

Meghalaya warns of El Niño, climate crisis

Shillong, Jul 04: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has described climate change as an “existential crisis” and called for immediate and coordinated action to strengthen the state’s preparedness against the possible impact of El Nino, warning that Meghalaya recorded an alarming rainfall deficit of over 70% in June.

Addressing a workshop on “Developing State Response for El Nino Preparedness: Strengthening Food and Water Security”, Sangma on Friday said climate change is no longer a distant concern but a reality that is already affecting people and governments. He stressed the need for urgent action from state agencies, communities and institutions to reduce the impact of changing

weather patterns. “Climate change is no longer a future challenge; it is our present reality. While forecasts may change, preparedness cannot wait and there has to be proactive and collaborative efforts involving government departments, communities and institutions are essential to minimise the potential impacts of climate change,” Sangma said.

The Chief Minister’s remarks came as Meghalaya, one of India’s wettest states, faces a severe monsoon shortfall and growing concerns over the likely impact of El Nino on rainfall, agriculture and water resources. El Nino is a natural climate phenomenon marked by the warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.

SIR row erupts in West Shillong over BLO’s alleged illegal form disbursement

Shillong, Jul 04: A major controversy has erupted over the manner in which Enumeration Forms are being “illegally” distributed under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Mawprem under 18-West Shillong constituency, with allegations that Booth Level Officers (BLOs) flouted Election Commission guidelines by distributing forms from the residence of late Dhruba Nath Joshi, former MLA, at Nongsophoh and even on public roads instead of conducting proper house-to-house visits. The Khasi Students’ Union (KSU) Mawprem Circle and leaders of Nongsophoh Dorbar Shnong have strongly

objected to the practice, alleging that forms were being handed out indiscriminately from the courtyard of the former legislator’s residence and in public places without adequate verification or public awareness. They claimed this compromised the integrity of the enrolment process and violated the prescribed procedure of door-to-door enumeration.

KSU Mawprem Circle vice-president Pynshngain Lyngdoh Lyngkhoi, along with local Dorbar leaders including general secretary Richmond Kharbudon, Rangbah Shnong Hardy Ryntathiang, Chairman Johny Kharmawlong and Mawbah Rangbah Shnong



Aresstone Thabab, visited the area after receiving complaints from residents. They demanded that all forms distributed irregular-

ly be retrieved and that future distribution be carried out strictly through house-to-house visits with proper guidance to eligible elec-

tors. Taking serious note of the complaints and media reports, East Khasi Hills District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner

Abhilash Baranwal convened a meeting with political parties and ordered an inquiry. Following a spot inspection by the Assistant Electoral Registration Officer (AERO) on Thursday, the DEO has directed the concerned BLO to immediately retrieve all enumeration forms distributed from the late former MLA’s residence between June 30 and July 2.

The DEO has further ordered that, with effect from July 3, the AERO will personally accompany the BLO during form distribution and directly supervise the exercise until its completion to ensure strict compliance with guidelines.

Centre assures support for MSME Technology Centre in Mizoram

Aizawl, Jul 04: The Centre has assured Mizoram of its support for setting up an MSME Technology Centre in the state, a move aimed at boosting skill development, entrepreneurship and industrial growth, according to an official statement issued on Friday. The assurance was given during a meeting between Mizoram’s Labour, Employment, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar and Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Jitan Ram Manjhi in New Delhi on Thursday evening.

According to the official statement issued on Friday, the proposed Technology



Centre will serve as a hub for training, innovation, and enterprise incubation, offering advanced facilities to nurture small and medium businesses. The Centre is expected to provide local entrepreneurs and youth with access to modern tools, technical

expertise, and mentorship, thereby enhancing competitiveness and creating new employment opportunities. Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar highlighted the importance of the initiative, noting that Mizoram’s growing pool of skilled youth requires institutional support to translate their potential into sustainable enterprises. He stressed that the Technology Centre would not only boost industrial activity but also help bridge the gap between traditional skills and modern business demands. Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi reaffirmed the Centre’s commitment to supporting Mizoram’s aspirations for inclusive growth. He said the MSME Technology Centre would be developed as part of the government’s broader push to strengthen entrepreneurship across the Northeast, ensuring that the region benefits from national industrial policies.

