an important source of inputs for the proposed panel. Bank executives and other stakeholders are being encouraged to identify areas where regulatory, operational and institutional changes could improve the sector’s ability to support economic growth. The government intends to use the recommendations emerging from these discussions while framing the committee’s future roadmap.

The government’s approach also reflects a shift

in the banking reform agenda. With asset quality having improved substantially, the focus is increasingly moving towards preparing banks for the changing requirements of the economy, expanding their capacity to provide credit and ensuring that financial services remain accessible while maintaining stability and consumer safeguards.

Sitharaman said the timing was particularly important because India is already in 2026 and has less than two decades to work towards the 2047 objective. The proposed review is consequently intended to provide a long-term framework rather than a short-term response to current banking conditions.

The committee’s eventual recommendations are expected to influence the direction of banking policy in the years ahead. By combining inputs from public sector banks and other stakeholders with a wider review of the financial system, the government aims to build a banking architecture capable of supporting faster economic expansion while maintaining financial stability, inclusion and consumer protection.

PTC Industries Hits Record High After Strong Q1 Profit Growth and Aerospace Expansion

New Delhi: Shares of precision engineering and strategic materials manufacturer PTC Industries climbed 8 per cent to a record high of ₹20,580 on the BSE during intraday trading, after the company reported a sharp improvement in its financial performance for the first quarter of 2026-27.

The stock surpassed its previous peak of ₹19,863 recorded on June 3, with strong trading activity across the exchanges. Nearly 2.1 lakh equity shares changed hands on the BSE and NSE. The counter has gained around 16 per cent through August, outperforming the broader benchmark indices.

For the quarter ended June 30, 2026, PTC Industries reported a 465.7 per cent year-on-year increase in con-



solidated net profit to ₹29.2 crore, compared with ₹5.16 crore in the corresponding period a year earlier. Revenue from operations rose 97.4 per cent to ₹192 crore from ₹97.2 crore, supported by stronger order execution.

The company’s operating performance also improved substantially, with earnings

before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) increasing 400 per cent year-on-year to ₹48.9 crore. The EBITDA margin expanded to 25.5 per cent from 10.1 per cent in the year-ago quarter, aided by operational leverage and inventory adjustments.

PTC Industries’ wholly

owned subsidiary Aerolloy Technologies remained a key contributor to the growth. The unit, which manufactures titanium and superalloy components for the aerospace, defence and space sectors, recorded a 466.4 per cent increase in total income to ₹74.27 crore. Its EBITDA stood at ₹33.42 crore, trans-

lating into a margin of 45 per cent, while net profit reached ₹22.08 crore.

The company has also continued to strengthen its position in global aerospace and strategic manufacturing supply chains. During and after the quarter, PTC Industries entered into an agreement with Airbus, while expanding its engagement in defence programmes involving BrahMos Aerospace, the Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) under DRDO and Gun Factory Kanpur.

Shareholding disclosures for the quarter ended March 31, 2026, showed that investors Mukul Mahavir Agrawal and Vikas Vijaykumar Khemani held stakes of 1.07 per cent and 2.57 per cent, respectively, in PTC Industries.

Bank of Maharashtra Plans \$500-Million Offshore Bond Sale Through GIFT City Unit in FY27



Mumbai: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra is preparing to raise up to \$500 million through offshore foreign currency bonds in FY27 as part of its strategy to expand overseas lending, strengthen its foreign currency balance sheet and diversify its funding sources.

The proposed bond issue will be routed through the bank’s International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) Banking Unit at GIFT City in Gandhinagar under Regulation S of its Euro Medium Term Note (EMTN) programme. Depending on market conditions, investor demand and pricing, the fundraising could be completed in a single tranche or through multiple tranches.

The Pune-headquartered lender has initiated the process of appointing Joint Lead Managers (JLMs) to structure, market and exe-

cute the proposed transaction. Eligible investment banks and merchant bankers have been invited to submit their proposals by August 20, while the technical and financial bids are scheduled to be opened on August 21.

The offshore borrowing is part of Bank of Maharashtra’s broader capital-raising programme approved by its board. Alongside the proposed dollar bond issue, the lender plans to raise up to ₹7,500 crore through equity instruments and another ₹10,000 crore through long-term infrastructure bonds to support its growth and funding requirements.

The proposed foreign currency borrowing is expected to provide additional resources for overseas lending and cross-border financial activities. It will also strengthen the bank’s ability to serve customers involved

in international trade and businesses with foreign currency funding requirements.

Bank of Maharashtra’s GIFT City unit has become an important part of its international banking strategy, handling activities such as cross-border credit, external commercial borrowings and international trade financing. The branch crossed \$500 million in assets within its first six months of operations, indicating rapid growth in its international financial services business.

The planned bond issue is expected to further strengthen the GIFT City platform while giving the bank access to international investors and an additional source of foreign currency funding. The move comes as Indian lenders increasingly seek to diversify their funding base and expand their participation in global financial markets.

The final size, structure and timing of the issue will depend on prevailing market conditions, investor appetite and the pricing available when the transaction is launched. The appointment of lead managers will be an important next step before the bank begins formally marketing the proposed offshore bonds.

Apollo Micro Systems Secures Rs 80.84-Crore Orders from Defence PSUs, State Bodies and Private Firms

Mumbai: Defence and aerospace electronics manufacturer Apollo Micro Systems has secured fresh commercial orders worth ₹80.84 crore from Defence Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), state government entities and private industrial customers, adding to its growing order pipeline and strengthening its presence across strategic technology segments.

The contracts were awarded in the normal course of business and cover the company’s specialised electronic and electromechanical solutions. Apollo Micro Systems operates across the design, development, assembly and testing of customised systems used in critical applications where reliability and precision are essential.

The Hyderabad-based manufacturer caters to a range of strategic programmes, including missile systems, avionics, naval platforms, satellite infrastructure and homeland security networks. Its portfolio includes specialised electronic systems and components designed for demanding defence and aerospace applications.

The latest order wins are expected to provide addi-



tional revenue visibility for the company while supporting its multi-year order backlog. The diversified nature of the contracts, spanning government-backed defence programmes, state entities and private industrial customers, also gives Apollo Micro Systems exposure to multiple segments of the wider electronics and strategic manufacturing ecosystem.

The fresh orders come after the company reported strong operating performance for the quarter ended June 30, 2026. Apollo Micro Systems recorded a 43 per cent year-on-year increase in first-quarter net profit to ₹25.2 crore, compared with ₹17.6 crore in the corresponding quarter

General Insurers Shift Focus from Premium Growth to Sustainable Underwriting Profits

New Delhi: General insurance companies are increasingly moving away from a strategy centred on rapid premium growth and market share towards stronger underwriting profitability, as rising claims costs, moderating pricing conditions and greater pressure on capital efficiency reshape the non-life insurance industry.

Industry insights from Boston Consulting Group indicate that insurers are placing greater emphasis on profitable risk selection, combined ratios and tighter claims management rather than relying primarily on growth in gross written premiums. The shift comes as insurers face slower rate increases across major commercial insurance segments and higher claims severity.

Insurers are adopting more granular pricing models to distinguish between profitable and loss-making risks. Companies are tightening underwriting standards across areas such as commercial property, motor insurance and group health while reducing exposure to portfolios that consistently generate losses.

Technology and artificial intelligence are also becoming increasingly important in improving underwriting efficiency. Insurers are using advanced analytics and AI-based systems to accelerate policy processing, automate routine underwriting decisions, identify potential fraud and reduce claims leakage. These tools are helping insurers shorten underwriting cycles while

improving risk assessment. Capital discipline is another major priority, with insurers focusing on improving returns from existing policy portfolios rather than depending on investment income to compensate for weak underwriting results. Companies are also working to improve customer retention and control unallocated loss adjustment expenses.

The changing strategy suggests that long-term shareholder returns in the general insurance sector are becoming less dependent on premium growth and market share. Insurers that maintain disciplined underwriting, manage claims effectively and control operating costs are increasingly positioned to deliver more sustainable financial performance.

Tata Sons AGM Likely to Be Adjourned Over Trust Representation Dispute



Mumbai: Tata Sons’ annual general meeting, scheduled for August 18, 2026, is likely to be adjourned after a legal and regulatory dispute prevented a key philanthropic shareholder from appointing a representative required to meet the company’s quorum requirements.

The holding company of the Tata Group is scheduled to conduct the meeting virtually to adopt its financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2026, approve the annual dividend and take up matters concerning Chairman N. Chandrasekaran. Chandrasekaran has decided not to seek another term after his current tenure ends in February 2027.

The difficulty in constituting the meeting follows an interim order issued by Maharashtra’s Chari-

ty Commissioner in May, which suspended board meetings of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) while an inquiry into its board composition is underway. As a result, SRTT has been unable to convene its board and jointly nominate a representative with the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT).

Tata Sons’ Articles of Association require at least five members to be present for a shareholder meeting. Article 86 also requires a joint representative of SRTT and SDTT as long as the two trusts together hold at least 40 per cent of Tata Sons. SRTT holds 23.56 per cent and SDTT 27.98 per cent, while the philanthropic trusts collectively control nearly 66 per cent of the holding company.