Missing man’s body found in coal pit; three arrested



Shillong, Jul 04: The Meghalaya Police today confirmed the recovery of the body of a missing man from an abandoned coal pit in East Jaintia Hills district. Acting swiftly on leads, authorities arrested three individuals in connection with the case. According to officials, the discovery fol-

lowed an intensive search operation launched after the man was reported missing. The arrests were made during subsequent investigations, with police stating that further inquiries are underway to determine the circumstances leading to the incident. The case has raised concerns about illegal coal

mining activities in the region, which continue to pose risks to both human safety and the environment. Police assured that strict action will be taken against those found responsible, and reiterated the government’s commitment to enforcing the ban on unscientific coal mining. Authorities emphasized that

the investigation will be pursued with transparency and diligence, and that justice will be delivered to the victim’s family. The arrests mark a significant step in addressing criminal activities linked to coal pits in East Jaintia Hills. The incident has once again drawn attention to the dangers posed by illegal coal mining in the region. Despite repeated enforcement drives and judicial directives, unscientific mining continues to create hazardous conditions, often leading to accidents and criminal activity. Police assured that strict action will be taken against those responsible, and reiterated the government’s commitment to enforcing the ban on unsafe coal mining practices.

Eastern Nagaland body calls shutdown for FNTA

Kohima, Jul 04: The Eastern Nagaland Peoples’ Organisation (ENPO) has rescheduled its proposed public rally to July 10 from July 7 and announced a dawn-to-dusk shutdown across six eastern Nagaland districts to intensify its demand for the early implementation of the proposed Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA). The decision was taken during a meeting of the ENPO Central Executive Council and a joint session attended by representatives of tribal bodies and frontal organisations in Tuensang. The ENPO emphasized that the rally and shutdown are part of a peaceful democratic movement aimed at securing constitutional safeguards

and greater autonomy for the region. Tribal leaders reiterated that the FNTA is seen as essential to addressing decades of neglect and ensuring equitable development across eastern Nagaland’s districts. Community representatives present at the meeting expressed solidarity with the ENPO’s call, stressing that the mobilisation reflects the collective will of the people. The organisation further appealed to citizens to observe the shutdown in a disciplined manner, underscoring that the movement seeks justice and recognition within the framework of the Indian Constitution. y rescheduling the rally and intensifying its programme of action.

NHRC seeks report from RPF DG on Guwahati harassment case

Guwahati, Jul 04: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought an Action Taken Report (ATR) from the Director General of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) regarding allegations of harassment faced by a Guwahati-based human rights defender. According to the Commission, the complaint raises serious concerns about the treatment of individuals engaged in safeguarding human rights. The NHRC has directed the RPF to submit a detailed report within a stipulated timeframe, outlining the steps taken to investigate the matter and prevent recurrence of such incidents. The Commission emphasized that human rights defenders play a vital role in strengthening democra-



cy and ensuring accountability, and any attempt to intimidate or harass them undermines the principles of justice and rule of law. The NHRC reiterated its

commitment to protecting the rights of citizens and ensuring that law enforcement agencies act in accordance with constitutional values. It further stated

that the outcome of the ATR will be closely monitored to ensure transparency and accountability in the handling of the case.

Manipur CM attends Valte’s funeral in Churachandpur



Imphal, Jul 04: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Saturday (July 4) attended the funeral service of former Thanlon MLA, late Vungzagin Valte, at his residence in Dorcas Veng in Churachandpur, becoming the first Chief Minister to visit the district since the ethnic violence broke out on May 3, 2023. The Chief Minister travelled to Churachandpur by helicopter as he had to return to Imphal to attend a virtual meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah later in the day.