The Charity Commissioner’s review followed a petition alleging that SRTT’s

board composition did not comply with Section 30A(2) of the Maharashtra Public Trusts Act. The provision limits the proportion of lifetime trustees to 25 per cent of a trust’s board strength. SRTT had three lifetime trustees — Jimmy Naval Tata, Jehangir H.C. Jehangir and Noel Naval Tata — among its six board members, putting the proportion at 50 per cent.

Tata Trusts has maintained that the amendment introducing the restriction, which came into effect on September 1, 2025, is prospective and should not affect lifetime trustee appointments made before the change.

The trust has also undergone another change with the departure of Vice-Chairman Vijay Singh, who ceased to be an SRTT trustee after his term ended on August 14.

Tata Sons is expected to begin the AGM as scheduled on August 18 and formally adjourn the meeting if the required quorum is not present. Chandrasekaran is expected to continue on the board until a legally compliant annual general meeting is convened to consider the relevant directorship matter.

RBI Steps Up Dollar Sales to Contain Rupee Volatility Amid Global Risks

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India has intensified intervention in the foreign exchange market to contain rupee volatility amid elevated crude oil prices and geopolitical tensions in West Asia. State-run banks have increased dollar sales during periods of currency weakness, helping keep the rupee within a narrow trading range despite strong dollar demand.

The rupee opened at 95.4775 against the US dollar and remained within a tight 10-paise range in early trade. The RBI’s intervention has also reduced 14-day realised currency volatility from more than 4 per cent at the beginning of August to around 2 per cent.

The central bank’s efforts have been supported by stronger external reserves, with balance-of-payments measures generating nearly \$57 billion and pushing India’s foreign exchange reserves above \$700 billion. Analysts expect the rupee to trade within a broader 94.50–96.00 range through September as the RBI continues monitoring global risks.

Republican senator denounces Trump’s ‘crazy, stupid’ claims about MMR vaccine safety

America: Republican senator Bill Cassidy – a medical doctor who voted to confirm anti-vaccine activist Robert F Kennedy as federal health secretary in early 2025 – on Sunday denounced Donald Trump’s “crazy, stupid” claims about the safety of the combined MMR vaccine for undermining faith in immunization.

When Trump recently ordered changes to the recommended childhood vaccination schedule, with Kennedy by his side, the president called for two shots of the combined Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccine to be scrapped in favor of two doses of three separate vaccines, claiming that the MMR shots are “sort of like a nuclear weapon” that could be “quite lethal”.

Cassidy, whose re-election bid ended in defeat to a Trump-backed challenger in a Republican primary in Louisiana, has been on the president’s enemies list since 2021, when the senator voted to convict him of “incitement of insurrection” in connection with the US Capitol attack carried out by Trump supporters toward the end of his first presidency.

Asked about Trump’s comment that “nothing bad can happen” from advising parents to get six separate shots for their children, instead of two, Cassidy told CNN on Sunday: “If it wasn’t so potentially tragic, you would break out laughing at a comment like that.

“Let’s just take it from the perspective of the parent: now instead of going to the doctor twice to get their child vaccinated, they have to go six times. Instead of the child getting two jabs, they get six jabs,” he continued. “Instead of the insurance company paying for two doctor’s visits, they’re paying for six, which is going to ultimately drive up premiums ...

“So the president is wrong; there’s a lot of bad things that will come out of this.”

Cassidy’s critics have lambasted the outgoing senator for expressing misgivings about Trump’s actions, including a recent shouting match over the ongoing Iran war – but continuing to cast crucial votes to confirm



the president’s nominees. He cast the decisive vote on 8 August that allowed Todd Blanche – a former criminal defense lawyer for Trump – to secure Senate confirmation as US attorney general. When Cassidy, the chair of the Senate health committee,

previously announced that he would vote to confirm Kennedy as health secretary, he acknowledged that “the most notable opponents of Mr Kennedy were pediatricians on the frontlines of our children’s health who regularly have to combat misinformation; combating vaccine skepticism with correct information – correct information that comes from their education, training and experience as physicians.”

Cassidy also revealed that he had extracted a promise from Kennedy, who has pushed the discredited theory that vaccines cause autism for decades, that “CDC will not remove statements on their website pointing out that vaccines do not cause autism”.

After Kennedy became health secretary, however, the “Autism and Vaccines” page on the CDC website was altered to undermine that scientific consensus. An asterisk was added to the headline “Vaccines do not cause Autism”, which leads to a footnote pointing out that “the root causes of autism” remain unknown.

Text was also added to the top of the same page, so that anyone who searches for CDC guidance on autism and vaccines is now presented with two “key points” that further appease vaccine skeptics and conspiracy theorists.

“The claim ‘vaccines do not cause autism’ is not an evidence-based claim because studies have not ruled out the possibility that infant vaccines cause autism,” the first key point reads.

The second addition, since one of the nation’s leading anti-vaccine activists took charge, suggests that the lack of evidence for a link between vaccines and autism could be the result of a conspiracy. “Studies supporting a link have been ignored by health authorities,” the CDC site now claims.

Cassidy on Sunday told CNN that Trump’s MMR commentary “will do nothing” to address the discredited link between vaccine and autism stemming from a single paper that was ultimately retracted.

Ebola outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo now deadliest in country’s history

Uganda: The Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo is now the deadliest in the country’s history with at least 2,325 people killed, according to government data, surpassing the toll from the 2018-20 outbreak.

Congo’s public health institute said on Sunday that confirmed cases had risen to 4,945, including 101 new cases detected in the previous 24 hours.

West Africa’s 2014-16 Ebola outbreak resulted in 28,616 cases and 11,310 deaths across Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).On Friday the UN warned that “Ebola is winning in the Democratic Republic of the Congo” and said the epidemic was now killing one person every 30 minutes.

Six of DRC’s 26 provinces have now been affected, mainly those along the country’s north-eastern border. More than 3,400 of the cases have been recorded in Ituri province, where the outbreak was



first reported. There are no approved vaccines or treatments for the rare Bundibugyo strain of the virus that is responsible for the current surge in cases. Thomas Parisch, a public health specialist recently deployed to DRC with Médecins Sans Frontières, said: “Normally, as an outbreak progresses, the case fatality ratio should fall as contact tracing improves and patients are identi-

fied and treated earlier.

“Instead, we’re still seeing many cases detected very late, when treatment is less likely to succeed, with many identified only after they die in the community.”

Uganda has reported at least 20 cases, all in the capital, Kampala.

In May, the outbreak of the disease in the DRC and Uganda was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the WHO.

The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals and then spreads in the human population through direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people and with contaminated surfaces and materials such as bedding or clothing.

According to WHO, symptoms can include fever, fatigue, malaise, muscle, pain, headache and sore throat. These are followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, rash and symptoms of impaired kidney and liver functions.

Trump calls Saudi-Turkey-Pakistan defence pact ‘big, bold’ first step



Washington: US President Donald Trump has described the recently signed Saudi Arabia-Turkey-Pakistan defence agreement as a “big, bold and important first step” towards enabling the three countries to defend themselves in a more meaningful way.

Trump’s remarks came days after Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan signed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement on August 7. Under the agreement, an armed attack against any one of the three countries would be considered an attack against all three. “Very happy to see that Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan have recently, and finally, signed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement. It shows how the Middle East is coming together, and how countries will finally be able to defend themselves in a more meaningful way,” Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

“Congratulations to the Great Leadership of the three Nations mentioned.

THIS IS A BIG, BOLD, AND IMPORTANT FIRST STEP — WOW,” he said.

The agreement was signed by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

India is examining the implications of the agreement for its national security as well as regional peace and stability.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had said on August 11 that India was examining the agreement “both from the perspective of India’s national security and considerations of regional peace and stability”.

“India remains fully committed to safeguarding its national interests and will take all necessary measures in this regard,” Jaiswal said.

The agreement comes amid continuing security concerns in West Asia and is expected to add a new dimension to the evolving regional security framework.

Karachi Independence Day Celebrations Turn Tragic as Aerial Firing Kills Woman, Injures at Least 94

Islamabad: Celebrations for Pakistan’s Independence Day turned tragic in Karachi after people allegedly opened fire into the air while marking the occasion with fireworks, leaving a woman dead and at least 94 others injured. The incidents were reported across several parts of the capital of Sindh province, according to an Edhi Foundation spokesperson.

The spokesperson said on Friday morning that the injured included 10 women and 17 children. They were taken to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, Civil Hospital and Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for treatment.



Hospital treated 26 patients, including 10 children, four women and 12 men.

Officials said aerial firing was reported in several areas, including Lyari, Saddar, Korangi, Malir, Azizabad, North Nazimabad, Nazimabad, Gulbahar, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Orangi Town, Jamshed Quarters and Defence Colony during Independence Day celebrations.

Police said 30 suspects had been arrested from Karachi’s eastern, western and central districts in connection with the incidents. The arrests were made within the jurisdictions of Khawaja Ajmer Nagri, Samanabad, Rizvia Society and Sir Syed police stations. Several weapons were also recovered from some of those arrested.

Police said the woman who sustained a gunshot wound later died at Abbasi Shaheed Hospital. The accused, identified as the woman’s cousin, was arrested.

Aerial firing during Independence Day celebrations has repeatedly resulted in casualties in Karachi in recent years. In 2025, similar incidents reportedly killed

three people and injured at least 75 others. In 2024, nearly 95 people were injured in incidents of celebratory gunfire during Independence Day festivities.