The Chief Minister travelled to Churachandpur by helicopter, underscoring the importance he attached to paying his respects despite a packed schedule. Following the funeral service, he returned to Imphal to attend a virtual meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah later in the day. Valte, a respected leader from the Kuki community, had played a prominent role in representing Thanlon constituency and

was widely regarded for his contributions to local governance. His passing has been mourned across political and community circles, with the funeral drawing large attendance from family members, colleagues, and residents of Churachandpur.

The Chief Minister’s visit carried symbolic weight, reflecting both his personal respect for Valte and his broader commitment to healing divisions in Manipur. Officials noted that his presence in Churachandpur was intended to send a message of reconciliation and solidarity at a time when the state continues to grapple with the aftermath of last year’s unrest. By attending the funeral, Singh sought to bridge gaps between communities and reaffirm the government’s resolve to restore peace and stability. His participation was seen as a gesture of outreach, reinforcing the importance of dialogue and empathy in rebuilding trust across Manipur’s diverse social fabric.

Following the success of pineapples, Tripura plans to produce mangoes on a large scale

Agartala, July 04: Encouraged by the recent success in Mango production, the Tripura government is now planning to expand it further and bring 342 Kanis of land under Mango cultivation especially in Gandacherra Sub-division in Dhalai District. Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath announced this while attending the concluding day program of Monsoon Mango Festival 2026 at Narikel Kunja. ‘Tripura’s Queen Pineapple’ is already famous across the world, the mango varieties grown in the Dumbor region are equally special and will earn a global fame



soon’, He said.

Local MLA Nandita Debbarma Reang, MLA Promod Reang, MDC Khatrajay Reang, former MP Rebati Tripura, former MDC Bhumi-kananda Reang and other dignitaries present on the occasion echoed the expectation while urged to improve the road communication so that the cultivators can market their product easily.

Minister said “We have seen many kinds of mangoes, but the varieties grown in Dumbor are truly unique. The government will promote the Mango Festival on a larger scale to make Gandacherra and Dumbor

known across the world.”

He added that the government has already introduced deep irrigation facilities for mango growers and plans to set up five more cold storage units to help farmers preserve their produce and reduce post-harvest losses.

Encouraging tourism, the Minister urged people to visit Dumbor, noting that homestay facilities are available for visitors. “Our goal is to support farmers and help double their income. He said that around 259 farmers are currently contributing to Gandacherra’s growing reputation as a mango-producing region.

Muslims hold peaceful protest against proposed UCC Bill in Silchar

Silchar, July 04: Members of the Muslim community staged a peaceful protest in Assam’s Silchar town after Friday prayers, expressing opposition to the state government’s proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill and urging its withdrawal. The demonstration was held on Friday in the Berenga area and was organised by several religious and social organisations. A large number of worshippers gathered outside a local mosque after offering Friday prayers and voiced their concerns over the proposed legislation. Protesters carried petitions and placards calling for the withdrawal of the proposed Bill. They argued that the Uniform Civil Code, in its proposed form, was inconsistent with Muslim Personal Law and would affect the community’s religious and personal legal practices. Addressing the gathering, speakers said the proposed legislation infringed upon the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and fundamental rights. They maintained that the implementation of the UCC would have a direct impact on matters governed by Muslim Personal Law, includ-

ing issues relating to marriage, inheritance and family affairs. The speakers urged the Assam government to reconsider its proposal and withdraw the Bill. They said members of the community would continue to oppose the move through peaceful and democratic means while remaining committed to maintaining law and order. Organisers of the protest also appealed to the government to engage with stakeholders before taking any further steps on the proposed legislation. The demonstration concluded without any untoward incident. Police and civil authorities monitored the situation, and normalcy was maintained throughout the protest. The Assam government’s proposal to introduce a Uniform Civil Code has triggered discussions and reactions from different sections of society, with supporters and opponents expressing differing views on its likely impact. Friday’s protest in Silchar was among the latest public demonstrations against the proposed Bill in the state.