According to Dunya News, as the clock struck midnight and August 14 began, residents of Karachi gathered on streets and rooftops to commemorate the anniversary of Pakistan’s independence from British rule in 1947. Celebrations were accompanied by fireworks and aerial firing in several areas.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended Independence Day greetings to the nation. He said Pakistan was commemorating the occasion while paying tribute to those who sacrificed their lives for the country amid what he described as a “historic victory”.

Addressing an Independence Day ceremony in Islamabad, Shehbaz said the nation was remembering the sacrifices made by its founding generation. He also described every drop of water concerning Pakistan as an extremely sensitive issue and warned that any disruption by India over water-related matters would draw a strong response.

The prime minister said providing new opportunities for development to the country’s younger generation remained the government’s foremost priority.

De Gaulle’s Grandson Says Ashamed of Paris Violating Minsk Accords

Moscow: Pierre de Gaulle, a grandson of former French President Charles de Gaulle and deputy chairman of the jury of the Leo Tolstoy International Peace Prize, told RIA Novosti that he was ashamed of France’s breaking its word regarding the Minsk Accords. “I am sad and I am ashamed that France broke its word [regarding the Minsk Agreements],” Charles de Gaulle said. Europeans, Ukrainians and Russians are all suffering from what is currently happening in Ukraine, he added.

The Minsk Accords were a complex series of measures negotiated by Russia, France, Germany and Ukraine - a quartet known as the Normandy format - in 2014-2015 in a bid to put an end to the armed conflict between the Kiev authorities and the breakaway eastern region of Donbass. Moscow accused Kiev of breaking the terms of the deal, including by refusing to grant autonomy to Donbass. In February 2023, Vladimir Zelensky admitted that he never intended to implement the Minsk agreements, as did ex-German Chancellor Angela Merkel and former French President Francois Hollande. They said that they had no intention of complying with the agreements they had signed.

The Pentagon released its UFO videos – so I went to the US to chase aliens. This is what I found

I never gave much thought to aliens beyond Star Wars. I put extraterrestrials and their flying saucers in a box marked “non-sense” long ago, along with political manifestos, loyalty cards, Black Friday, fairies, pixies, elves, ghosts and ghouls. Then, in 2017, the New York Times published an article with the headline “Glowing Auras and ‘Black Money’: The Pentagon’s Mysterious UFO Program”. Apparently, the US government had been chasing UFOs for years. These weren’t the ramblings of the kind of straw-chewing rancher you would see in a sci-fi film; the story was told by a military intelligence officer called Luis Elizondo. He claimed he ran a secret Pentagon programme called the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program (AATIP), which had found evidence that UFOs were flying around military bases, behaving in ways that defied the laws of physics. A couple of striking videos accompanied the New York Times piece and were subsequently released by the Pentagon. One appeared to show a dark, glowing object that looked remarkably like a flying saucer, while the voices of startled navy pilots played in the background. “There’s a whole fleet of them; look at the SA,” came the first voice on the video, referring to the multifunctional cockpit display. “My gosh!” a second voice replied. “They’re all going against the wind. The wind is 120 knots [138 miles an hour] out of the west,” chimed in a third voice. “Look at that thing, dude. Look at that thing ... It’s rotating!” A few years later, the plot thickened. In June 2021, the Pentagon released a report confirming that it could not explain more than 140 incidents of flying objects reported by navy officers over the previous two decades. A month before, on The Late Late Show With James Corden, Barack Obama had confirmed that things were happening in the sky that could not be explained. (In February, he went further and told a podcast host that aliens were “real”.) In July 2023, a former US intelligence officer, David Grusch, told a packed congressional hearing that secret government programmes were hoarding crashed spaceships and “non-human biologics”. I found myself withdrawing little green men from the non-sense box in my mind. Either an alien invasion was taking place under our noses or there were some very confused people in the upper echelons of US intelligence. Either way, there was a story to tell. So, much to the surprise of my close friends and family, in the autumn of 2023, I dropped everything and headed to the US to chase aliens. I don’t know what I was expecting, but I fantasised about having a Woodward and Bernstein moment on my trip. In a dusty diner in the American south-west, a source would hand me a brown envelope containing indisputable proof of the alien invasion. However, none of the major players in the disclosure movement – those who have been lobbying the government to declassify the UFO evidence – replied to my emails or calls. These include Elizondo and the Blink-182 frontman Tom DeLonge, who has an entertainment company devoted to uncovering alien life. The radio silence prompted me to dig a little deeper into the stories of whistleblowers such as Elizondo and Grusch. It didn’t take much excavating to realise that the alien invasion wasn’t all that it seemed. It was true that the Pentagon had a UFO programme, but it wasn’t called AATIP and, according to the Pentagon, Elizondo had nothing to do with it. The programme that was concerned with UFOs – or unexplained anomalous phenomena (UAPs) – was called the Advanced Aerospace Weapon System Applications Program (AAWSAP). The story of how AAWSAP came about is convoluted and absurd, but it all started because a spook saw a ghost on a ranch. The spook was James Lacatski, an intelligence officer who had visited the 200-hectare (500-acre) Skinwalker Ranch in Utah, a supposed hotspot for paranormal activity and UFO sightings. Lacatski had read Hunt for the



Skinwalker, an obscure book about the ranch published in 2005, which documented research funded by the ranch’s owner, the real-estate billionaire turned aerospace mogul Robert Bigelow, whose National Institute for Discovery Science looked into space exploration and the paranormal. The book is a bizarre tome, featuring flying orbs, mysterious cattle mutilations, monsters, portals to other realities and invisible objects emitting magnetic fields on the property. In June 2007, Lacatski wrote to Bigelow, requesting to visit the ranch to see “how my office can characterize the potential threat aspects of the phenomena encountered in your research efforts”. Shortly after arriving, Lacatski claimed to have had a strange encounter. He described seeing an “unearthly technological device” that took the form of “a complex semi-opaque, yellowish, tubular structure”. Apparently, it looked a bit like the image on the cover of Mike Oldfield’s album Tubular Bells. This alleged encounter led to the creation of AAWSAP in 2007. In 2008, Bigelow’s company was the only bidder for a \$22m government contract to research the technical aspects of the

putative advanced aerospace weapon systems of the programme’s title. It did not mention that it wanted intel on monsters, apparitions, orbs, portals, werewolves or dinosaurs, but that is exactly where the taxpayers’ money went. Elizondo disputes the Pentagon’s statement that he never led AATIP. In 2021, he filed an official complaint, accusing his former employer of campaigning to discredit him. That year, a book co-authored by Lacatski cataloguing AAWSAP’s research claimed that AATIP was “an unclassified nickname” used for a “completely separate, small” initiative to study UFOs encountered by people in the military. What is clear is that the full story of Elizondo’s background was not apparent in the initial reports around his whistleblowing. In his 2024 memoir, Imminent, he wrote about possessing psychic powers. He also claimed he had met “remote viewers” – people who believe they can see things that their eyes can’t, sometimes thousands of miles away. Elizondo claimed he managed on one occasion to pay a psychic visit to a jailed terrorist. If these details had been publicly available when he blew the whistle on the

Pentagon, his story may not have taken off in the same way. Elizondo did not respond to my many requests to interview him, but I seized an opportunity to meet him in Washington DC in May 2025, at a UFO hearing he was chairing. The meeting was organised by the UAP Disclosure Fund, “a nonpartisan nonprofit supporting UAP legislation, protecting whistleblowers, and raising public awareness for greater transparency”. We spoke briefly before his opening speech and he promised me time later. I then took my seat and watched him put forward the views he has been sharing for close to a decade: that UFOs are thumbing their noses at physics while posing threats to national security. At one point during the three-hour-long event, Elizondo held up a photo of what appeared to be a large, white floating disc casting a shadow on what looked like agricultural land. Elizondo described the object as “lenticular” and “anywhere between 600 and 1,000ft in diameter”. Elizondo claimed he received the image from a civilian pilot. However, internet sleuths were quick to point out that Elizondo’s lenticular object was almost certainly two irri-

gation circles, one white and the other black, creating the illusion of a flying disc. Seven months earlier, at an event in Philadelphia, he had presented a slide purporting to show a giant light emerging from clouds in Romania. He said it looked like “the mothership from Close Encounters of the Third Kind”. The image, which ended up online, was believed by many other observers to show a window reflecting a ceiling light. Indeed, if you look closely, you can see the outline of what appears to be a head of hair, presumably that of the photographer. Then there were those videos recorded by the US navy. Mick West, a UFO video analyst, deduced that the object of the video that made an officer go: “Oh gosh,” was likely glare from a nearby heat source – probably a jet plane’s exhaust. And yet, beyond publications such as Popular Mechanics and niche YouTube shows such as The Basement Office, these updates have been missing from the media’s coverage of UFOs in the US. Elizondo, Grusch and other ufology “whistleblowers” and “experts” appear regularly as talking heads on rolling news channels. Just this month, the talkshow host

Bill Maher remarked on his HBO show: “If you don’t believe aliens are here, then maybe you’re the conspiracy theorist.” Elizondo and I did not meet after the Washington event. I emailed him and he said he would be happy to be interviewed once he had returned home from a tour, but I never heard from him again. I spent several months travelling across the US trying to find evidence that aliens were among us. I interviewed people who alleged they had been abducted by aliens in places as different and distant as Florida and Arizona. I tried to connect with aliens through “starseeds”, people who believe they lived past lives as aliens on other planets. Through it all, I learned far more about human beings than I did about extraterrestrials. So, if there are no aliens, what is going on? Why has ufology had a resurgence? Perhaps it is because the past decade of political unreality has made it almost impossible to separate fact from fiction, or because popular culture has trained us to point to ET when unexplained phenomena appear in our skies. UFOs are spotted worldwide, but stories of alien visitors sit particularly prominently in American

minds. The US’s obsession with UFOs erupted in the late 60s, a period of great unrest and mistrust of power, from the “red scare” to the Cuban missile crisis, the assassination of John F Kennedy to Watergate. Hollywood reinforced these beliefs when it succeeded in turning extraterrestrials into an American myth on a par with the cowboy on the frontier. American exceptionalism is at the heart of this: if the US is the greatest slice of land in the known universe, then why would invading aliens go anywhere else? When I interviewed the Harvard physicist Avi Loeb, who achieved notoriety when he hypothesised that an asteroid passing through the solar system could have been an interstellar solar sail belonging to an extraterrestrial, I asked him if intelligent life begins and ends with us. “Oh, that would be very disappointing,” Loeb said, sipping from a glass of water. Humans, he said, “are not that intelligent. If that’s the best that the universe made, I would lose my respect for the size, the scale and the length of time that the universe existed.” The assumption here is that an extraterrestrial that succeeds in reaching Earth must possess an intelligence that far exceeds our own. The hope is that aliens aren’t cosmic colonists hell bent on winning their latest planetary trophy, but beings that travel to share wisdom. Of course, there isn’t a shred of evidence that aliens have visited our planet – and it’s highly unlikely that there ever will be. The distance between our solar system and others that could host a planet similar to Earth is vast. The nearest exoplanet to ours is Proxima b, 4.2 light years away. The fastest spaceship humans have engineered would take thousands of years to cover such a distance and would need, according to one calculation, a year’s worth of Earth’s total energy output. Ask yourself this, then: would you embark on a journey you would never finish for the remote possibility that your distant descendants might meet the men from Ork? Aliens would have to answer the same question.

Egyptian mummy has part of the ‘Iliad’ in its abdomen, archaeologists discover

Archaeologists in Egypt have discovered a Roman-era mummy with a copy of Homer’s epic poem the “Iliad” inside its abdomen — a unique find that archaeologists are calling “exceptional.” Written on papyrus in Greek, the text records part of Book 2 of the “Iliad,” which details the legendary Trojan War. The text found in the mummy lists the ships used against the city of Troy, according to a statement from the University of Barcelona. It would have been placed within the abdomen during the embalming ritual. The mummy, which dates to a time when the Romans controlled Egypt, was found at a tomb within a cemetery in the modern-day town of Al-Bahnasa in Egypt, which was known as Oxyrhynchus in ancient times. The Romans controlled Egypt starting in 30 B.C., after Cleopatra died by suicide, until A.D. 641, when the Rashidun Caliphate took control of Egypt. The site of Oxyrhynchus has been excavated off and on for well over a century. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, archaeologists found around 500,000 fragments of papyri at the site. The newly discovered “papyrus was placed on the abdomen to protect [the] deceased in the afterlife,” Esther Pons Mellado, co-director of the archaeological mission in Oxyrhynchus, told Live Science in an email. Pons Mellado and Maitte Mascort, who is also a co-director of the mission, explained that during the time the Romans controlled Egypt, it was common for papyri to be put inside mummies, in the chest or abdomen.



However, it’s unclear why ancient Egyptians thought papyri would help protect the deceased, Pons and Mascort said. Remarkably,

this is the first time a copy of Homer’s “Iliad” has been found inside a mummy. “The discovery is exceptional: it is the first time in the

history of archaeology that a Greek literary text has been found deliberately incorporated into the mummification process,” the Univer-

sity of Barcelona statement noted. Although other Greek literary texts have been unearthed at Oxyrhynchus, “the real novelty” of the newfound literary papyrus is its “funerary context,” Ignasi-Xavier Adiego, a linguistics professor at the University of Barcelona who analyzed the papyrus, said in the statement. He explained that papyri found inside mummies are often magical texts. So far, archaeologists don’t know much about the mummy with the “Iliad” papyrus. “We know that [it] was a male mummified individual but it’s still under investigation,” Pons and Mascort wrote in the email. They noted that the person was an adult. The “Iliad” mummy was found during a November-December 2025 excavation of a cemetery at Oxyrhynchus. The team’s previous excavations at the cemetery revealed more than a dozen mummies with gold tongues, which ancient Egyptians thought would help the mummies communicate in the afterlife. The team found three additional gold tongues and one copper tongue during the November-December 2025 excavation, a translated statement from Egypt’s Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities said. For the ancient Egyptians, gold symbolized the flesh of the gods and it was thought that having a tongue made of gold would help you communicate with them. It’s not clear why copper was used for one of the tongues. It’s also unknown if the mummy with the “Iliad” text had a gold or copper tongue; study of the mummy is ongoing.

ENTERTAINMENT

Amitabh Bachchan on why his father changed his surname in school

Mumbai : Megastar Amitabh Bachchan took audiences by surprise after he revealed the fascinating story behind his legendary surname.

The megastar recalled how his father, celebrated Hindi poet Harivansh Rai Bachchan, rejected the caste system from childhood and chose “Bachchan” as the family’s surname. The revelation came during an episode of Kaun Banega Crorepati Season 18,



when Bachchan discovered that contestant Dr Jagriti shared his roots in Prayagraj and had also studied at the St. Mary’s Convent School, of which the legendary actor is an alumnus.

Recalling the admission process at the school, Bachchan said, “Kya baat kar rahein hain, arey devi ji woh humara bhi pehla school tha. Are aisa bolne ki jarurat nahi hain, lekin ismein ek bahut

likhna padta hain. Wahan ek column hai aapki jaati kya hain? Babuji jo thein bachpan se jaati-vaadh ke khilaf the, unko bilkul pasand nahi tha aur uska kabhi bhi unhone sweekar nahi kiya. Paheli baar, unhone kaha humari jaati Bachchan hain, uss naam se unhone likh diya, jaati Bachchan hain, pura naam hain iska Amitabh Bachchan.”

Talking about Amitabh Bachchan’s original name at

birth was Amitabh Srivastava. The actor was born on October 11, 1942, in Allahabad, now Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. His father, Harivansh Rai Bachchan, was born into the Srivastava family and went on to become one of the towering figures of modern Hindi literature.

He is best known for his iconic Madhushala, while his other celebrated works include Madhubala, Madhu-

kalash, Nisha Nimantran, Sa-trangini and the much-loved poems Agneepath and Jo Beet Gayi So Baat Gayi. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan for his contribution to Hindi literature in 1976.His literary work also reflected patriotic and national themes. During the 1965 India-Pakistan war, Harivansh Rai Bachchan reportedly wrote powerful lines on courage and fighting the enemy.

Heroes star hayden panettiere dies at 36

Agency : Hayden Panettiere, best known for Heroes and Nashville, has died at the age of 36. Her representative confirmed the news to ABC News, while her father Skip Panettiere asked for privacy as the family deals with the loss.

The cause of Hayden’s death has not been disclosed. Further details were not immediately available, leaving fans and the actor’s colleagues waiting for more information about what happened. Her father shared a statement after her death, describing the actress as a deeply loved member of the family. “It is with profound sadness that we share the tragic passing of our beloved Hayden. She was an incredible light and a force of nature who brought immeasurable love and joy to all who knew her and to the millions who watched her onscreen,” he said.Skip Panettiere also asked for privacy “as our family takes time to process this unimaginable loss.”

Hayden began acting as a child and went on to build a long career in television and film. She became widely known for playing Claire Bennet in Heroes and later starred as Juliette Barnes in the musical drama Nashville. Her film credits included Remember the Titans, Raising Helen, Ice Princess and Scream 4. She also returned as Kirby Reed in the Scream franchise, with her appearance in the series released in March 2023. Over the years, Panettiere was open about some of the difficult periods in her life. Her memoir, This Is Me: A Reckoning, was released in May and discussed her experiences away from the screen. According to the book’s synopsis, the memoir offers “a rare and intimate glimpse into her life behind closed doors, opening up about postpartum depression, addiction and recovery, trauma, domestic abuse, and loss.”

Ravi Kishan Catches Divyendu and Ali Fazal Doing His Viral Gucci Step

Mumbai : Ravi Kishan is all the rage right now. If you are an active Instagram user, your feed must have been filled with hilarious memes featuring the actor-politician. Ever since his recent interview, Ravi has gone massively viral. In fact, his old signature Gucci step has also resurfaced on the internet which many have been recreating. Well, joining the trend were his Mirzapur co-stars Divyendu and Ali Fazal and their video will brighten up your day. The duo was seen imitating his step in the background quietly while Ravi Kishan spoke to the paps. When Ravi spotted them doing this masti, he joined the fun.