Tiger population goes up in Assam’s Nameri reserve

Guwahati, July 04: The big cat population in Assam’s Nameri National Park and Tiger Reserve has increased from three in 2022 to 12 by the end of 2025, state Forest and Environment Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah said on Friday. The minister said the increase was a significant conservation achievement. “From just 3 tigers in 2022 to 12 by the end of 2025, Nameri Tiger Reserve has scripted a remarkable conservation success, validated by the Wildlife Institute of India,” Baruah said in a post on X. “Forest conservation efforts under the guidance of Hon’ble CM @himantabiswa is doing wonders!” he added. Baruah also said two tigers have returned to the Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, the satellite core of Nameri Tiger Reserve, after decades of absence, marking another milestone for wildlife conservation in the state. Nameri Tiger Reserve comprises Nameri National Park and Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, along with the Naduar and Balipara Reserve Forests. Nameri National Park, spread over 200 sq km, forms the core area of the tiger reserve, while the approximately 120 sq km Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary serves as its satellite core.

Assam girl goes missing

Rangia, July 04: A 22-year-old woman from Assam’s Tamulpur district has been missing from Bengaluru for the last week, family members claimed on Friday. The woman, who hails from Harinchara village along the Indo-Bhutan border, had been working in a private company in the southern city for the last six months, her father claimed. He said she first went to Tamil Nadu about a year back in search of a job and was later employed by a company in Bengaluru. She was staying in a rented house with three other women. Her family lodged a complaint at Kumarikata police station in the district after they were informed that she had gone missing on June 26. Police said they are investigating the matter and have informed higher authorities. Her parents have appealed to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to help trace their missing daughter and bring her home.

Biker Killed After BMW Motorcycle Crashes into Parked GMC Vehicle

Guwahati, July 04: A motorcyclist lost his life in a road accident after his BMW motorcycle crashed into a parked GMC vehicle on the Rukminigaon flyover in Guwahati late on Friday night. According to initial reports, the high-end motorcycle rammed the stationary Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) vehicle on the flyover, resulting in the rider’s death on the spot. The deceased has been identified as Divyanshu Agarwal. Police reached the scene soon after the incident and launched an investigation to ascertain the exact cause of the accident. Further details are awaited.-----

CM Himanta Pays Tribute to Poet Hiren Bhattacharyya on Death Anniversary

Guwahati, July 04: Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday paid heartfelt tributes to eminent Assamese poet Hiren Bhattacharyya on his death anniversary, remembering his immense contribution to Assamese literature. In a message shared on social media, the Chief Minister described Bhattacharyya as the “poet of fragrant butterflies” and a master of words whose simple yet deeply emotional poetry introduced a new voice. Language and sensitivity to Assamese literature Sarma said the legendary poet possessed the rare ability to transform words into the heartbeat of human emotions, ushering in a distinctive era in modern Assamese poetry. He added that Hiren Bhattacharyya’s thoughts, writings and literary legacy would continue to inspire generations. The Chief Minister concluded his message by offering heartfelt homage to the celebrated poet, fondly remembered as “Hiruda.”

Residents of Noklak Initiate Monsoon Cleanup Campaign

Kohima, July 03: Noklak residents hit the streets on July 3 to beat the rainy season. The district administration and the District Disaster Management Authority teamed up to head off flood damage. It was a massive effort. Government workers, students, and town council members joined forces to clear out clogged drains and culverts. Crews pulled out heaps of silt and hacked back overgrown vegetation. They wanted to stop water from backing up into the streets. The goal is simple: keep the town safe when the heavy rains hit. Teams also looked for trouble spots across the town. They checked electric poles and marked trees that looked ready to snap in a storm. They cleaned school grounds and hauled away piles of trash. According to the DIPR report, the



work focused on efforts to “strengthen sanitation, improve drainage, and enhance public safety during the monsoon season.” Local authorities expect the work to keep the town moving while the weather turns ugly.