At the promotional event of Mirzapur, Ravi recreated

his iconic Gucci dance step with a photographer. He also hugged the pap later. When he turned around, to his surprise, he found Divyendu and Ali Fazal also imitating the same step. This left him in bouts of laughter. Kishan stepped inside the venue and all of them started dancing together to the viral step. Recently, in an exclusive interview with News18 Showsha, Ravi Kishan had reacted to his meme avatar and explained why he believes so many of his spontaneous moments end up going viral.

Ravi Kishan has become a familiar face in the world of social media memes, with several of his moments finding a second life online. His “Jaldi The Late” remark

turned into a popular meme, while his “Home From Work” slip-up also sparked plenty of jokes and edits. In recent months, clips from his podcasts, including the viral “Money Follows My Brother” moment, have also been widely shared. His expressions, mannerisms, dialogues and even dance moves continue to inspire memes and reels across social media.

The movie will bring back several familiar faces from the franchise, including Pan-kaj Tripathi as Kaleen Bhaiya, Divyendu as Munna Bhaiya and Ali Fazal as Guddu Pandit. Jitendra Kumar will also join the cast as Bablu Pandit, a character originally played by Vikrant Massey in the series.

Sunny Deol reflects on overcoming Rs 56 crore debt prior to Gadar 2 triumph

Mumbai : Sunny Deol’s career found fresh momentum with the blockbuster success of Gadar 2 in 2023, but the actor remembers spending years struggling to find films that could replicate the extraordinary run he enjoyed around the turn of the millennium. Speaking about that difficult phase, Sunny said his career slowdown happened gradually despite delivering massive successes such as Gadar and Indian in 2001.

The actor also addressed the financial pressure he faced after directing and producing films himself, including the debt that eventually resulted in an e-auction notice being issued against his Juhu property. Speaking on Shubhankar Mishra’s podcast, Sunny

revisited 2001, when Gadar became one of the biggest hits of his career. The film released alongside Aamir Khan’s Lagaan and earned approximately Rs 77 crore domestically.

Sunny followed it with Indian later that year. The actor pointed out that the action thriller also performed exceptionally well, earning around Rs 43 crore in India compared to Lagaan’s Rs 34 crore. “Along with Gadar, I also delivered Indian, which was a much bigger hit than Lagaan and all the other films of that time. It did two to three times of Lagaan’s business. Gadar did much more than that,” he said.

Yet the successes didn’t translate into a steady run of



strong projects.“Suddenly, corporates came in, and the film industry’s format began changing,” Sunny said, adding, “But after that, I don’t know why I wasn’t getting the right subjects and makers.” Sunny also recalled the trouble surrounding his 2005 action comedy Jo Bole So Nihaal. The Rahul Rawail directorial faced objections from sections of the Sikh community.Its the-

atrical run was further affected after a bomb explosion at a Delhi cinema screening the film resulted in one death and left 49 people injured.

The film, however, hasn’t matched the numbers of Sunny’s recent theatrical successes. It collected approximately Rs 26.50 crore domestically over its opening weekend, which is lower than the opening-day collection of Border 2.

Emraan Hashmi’s gunmaaster G9 locks Nov 27 release, clashes with Ayushmann starrer

Mumbai : After winning hearts with his recently released film, Awarapan 2, Emraan Hashmi is ready with another big-screen outing. His upcoming film is titled Gunmaaster G9, which also stars Genelia D’Souza and Aparshakti Khurana. The film, which is said to be a mix of action, romance and musical, has now locked its theatrical release date. It will be clashing with Ayushmann Khurrana’s Yeh Prem Mol Liya.

Gunmaaster G9 will arrive in cinemas worldwide on November 27, 2026. Directed by Aditya Datt, the action romance is produced by Deepak Mukut, Hunar Mukut and

Sangeeta Ahir and presented by Soham Rockstar Entertainment Pvt. Ltd. The film is a production of SRE Studio LLP.Emraan announced the release date through an Instagram video. The announcement carried the message: “GunmaasterG9 is locked, loaded and ready to fire up the big screen on 27th November. And this time, it’s not just bullets firing. It’s romance, music and action coming to steal your heart.”

The film also brings Emraan, Himesh Reshammiya and Aditya Datt back together nearly two decades after their earlier collaborations. Gunmaaster G9 marks an-



other association between Soham Rockstar Entertainment and Himesh, following the musical successes of Sanam Teri Kasam and Genius. Producer Deepak Mukut spoke about bringing the team together again and

said, “We were keen to bring Emraan Hashmi, Aditya Datt and Himesh Reshammiya together once again, and Gunmaaster G9 has given us the opportunity to do just that. Romance, action and music form a heady cock-

tail in the film, and it has come together beautifully.”

Aditya Datt also opened up about making the film. The director said, “Gunmaaster G9 has been one of the most demanding yet exhilarating films of my career. Our endeavour was to ensure that every action sequence, every emotion and every frame carries a sense of impact. Reuniting with Emraan and Himesh after all these years has been an extraordinary experience, and I am excited for audiences to see what we have created.”

The November 27 release will set up a box office clash between

Gunmaaster G9 and Ayushmann Khurrana and Sharvari’s Yeh Prem Mol Liya. The latter is directed by Sooraj Barjatya and is said to be a family entertainer.Ayushmann and Sharvari recently wrapped the film’s shoot. The final schedule took place at Banganga in Mumbai. Sharing pictures from the shoot, Ayushmann wrote, “With our hearts full of love and gratitude, thank you, Sooraj sir, Rajshri Productions, Mahaveer Jain and the entire team for making this journey so special. We can’t wait to bring this Sooraj Barjatya film to you and your family only in cinemas on 27th November.”

Nitin Kakkar’s next big project: a romantic musical after Awarapan 2 triumph

Mumbai : After the success of Awarapan 2, director Nitin Kakkar is set to take on his next project, a romantic musical with producer Anshul Garg. The filmmaker, who has had a strong run with his latest release, is now venturing into a new genre with a story that brings together romance and music.

The collaboration marks an exciting new creative partnership, with the script already locked and the team gearing up to begin work on the film later this year. Talking about the project, Nitin Kakkar said, “I’m really excited to be



collaborating with Anshul on this project. It’s a beautiful romantic musical with a story that I’m

very excited to bring to the screen. I believe it has a very fresh and contemporary emotional world,

and I’m looking forward to bringing this story to life and starting work on it soon.”

The team is currently in the process of finalising the leading cast, with discussions underway with actors who will headline the romantic musical. The casting is expected to be locked soon, with the film set to go on floors later this year. With Nitin Kakkar coming fresh off the success of Awarapan 2 and Anshul Garg continuing to expand his slate of films, their collaboration on this romantic musical is certainly one to watch out for.

Kashmera Shah calls out infidelity and broken marriages amid Govinda-Sunita spat

Mumbai : Bollywood actress Kashmera Shah has expressed disillusionment over marriages and infidelity, questioning whether “true love” still exists. The post has come amid the on-going public spat between her husband Krushna Abhishek’s superstar uncle Govinda and his wife Sunita Ahuja.

Kashmera took to her social media account on the early morning of Monday, and shared a picture of a heart-shaped trail in the sky, alongside a candid note questioning the existence of lasting love. “So is this what true love looks like? Does it exist? Does anyone love someone so much that they will pay for this and make their person feel special? Where is this kind of love and who is this person? Feeling so disillusioned by marriages breaking and people cheating. I feel I need a reality check #love #kashmerashah,” she



wrote.

For the uninitiated, the couple has been making contrasting and pointing remarks about their relationship and washing dirty linen in public. Sunita has spoken openly about alleged infidelity in her marriage, including claims that Govinda has had affairs. A few days ago, Sunita while talking to the paparazzi, called Govinda a ‘sugar daddy’ of his new heroine with whom, according to Sunita, is having an affair.

Sunita’s shocking claims have raised

a lot many eyebrows.To this, Govinda posted a video where he was seen subtly yet strongly lashing out at Sunita for trying to malign his image. He asked her to mainly stop abusing and have some control over her swear words. He also stated that just because he was paired opposite a much younger actress did not mean that he was having in affair and also added that in the history of Bollywood many big stars have work with actresses of a very young age compared to them.He said that Sunita was not letting a single chance go to put him down in the eyes of his fans.

For the uninitiated, a few months ago Kashmera and Sunita had ended their almost decade-old feud. The two who were, once upon a time, at loggerheads and did not talk to each other for years, were seen burying the hatchet and getting along like a house on fire.

Ranveer Singh’s father set to meet IMPPA amid Don 3 controversy

Mumbai : The controversy surrounding Ranveer Singh’s exit from Don 3 has taken a new turn, with his father, Jagjit Singh Bhavnani, now willing to meet the Indian Motion Picture Producers’ Association (IMPPA) over the matter.

As per Times of India report, filmmakers Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani approached IMPPA last month with a complaint against Ranveer. They reportedly submitted documents related to Don 3, including the agreement signed between the two parties and informed the association about the promotional video that had been made for the film.According to the president of IMPPA Abhay Sinha, the filmmakers have approached the association with their problems. “Farhan and Ritesh approached us with a complaint against Ranveer and sought our intervention in the matter last month. We subsequently wrote to Ranveer asking him to re-



spond,” he told the publication.

The matter initially hit a roadblock after Ranveer’s lawyer argued that the dispute did not fall under IMPPA’s jurisdiction, stating that the actor would therefore not participate in the proceedings. However, the stance has since changed, with Ranveer’s father, Jagjit Singh Bhavnani, stepping in and expressing his willingness to meet the producers’ association.“However, three days ago, Ranveer’s father approached us and expressed their willingness to

meet. We also received his advocate’s email stating that they would participate in the meeting whenever it was scheduled,” he added.

Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani reportedly approached IMPPA to discuss the complications caused by Ranveer Singh’s last-minute exit from the film. According to IMPPA committee member Nishant Ujjwal, the producers presented the association with their signed contract and informed them that a promotional video for the project had already been shot. They also reportedly shared a message from Ranveer expressing his initial excitement about being part of the film.Since the exact reason behind Ranveer’s exit is still unclear to IMPPA, the association plans to meet with the actor’s father or his representative soon. The body will first hear their side of the matter before deciding whether any further action is required in connection with the dispute.

Celebrity admiration: Orry discloses his unique tribute to Salman Khan across all his residences

Mumbai : Internet sensation Orhan Awatramani, aka Orry, revealed that he keeps a picture of Salman Khan beside his bed wherever he goes.

He described the superstar as an important figure in his life and career. The revelation came during his appearance on Khatron Ke Khiladi 15, where his unusual fear of pencils also became a talking point. During the episode, host Rohit Shetty told Orry, “I’ve heard that you’re afraid of pencils.” Explaining the unusual fear, Orry said he worries that if he sneezes while writing, the pencil could accidentally enter his nose, reach his brain, and potentially cause serious harm.



His explanation left the contestants amused, but the conversation soon took an unexpected turn. A fellow contestant pointed out that Orry keeps a photograph of Salman Khan beside his bed, questioning how he could be afraid of a pencil when he has the picture of “the greatest star” by his

side.Orry then revealed just how significant Salman Khan is to him. He said that he keeps the actor’s picture by his bedside in every house and even takes it with him when he travels. “In every house and on every trip, I keep a picture of Salman Khan by my bedside. I put glasses on it, so when

I can’t see, the first thing I do is put on my glasses and look at his photo for good luck.”Further, when Rohit Shetty asked whether the ritual had a deeper significance, Orry opened up about Salman Khan’s influence on his journey. “He gave me my first successful break, so I carry the same photo everywhere,” he said.

Meanwhile, Orry has been making headlines with his unexpected daredevil avatar on “Khatron Ke Khiladi 15.” Known for his viral appearances and quirky internet persona, he has been stepping out of his comfort zone and taking on a series of challenging and high-risk stunts on the reality show.

Sanjiv Goenka’s amazing reaction to MSG’s first hundred win takes the internet by storm



London: The sixth edition of The Hundred came to a thrilling climax on Sunday, with Manchester Super Giants winning the men’s title and Trent Rockets winning the women’s tournament. MSG defeated Trent Rockets in the men’s final at Lord’s to win their first championship. It was a fascinating game, with the Rockets scoring 158/8 after being asked to bat first. Manchester got off to a flying start in the chase, with to opener Tim Seifert’s fluent 72 off 38 balls. Later, with Manchester needing three

runs from the last three deliveries, Liam Dawson blasted a six to help his team over the finish line and record a five-wicket triumph. It was a special moment for MSG owner Sanjiv Goenka, who finally witnessed one of his cricket franchises win a major tournament. Goenka, who also co-owns IPL franchise Lucknow Super Giants, is often known for his animated reactions during matches. However, his heartfelt congratulatory message after the team’s triumph in The Hundred won praise

from fans.“Champions in our very first season! ManchesterSG100. What a night it has been at Lord’s, a proud moment for all of us in the Super Giants family. This was a team effort from the first game to the last. Tim, what an innings. Noor, a brilliant spell with the ball and wickets at the times we needed them. Jos has led from the front all season, and the way the whole squad came together through the knockouts is what turned this season around. Congratulations to Jos and to every player who made this happen. And a special thank you to our supporters, you willled this team on all the way. This one is for you,” wrote Goenka on X (formerly Twitter). Team Manchester was once known as Manchester Originals. This year, Goenka became the new owner and renamed the team Manchester Super Giants. Captain Jos Buttler was emotional following the team’s triumph.I believe there is a mixture of feelings. The thrill and ecstasy of winning it. There was some relief after the last few balls. However, everyone put up a terrific effort. I believe Tim indicated that in order to be in this position to take the trophy, they needed to win five consecutive games. “I believe we deserved it,” Buttler remarked after the match.

The “One Family, One Ticket” controversy escalates as BJP’s Ravneet Bittu targets the Congress

New Delhi, Aug 17: The Congress’s “One family, one ticket” policy has come under renewed fire, with BJP politician and former Union Minister Ravneet Bittu choosing sides. Bittu has supported senior Congress politician Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa’s idea that electoral skill, not family ties, should determine ticket allocation.

The incident has fueled the current political feud between Punjab Congress head Amrinder Singh Raja Warring and Randhawa. Warring has argued in favor of the party’s “One family, one ticket” policy, claiming that the Congress should not grant two seats to members of the same family. Randhawa, on the other hand, has called for flexibility, claiming that if a family has four good candidates who can win, there is no reason why the Congress should not grant them all tickets.Bittu is now using Randhawa’s argument to challenge the Congress.Bittu has questioned why the Gandhi family’s three members can acquire election tickets when another family has four candidates who are capable of winning. His intervention has added a new political dimension to what was initially an internal Congress disagree-



ment. The controversy has also exposed a wider contradiction within the Congress. On one side, the party has promoted the idea of limiting multiple tickets within the same family as part of its organisational reforms, an effort to counter allegations of dynastic politics. On the other, senior leaders such as Randhawa argue that a blanket restriction could prevent strong and winnable candidates from contesting. The heated discussion comes at a critical juncture for the Punjab Congress, with the 2027 assembly elections coming. Candidate selection and ticket allocation are expected to become major concerns inside the party, especially as various leaders seek to reinforce their separate camps.The dispute has progressed beyond an internal Congress policy discussion. It has now become another political weapon for the BJP, highlighting the widening divide between Warring and Randhawa ahead of the polls.

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“It’s A Privilege” Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty Enjoy Home Opportunity At BWF World Championships



New Delhi: Indian badminton doubles player Chirag Shetty appreciated the tremendous preparations for the BWF World Championships in New Delhi, stating that the enhanced facilities and circumstances are clearly obvious. Shetty described competing in front of a home audience as a luxury, emphasizing that the extra support would give him and his partner Satwiksairaj Rankireddy an extra lift as they strive to make the most of the chance and advance to the tournament’s final round. The famous competition returns to India after a 17-year absence, with Hyderabad last hosting the championships in 2009. The 30th edition will take place in the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium from August 17 to 23. “A lot of work has been done, and it’s quite visible. The conditions are much better, and I think

everything will definitely be a really good time. Experiencing the tournament here, and I am really looking forward to this week... It’s another opportunity. Every year, we want to go all the way. This time too. It’s in our home ground, and we would want to go as deep into the tournament as possible... It’s an added advantage that we’ll have home crowd support. It’s a privilege to be in our country. We will make the most of it and enjoy it to the fullest.” Shetty told the reporters.Rankireddy also emphasised that playing in front of a home crowd is always special, making the World Championships in India an even bigger occasion for him and Shetty.“It’s always special playing in front of a home crowd. It’s not about the World Championship. Even in the India Open, we always loved playing here. Because

when we started playing international tournaments, we rarely got a chance to play in India. Before, it used to be PBL. So we used to play in front of our people. But I think this is one more chance in the year. We played in India Open here. But we couldn’t go to the deepest in the tournament. But I think this is more special. It will be challenging for us, coming back from injury, having had a break, then playing the World Championship in India. It’s quite challenging, but we love taking challenges, so we are really excited for it,” Rankireddy said.

The World Championships, held annually except in Olympic years, offer the highest number of BWF ranking points alongside the Olympic Games, making the event one of the most coveted prizes in badminton.India will have two entries in each of the five disciplines: men’s and women’s singles, men’s and women’s doubles, and mixed doubles. Sindhu, seeded ninth in women’s singles, and Satwik-Chirag, seeded fifth in men’s doubles, headline the Indian contingent, with Lakshya Sen and the mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto also among the country’s seeded entries.Asian Games champions and fifth seeds Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will look to carry the momentum from their Singapore Open triumph in May, where they claimed the BWF Super 750 title.