SIR row in West Shillong pertains to the alleged unlawful distribution

Shillong, July 04: A significant controversy has arisen regarding the alleged “illegal” distribution of Enumeration Forms under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Mawprem, part of the 18-West Shillong constituency. Accusations have been made that Booth Level Officers (BLOs) violated Election Commission guidelines by distributing forms from the residence of the late Dhruba Nath Joshi, a former MLA, located in Nongsophoh, and even on public roads, rather than conducting proper house-to-house visits. The Khasi Students’ Union (KSU) Mawprem Circle, along with leaders from Nongsophoh Dorbar Shnong, have expressed strong objections to this practice, claiming that



forms were being distributed indiscriminately from the courtyard of the former legislator’s home and in public areas without sufficient verification or public awareness. They argue that this undermines the integrity of the enrolment process and contravenes the established procedure for door-to-door enumeration. KSU Mawprem Circle vice-president Pynshngain Lyngdoh Lyngkhloi, along with local Dorbar

leaders such as general secretary Richmond Kharbudon, Rangbah Shnong Hardy Rynthiang, Chairman Johny Kharmawlong, and Mawbah Rangbah Shnong Aresstone Thabab, visited the area after receiving complaints from residents. They have called for the retrieval of all forms that were distributed irregularly and insisted that future distributions be conducted strictly through house-to-house visits, en-

suring proper guidance for eligible voters. In response to the complaints and media coverage, East Khasi Hills District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal held a meeting with political parties and initiated an inquiry. Following a spot inspection by the Assistant Electoral Registration Officer (AERO) Thursday, the DEO has instructed the relevant BLO to promptly retrieve all enumeration forms that were distributed from the late former MLA’s residence between June 30 and July 2. Additionally, the DEO has mandated that starting July 3, the AERO will personally accompany the BLO during the distribution of forms and directly supervise the process.

Cyber Crime Department to Rural Markets, Tripura Gramin Bank Widens Outreach With Customers

Agartala, July 04: Reinforcing its commitment to customer-centric banking and financial inclusion, Tripura Gramin Bank has intensified its outreach efforts by organizing a series of Mega Customer Meets and Customer Day programmes across different districts of the state, engaging businesspersons, farmers, artisans, entrepreneurs and customers from diverse sections of society. City & Local Guides Tripura Gramin Bank organized a Mega Customer Meet and Financial Awareness Program at the Directorate of Land Records & Settlements, Government of Tripura, engaging over 50 staff and officials. During the programme, bank representatives showcased special salary package schemes, various loan products, and advanced digital banking services tailored to customers’ financial needs. The bank expressed gratitude to Kamal Debbarma, TCS Gr-I, Deputy Director, and Jayanta Deb, TCS Gr-I, Deputy Director, for their support in organizing the event. The programme was led by Marketing Head Jeet Bhattacharya, Marketing Officer Nishit Debbarma, Senior Manager G. Shankar, and the Deputy Branch Manager of Agartala Branch. The initiative reflects Tripura Gramin Bank’s commitment to enhancing customer engagement and



promoting financial literacy. A Financial Awareness Campaign was held at the SP Cyber Crime Department, Government of Tripura, on July 3, 2026. The session was graced by the presence of Additional SP (Cyber Crime), Niradesh Deb, TPS Gr-I, throughout the programme. Led by Jeet Bhattacharya of Tripura Gramin Bank Head Office, along with Ricky Datta and Biswajit Deb, the campaign focused on financial awareness and digital literacy, with active participation from the Cyber Crime Tripura team. As part of the initiative, a Mega Customer Meet was organized in collaboration with the Rajbari Branch under the coordination of Marketing Officer (North) Shubham Chakraborty. The programme was attended by CCPC (North) Mithun Das and saw active participation from business-

persons representing various sectors and scales of enterprise. Participants were introduced to the bank’s business and MSME financing options, digital banking services, insurance and investment products, while an interactive session addressed customer queries and evolving financial requirements. In Kailashahar, the bank celebrated Customer Day under the coordination of Marketing Officer (Unakoti) Anupam Deb. The programme was attended by the District Development Manager of NABARD, the Regional Manager (North) and the Senior Manager of Kailashahar Branch. Customers from different walks of life shared feedback and suggestions aimed at improving banking services, reaffirming the bank’s emphasis on responsive and inclusive customer engagement.