The Olympics 2036 will kick off a nationwide talent hunt In Focus: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Independence Day



New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated on Saturday that India is a strong contender to host the 2036 Olympics, and that to assure the country’s strong participation at the mega-event, a countrywide talent hunt will be started to uncover possibilities aged 5 to 15. On the 80th anniversary of Independence Day, Modi addressed the nation from the ramparts of Red Fort, claiming that the government’s flagship Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), introduced in 2014, had been a huge success in terms of athlete support. “India is making space for itself in the world of sports. We hear our national anthem frequently and see our tri-colour going up very often. TOPS has achieved great success. Whether it is Khelo India Games, University Games, Beach Games, Winter Games, or sports training, sports medicine, sports nutrition, India is moving

ahead at great pace,” he said.“India’s performance is improving, and we are strong contenders to become an Olympic host in 2036. We are hosting the CWG in 2030. There are about 40 disciplines in Olympics, with nearly 350 events. It is sad that we don’t compete in at least two third of these events because we are not even able to qualify.“We have decided that in 2036, we should have participation in at least three fourth events. We are launching a nationwide talent hunt for children aged 5 to 15 to identify prospects in every corner of the country. They will get special training to become world class athletes,” he added. The fate of India’s 2036 bid is expected to be known only in 2029.PTI had reported in January this year that plans to start a talent hunt with the 2036 Games in view were in the brainstorming stage so that the country finds its footing in

‘Look What Your Testing Agency Did’ Rahul Gandhi Slams PM Over UGC-NET Retests

New Delhi, Aug 17: Rahul Gandhi, a Congress MP, has launched a new wave of attacks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the National Testing Agency (NTA) in response to the declaration that the UGC-NET for three courses will be re-conducted due to incorrect question papers.The NTA, which has been dealing with the consequences from the NEET paper leak protests, announced yesterday that the UGC-NET for English, Commerce, and Sociology had been canceled and that new examinations will be administered.Dharmendra Pradhan lost his position as Union Education Minister as a result of



the competition,” she added. Sindhu also expressed excitement about playing in front of the home crowd and said the support from Indian fans would be an added boost during the competition.“The crowd will give us a lot of support, and I’m really happy to play the World Championship at home. I hope to make the most of it and win a medal,” she said.Sindhu has an impressive record at the BWF World Championships, having won five medals, one gold, two silver and two bronze, to equal China’s Zhang Ning for the most

women’s singles medals in the tournament’s history. India are aiming to win multiple medals on home turf. All eyes will be on Sindhu, who has struck form in the run-up to the Championships by winning the Japan Open last month.Sindhu will not face world number one An Se Young of South Korea or defending champion Akane Yamaguchi of Japan before the medal rounds. She is likely to meet China’s third seed Wang Zhi Yi in the pre-quarterfinals, with a possible last-eight clash against sixth seed Putri Wardani of Indonesia.

Row Over Three ‘Poachers’ Shot Dead In Karnataka; Vijay Says They Were Tamils



Chennai, Aug 17: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay has denounced the shootings of three Tamil persons in Karnataka’s Chamara-janagar district. He called the Karnataka forest department’s explanation for the killings “unacceptable” and requested a comprehensive investigation. Early Saturday morning, suspected poachers allegedly

entered the woodland to shoot animals. Forest officers went to the scene after receiving a tip.According to sources, the poachers allegedly fired on forest staff, who returned, resulting in a gun duel. Three males, suspected of being poachers, were killed during the exchange of fire. The males were identified as Antony Swamy, Peter, and Kumar.

Some papers and items, including firearms, have been confiscated. A post-mortem examination is being performed. “Anthony Sami, John Rose Peter, and Kumar, who were Tamils residing in villages in the Hanur taluk of Chamara-janagar district in Karnataka, were shot dead by Karnataka Forest Department officials in the early hours of August 15, 2026, in the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary area.

I strongly condemn this,” Vijay said in a post on social media platform X. “The Karnataka government must provide all necessary assistance to the families of the victims,” he added.Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said he received the information about the encounter around 5 am. “The forest department officials came

and gave me first-hand information,” he said. The guns of the poachers have been seized along with two bags of meat of wild animals, he said. “One person had escaped... They had shot our forest personnel who were involved there,” the Chief Minister said. Shivakumar said he has already ordered an inquiry by a magistrate. “I have also said that there should be a proper response and appropriate action,” he said. Compensation will be paid to the families, he added, pointing out that the details were yet to be finalised. Leader of the Opposition Ashok said, “The bullets hit the heart, though it should hit only the leg”. Accusing the commissioner of giving a wrong report, he said the BJP demands a judicial inquiry in the matter.

Rahul Gandhi demands accountability as NTA announces re-conduct of the UGC-NET

New Delhi, Aug 17: Rahul Gandhi, the Congress leader, blasted the government on Monday and urged that the National Testing Agency’s (NTA) leadership be held accountable after the agency announced that it will re-conduct the University Grants Commission National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) for English, commerce, and sociology. He stated that Dharmendra Pradhan’s resignation as Union Education Minister on July 25 in response to student demonstrations over examination irregularities was simply the first step. Gandhi addressed Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a post on X, requesting that he investigate into what his NTA had recently done. “The UGC-NET examinations for sociology, English, and commerce were held from June 22 to 30. Nearly two months later, the NTA canceled all three due to poor papers and the repetition of previous questions. Thousands of applicants who spent years preparing, filling out documents, paying fees, and traveling to remote centers must now repeat the process in September. The NTA makes a mistake, but the student fulfills his term. He said this is no longer an education system but an “extraction machine”. “It takes your money, your years, your mental health, and your confidence and returns nothing. Not even a job. NTA still won’t answer the real question - were these papers leaked before the exam?” Gandhi said that, just like every other arm of the Modi government, NTA never says it is their fault. “Just like every other compromised paper, I am absolutely sure there will be no accountability.”He referred to students taking the UGC-NET again in September and said they are not the problem. “PM Modi built a system that cannot run an exam and then blames the students who take it. Your years are being stolen, and we will not stop until PM Modi answers for it,” Gandhi said.Gandhi’s party colleague, Sachin Pilot, echoed him and demanded accountability. “Yet again, the inefficiency of NTA has come to light, with the agency acknowledging complaints received regarding UGC-NET 2026 for multiple papers - English, commerce, and sociology. Given NTA’s proven track record of incompetence.

Rain Threatens Galle Test, India's WTC Hopes Hang in Balance



Galle: Rain has already taken a sizeable bite out of the first Test between India and Sri Lanka in Galle, and the weather could yet have the final say. India have built a commanding position at 460/9, but the amount of time lost means a result is far from guaranteed. Day 1 was shortened by rain, while Day 2

suffered an even bigger interruption. Only 43 overs were possible on Sunday after the start was pushed back to 2.35 PM, with India adding 172 runs to their overnight 288/2. Devdutt Padikkal's 167 has put India firmly in the driver's seat, with KL Rahul making 82 and Dhruv Jurel adding 51. Sri Lanka's spinners did fight

back, with Prabath Jayasuriya taking 4/109 and debutant Keshara Nuwantha claiming 3/175, but India still finished the day nine wickets down and in control. The concern now is simple. India need enough time to bowl Sri Lanka out and then create a result, but the weather has already eaten into that window.

With more rain forecast, a draw is becoming a genuine possibility. According to AccuWeather, Monday has an 83% chance of precipitation in Galle. The hourly forecast makes for particularly frustrating reading, with a 51% chance of rain at 10 AM, 47% at 11 AM, 44% at noon, 48% at 1 PM and 52% at 2 PM. The chances then ease to 45% at 3 PM, 39% at 4 PM and 34% at 5 PM before rising again to 40% at 6 PM.

Arteta's Arsenal Blow Manchester City Away To Win 18th Community Shield

New Delhi: Arsenal could hardly have asked for a better start to the new season. Mikel Arteta's side tore Manchester City apart with a 3-0 win in the Community Shield on Sunday, lifting the trophy for the 18th time and sending an early warning to their Premier League rivals. The Gunners needed just 23 seconds to take the lead, with Riccardo Calafiori finishing off a superb move involving Myles Lewis-Skelly. Lewis-Skelly allowed the ball to run across his body 25 yards from goal before slipping a superb reverse pass into the path of Calafiori.

The Italian left-back made no mistake, running onto the pass before calmly sidefooting beyond Gianluigi Don-

narumma. It was the fastest goal in Community Shield history and set the tone for a one-sided afternoon in Cardiff. City did have a chance to respond when Phil Foden found space 25 yards from goal, but David Raya produced an excellent diving save to keep Arsenal ahead. Arsenal, though, continued to control the game and doubled their advantage in the 28th minute.

Martin Odegaard picked out the far post with a dangerous cross after cutting inside from the right. Christos Tzolis, one of Arsenal's debutants, made a clever run beyond Abdulkodir Khusanov and managed to direct a looping header back across goal. Kai Havertz was per-



fectly placed to meet it, heading through Donnarumma and into the net. It was a deserved reward for an Arsenal side that played with real intensity despite the Community Shield traditionally being viewed as a curtain-raiser rather than a major compet-

itive fixture. The Gunners looked hungry from the opening whistle and gave City very little time to settle. Tzolis, in particular, made a strong first impression. The summer signing was lively throughout the first half and played a key role in Arsenal's

second goal. City made a change at the break, bringing on Jack Grealish for Jeremy Doku, while Arsenal introduced Declan Rice for Bruno Guimaraes. But it made little difference. Arsenal needed only three minutes of the second half to make it 3-0.

Tzolis was involved again, sending a low ball into the area. Odegaard took it beautifully in his stride, darting in front of Josko Gvardiol before sending the City defender the wrong way. With Donnarumma committed, Odegaard simply passed the ball into the empty net. It was the kind of goal that summed up Arsenal's afternoon. Quick movement, confidence and composure left City chasing shadows.

Cristiano Ronaldo, Georgina Rodriguez Wedding Photos Revealed Exclusively By Vogue Magazine

New Delhi: Cristiano Ronaldo and Georgina Rodriguez have finally given the world a glimpse of the wedding they kept almost entirely under wraps. Vogue has released the first photographs from the couple's intimate ceremony at their home in Cascais, revealing a celebration that was a world away from the lavish affair many had expected.