Meghalaya continues to depend on 40% of its fish supply from imports

Shillong, July 04: The Meghalaya government’s renewed thrust on developing the fisheries sector in the state has once again raised a question why the state still remains far from self-sufficiency after more than a decade of interventions under the much hyped Meghalaya State Aquaculture Mission (MSAM)? Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma recently announced that the state is exploring the development of a fisheries cluster under the Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) in collaboration with the National Fisher-

ies Development Board (NFDB), NABARD and private partner Uday Aqua. The proposed cluster aims to integrate hatcheries, quality fish seed production, feed manufacturing, cold-chain infrastructure, processing, value addition and marketing under a single ecosystem. At this point, the project is at concept stage only so project specific details cannot be shared,” Tembe said. Beyond that brief response, the department did not provide details on the proposed investment, implementation timeline, funding pattern, expected production targets or

how the cluster would differ from previous aquaculture initiatives despite repeated requests from this newspaper. The Chief Minister’s announcement comes against the backdrop of continuous deficit which forces the state to import nearly 40 percent of fish from outside states like West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. However, he admitted that the state’s annual demand stands at 32,000 metric tonnes, leaving a shortfall of approximately 12,000 metric tonnes, which continues to be met through imports from Assam, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.

St. Xavier Higher Secondary School Hosts Literary Contest and Scout Ceremony

Kohima, July 04: St. Xavier Higher Secondary School in Shamator held a dual event on June 19. The school hosted a literary competition and an investiture ceremony for the Bharat Scouts and Guides. Colonel G. P. Singh, Commandant of the 32 Assam Rifles, attended as the chief guest. Students showcased their creativity during the literary contest. New student leaders took their oaths during the investiture, pledging to focus on service and responsibility. It was a big day. Col. Singh took the stage to address the crowd. He challenged the stu-

dents to aim high. He pushed them to work hard and keep their focus sharp. “Inspire students to nurture ambitious goals and pursue them with determination, discipline and perseverance,” he told the group. The Colonel also spoke about the National Cadet Corps. He noted how the program builds leadership and confidence. He explained how NCC certification helps students when they apply for jobs or take tough exams. The school event wrapped up with a call for the youth to strive for excellence in every part of their lives.

Guwahati Police Seize 13.5 Lakh in Fake Currency

Guwahati Police have arrested five people and seized fake currency notes with a face value of Rs 13.5 lakh in two separate operations carried out by Dispur Police Station on June 30 and July 1. **Guwahati, July 04:** Guwahati police busted five suspects carrying Rs 13.5 lakh in counterfeit notes. Dispur officers led the operations between June 30 and July 1. They acted fast. Two separate cases are now moving through the system. East Deputy Commissioner of Police Tabu Ram Pegu says the gang planned to scam locals. One group traveled from Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, claiming they wanted to buy gold. Another group came down from the Darrang district with similar goals. Officers confiscated the fake cash along with other evidence.

In flood-affected Dhemaji, IAG spearheads a quick needs assessment

Jorhat, July 04: On June 28, the Murkongselek Development Block in Assam’s Dhemaji district saw an unexpected and catastrophic flash flood that destroyed numerous villages in the Jonai subdivision. The abrupt rush of floodwaters, which was caused by heavy and persistent rains in the nearby hills of Arunachal Pradesh, swept through the low-lying areas with incredible force, leaving locals with little time to

flee or defend their homes and possessions. The Dhemaji District Inter Agency Group (IAG) responded quickly to the emergency by conducting a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) in the Jonai sub-division’s worst-affected villages in order to determine the immediate humanitarian needs of the impacted populations and gauge the extent of the tragedy. The results of the assessment are assisting



government agencies, civil society organizations, and humanitarian partners in

coordinating humanitarian actions and directing response strategy.

As the weather improves, Arunachal Pradesh’s flood problems lessen



Itanagar, July 04: Following a period of clear weather, the flood situation in Arunachal Pradesh appeared to be improving on Friday. The population and number of impacted villages had decreased over the previous 24 hours, despite the fact that restoration work was still ongoing in a number of districts damaged by landslides, floods,

and heavy rain.Only West Siang and Papum Pare districts reported new flooding-related occurrences in the past 24 hours, according to a State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) report.Seven villages under two circles in Papum Pare and twenty-four villages under five circles in West Siang were still affected by flooding. Although rescue

and restoration activities are still ongoing in sensitive locations, officials said the general flood situation has improved due to the improved weather.In addition to works to remove a road barrier on the Nyodu-Sibe Siru NLCPR road beneath Basar circle in Lepa Rada district, restoration work is underway to reopen the Potin-Hoj road in Keyi Panyor district.While officials are closely monitoring the situation and restoring damaged roads, water supply systems, and other critical infrastructure in the impacted district, the SEOC announced that no new casualties, missing individuals, or injuries had been reported during the previous 24 hours.

A Rajya Sabha MP has called for the creation of a National Commission for Men

New Delhi, July 04: Rajya Sabha member and Lovely Professional University founder Ashok Kumar Mittal has revived his appeal for a “National Commission for Men” citing the Pune case of suspected murder of 26-year-old Ketan Agarwal for which his fiancée and her friend have been detained.On Saturday, Mittal posted a video of Rajya Sabha sessions from December 2025 in which he proposed a private member’s bill for such a commission, calling the issue extremely troubling. Having been elected from Punjab, he was with the AAP at the time and in April this year claimed “merger” into the BJP as part of a group of seven AAP MPs led by Raghav Chadha. “The Ketan case is a reminder that men, too, can be victims,” Mittal wrote on X, “They deserve institutional support, legal protection, and a platform where their voices are heard. Everyone must have equal access to justice, regardless of gender.Private legislation of this nature rarely reach

the vote stage. Only 14 of these legislation have been enacted into law since Independence, and none have passed both Houses of Parliament since 1970.

On July 3, a Pune court remanded the principal accused in the Ketan Agarwal murder case, along with his fiancée Siya Goyal (20) and her purported boyfriend Chetan Chaudhary (22), to 14 days of judicial prison till July 16. The Lonavala Rural Police’s request for an extension of police custody was denied by the court. Additionally, it denied the request for a polygraph test after both defendants formally declined to take the lie-detector test.The Rajya Sabha website has the National Commission for Men Bill, 2025, which was “introduced” on December 5, 2025. The proposed bill for the establishment of a National Commission for Men aims to safeguard the rights and welfare of men while handling grievances related to their well-being. This commission will feature a chairperson and vice-chairper-

son with significant expertise in relevant fields such as law and social work, accompanied by at least one member from Scheduled Castes or Tribes and one under 40 years of age. It will possess civil court powers to investigate violations of men’s rights enshrined in the Constitution and is authorized to conduct research on vital issues like male suicide rates and domestic abuse.Additionally, the commission is tasked with offering legal aid, counselling, and rehabilitation services to distressed men. It will also develop educational programs in collaboration with academic institutions to promote gender sensitivity, healthy masculinity, emotional intelligence, and non-violence among young men. The bill ensures that the rights and protections of women under existing laws remain unaffected, explicitly stating that the commission cannot intervene in complaints involving women unless a court rules the complaint as false or malicious.



Forest Department of the cub or congregate in the vicinity because the mother leopard might be close by.