The couple tied the knot on August 11, exactly 10 years after their first meeting at a Gucci store in Madrid, where Rodriguez was working as a sales assistant. Speaking to Vogue, Rodriguez explained why they chose a private ceremony at home instead of the grand wedding she once imagined. "When I was little, I dreamed of the biggest castle, the grandest carriage, the longest dress, a crown full of diamonds," Rodri-



gueuz told Vogue. "Now I say: no. I want something intimate, with my partner and our children, at home. Because castles, houses, islands, horses, cars: we have all that within reach every day. But something intimate, that is much rarer for us," she added. The wedding took place at 1.30pm on August 11 at the couple's Cascais home, with their five children present. Only four witnesses attend-

ed the ceremony, including Ronaldo's longtime friend Miguel Paixao, Rodriguez's sister Ivana Rodriguez, and friends Jose Rodriguez Sangil and Monica Gonzalez Martinez. The couple had previously confirmed their marriage through Ronaldo's Instagram, where he shared a photograph of them holding hands and showing off their wedding rings. The Vogue photographs, shot by Juergen Teller, offer the

first detailed look at the ceremony and the moments surrounding it. Ronaldo opted for a light-coloured suit with a white shirt, while Rodriguez wore a white skirt-and-jacket combination with a matching shirt. The couple also attended a mass to bless their union, while photographs show Rodriguez with their children. The shoot also captures her wearing Chopard jewellery by the pool and during exercise, alongside glimpses of her extensive shoe collection. The ceremony was conducted under a separation-of-assets regime, according to details published by Vogue. For a couple whose lives are usually lived under a giant spotlight, the wedding was remarkably understated. The wedding comes at a significant point in Ronaldo's career.

Antonsen Slams February Schedule, Willing To Pay \$5000 India Open Fine

New Delhi: Anders Antonsen is enjoying his return to Delhi for the BWF World Championships, but the Danish shuttler remains firmly opposed to the India Open being played in the national capital during the peak winter months. Antonsen, who skipped the India Open Super 750 earlier this year because of air pollution and paid a mandatory \$5,000 fine for missing the tournament, noted that conditions in Delhi are vastly superior at this time of the year. He also expressed satisfaction with the facilities at the Indra Gandhi Indoor Stadium ahead of the global event. "Yeah, definitely. I have not been here in like three and a half years or something. Last time was in 2023," the Dane told media in the mixed zone ahead of the World Championships. "As I understand it, there is a big, big difference from season to season when it comes to the pollution.

So in general, it's pretty crazy, but this is just fine. I've experienced way worse air pollution than it is right now, so this I'm okay with. And as far



as the conditions go, the hall is pretty and the practice facilities are good as well. So yeah, all in all, I'm happy so far." While comfortable with the current setup during the World Championships, Antonsen admitted he would think twice about returning for future

editions of the India Open if it continues to be scheduled in January or February. The new BWF calendar slating the India Open for February has not gone down well with the World No. 4, who voiced his frustration over the decision.

PV Sindhu Fitter, Still Hungry, Chases Historic Third World Championship Title At Home



New Delhi: Seven years is a long time to carry an ache. For PV Sindhu, it has lasted since Basel, where she last stood on a World Championships podium. Since then, the two-time Olympic medalist has watched the tournament come and go without her name on it, even as she remained, by her own record, the most decorated woman in its history.

Now the wait comes to New Delhi, to the Indira Gandhi Indoor Arena, and to a crowd that will not need reminding what is at stake: a sixth World Championships medal, one that would pull her level with no one and leave her, alone, at the top of a list she currently shares with China's Zhang Ning. She could not have picked a better moment to arrive at that number.

Sindhu ended a two-year title drought at the Japan Open earlier this year, and if the seven-year wait for a Worlds medal has weighed on her, that win seems to have lifted something. "I think it definitely gives me a lot of confidence," she said on the eve of her first-round match in Delhi. "Of course, I'm really looking forward to the World Championships to start. Since it's happening in India, I think it's really exciting." She was relaxed at that press conference, even playful, a shuttler who looked like she was enjoying herself again rather than merely enduring the circuit. She trained alongside Ayush Shetty in the build-up, both of them overseen by coach Irwansyah, and by most accounts around the venue, she has looked sharp. But the real story of this Sindhu, the 2026 version rather than the one who won gold in 2019, sits somewhere less visible than a scoreline. It is in the sports science room. Vimal Kumar, who has watched Sindhu's career from close quarters and spoke to India Today in 2025 about the need for her to manage her tour schedule more sustainably as she got older, sees the difference plainly now.

Devdutt Padikkal Credits Clarity And Decisive Footwork For His Dream Test Hundred

New Delhi: Devdutt Padikkal admitted he had dreamt of scoring a Test hundred for a long time after marking his return to India's Test side with a maiden century against Sri Lanka in Galle. Padikkal's 167 was the headline act in India's 460 for nine at stumps despite the Sri Lankan spinners picking wickets at regular intervals on a rain-marred second day of the first Test on Sunday. "I've dreamt of this moment. For the last two years, I've been working really hard, you know, to try and make sure that when I get that opportunity, I can do something special like this, and I'm really happy to do that," Padikkal told Sony Sports after the end of play on Day 2. His milestone innings capped a patient wait to rejoin the national setup. Having last featured in the format during the first Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy



in November 2024, Padikkal earned his chance in Galle after B. Sai Sudharsan was ruled out with an injury. The left-hander made the most of his chance at No. 3, producing a fluent innings and putting Sri Lanka's spinners under pressure from the outset. He began with a boundary against debutant off-spinner Keshara Nuwantha before

taking on left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya, including a six that underlined his intent. Padikkal said his approach against spin was built around having clear plans rather than simply reacting to every delivery. "Especially when you're playing spin, it's important that you have certain plans in your head. You cannot go out there and ex-

pect to react all the time. It's important that we have a couple of shots in your head that you want to play as soon as you go out there, so that you can put some pressure on the bowler as well," he said. "So, I think over the last year or so, we have really worked on trying to find ways, in our own strengths, that you can really implement pressure back."

Wahab Riaz Retained As Pakistan Women's Head Coach Despite World Cup Failure

New Delhi: The Pakistan Cricket Board has retained Wahab Riaz and the rest of the coaching staff of the women's national team for the upcoming Asia Cup in the UAE and the Asian Games in Japan, despite a disappointing T20 World Cup campaign. Wahab will continue as coach and mentor, with Imran Farhat, Abdur Rehman and Umaid Asif also retaining their respective roles. Pakistan won just one match at the T20 World Cup under the coaching group and subsequently lost both the ODI and T20I series in Sri Lanka. The PCB's deci-

sion means the same coaching group will oversee Pakistan in two T20 tournaments in the coming weeks. The selectors have also recalled senior batter Aliya Riaz for the Asian Games. Aliya was dropped for the Sri Lanka tour after a poor T20 World Cup, but has been brought back despite failing to make a strong case with her performances since. Sidra Amin and Sadaf Shams, meanwhile, have once again been overlooked for both tournaments.

The selectors continue to consider the two batters as primarily ODI players. Sidra

did score a century in the ODI series in Sri Lanka, although Pakistan lost the series. Regular captain Fatima Sana will lead Pakistan in both tournaments after missing the T20I series in Sri Lanka because of her commitments with The Hundred. The Women's Asia Cup will be played from August 28 to September 13 at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium. Pakistan have been placed in Group A alongside India, Thailand and Hong Kong-China. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates make up Group B. Pakistan



will then turn their attention to the Asian Games in Japan. They are seeded alongside Thailand and will face them in the quarterfinal on September 17 at Korogi Athletic

Park in Aichi. A win would put Pakistan into the semifinal on September 20, where they will face either Sri Lanka or Malaysia. The bronze-medal and gold-medal matches

are scheduled for September 22. Pakistan won gold in the women's cricket event at the 2010 and 2014 Asian Games but finished fourth in the 2022 edition. The Pakistan Cricket Board has retained Wahab Riaz and the women's national team coaching staff despite a poor T20 World Cup showing. The team, led by captain Fatima Sana, will compete in the Asia Cup in the UAE and Asian Games in Japan. Senior batter Aliya Riaz returns despite recent poor form, while Sidra Amin and Sadaf Shams are omitted. Pakistan aims to improve after losing re-

cent series, with tournaments scheduled for August-September, hoping to reclaim Asian Games glory from past glories in 2010 and 2014.

Pakistan coach Wahab Riaz said his team let themselves down in the Women's T20 World Cup. On Saturday, Fatima Sana's side crashed out of the tournament after suffering a 23-run defeat to Bangladesh at the Rose Bowl in Southampton. Reflecting on the campaign, Wahab said Pakistan had been responsible for their own downfall rather than being outplayed by opponents. He

expressed disappointment with the team's inability to handle pressure, particularly after batting collapses in their first three matches. The defeat left Pakistan winless in the tournament, with their remaining two games now offering only an opportunity to salvage some pride. "It is very disappointing to be out of the World Cup because, from our point of view, I still believe no other team has truly beaten us. We have beaten ourselves. That is a big difference. When another team plays better and beats you, you have to give them credit.