At the Mahabir tea farm in Dibrugarh, a newborn leopard cub was spotted

Dibrugarh, July 04: The Mahabir Tea Estate in Dibrugarh saw a newborn leopard cub on Friday, which prompted the estate managers to act quickly. Concerns regarding the cub’s wellbeing were raised when witnesses reported seeing it struggle in the intense heat and searing sun. Although this has not been formally verified, it is believed that the cub was separated from its mother. The management of the tea estate promptly notified the

Will Take Into Account All Related Events: India Monitors the Teesta Problem

New Delhi, July 04: India stated on Friday that it bases its development funding for projects in Bangladesh on a “mutually agreed road-map” and that New Delhi will take “all related developments” into account in its overall strategy for the Teesta river-related project. During Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman’s recent visit to China, Dhaka and Beijing discussed the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRC-MRP). Randhir Jaiswal, a spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), responded to a question about the Teesta issue.China’s engagement in the Teesta river management can potentially disrupt New Delhi-Dhaka ties given its strategic significance. Asked how India regarded this, Jaiswal said, “India’s development assistance for projects in Bangladesh is based on a mutually agreed plan which is constantly reviewed.

The Bangladeshi side has already been informed of our opinions regarding the Teesta River project. We shall take into account all relevant developments while addressing the Teesta issue as a whole.”The



Teesta River originates in the eastern Himalayas and travels through West Bengal and Sikkim before entering Bangladesh, where it provides millions of people with irrigation and a means of subsistence.

The delicate Siliguri Corridor, a 22-kilometer-long sliver of land that links the northeastern states with the mainland, is close to the Teesta river basin. Jaiswal responded, “We pay attention to all these issues and take whatever appropriate steps we deem necessary,” when asked about New Delhi’s response to news regarding Bangladesh’s strategically important Mongla Port and its intentions to purchase fighter fighters from China. On June 27, Bangladesh’s Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman declared that Beijing-Dhaka

relations had reached their “highest level” following PM Tarique Rahman’s visit to China.

He claimed that “significant progress” had been achieved on the TRCMRP, with both parties agreeing to accelerate the project’s feasibility assessment and China promising its support. According to the minister, the two nations had also decided to accelerate the development of the Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone Development Project in Chattogram and the Mongla Port Modernization and Expansion Project.”Our missions in concerned countries, that is in Australia, Kuwait, and the UAE, continue to offer... limited consular services,” Jaiswal responded to another question on consular services in those

nations. The outsourcing companies’ operations in these nations, which assist the consular services provided by Indian missions, “have been kept on hold as the matter is presently sub judice.” On this issue, he stated, “We await directions from the honorable high court.” UNESCO has urged Pakistan to reverse recent reconstructions at Taxila, a World Heritage Site, which it claims undermine the site’s integrity.

Jaiswal emphasized that cultural heritage is a global responsibility. Media reports indicate that UNESCO may delist Taxila if these actions are not addressed. Taxila, located in Punjab, features significant archaeological remains, including early settlement sites, Buddhist monasteries, and historical structures.

As hostilities in West Asia decrease, the Delhi government removes its employees’ WFH arrangement

New Delhi, July 04: According to the chief minister’s office (CMO), the Delhi government has stopped allowing its workers to work from home (WFH) on Wednesdays and Saturdays since the “geopolitical situation has practically normalized.” The decision has been confirmed by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, and the official order will be released later on Saturday. The CMO added that while the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will stick to its current schedule of 8:30 am to 5 pm, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) has changed its office hours to 10 am to 6:30 pm. In May of this year, Delhi Chief Minister

Rekha Gupta proposed a number of initiatives, such as a prohibition on official international travel for the upcoming year, staggered office hours, and two days of work from home in government offices each week. The actions were a part of the city government’s “Mera Bharat, Mera Yodgaan” public campaign, which was prompted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s plea to minimize foreign exchange outflow and save fuel in light of the continuing West Asia crisis.PM Modi advised people to minimize their use of gasoline and diesel, refrain from traveling abroad for non-essential purposes, buy less gold, and take other fuel-saving



steps on May 10. As part of the proposal, government offices will likewise implement a similar system, and private businesses will be encouraged to permit employees to work from home two days a week whenever possible. CM Gupta has stated, “The Labour De-

partment will oversee implementation in the private sector.”According to Gupta, the prime minister’s appeal prompted the administration to decide to start the program, which would involve ministers and government officials taking the metro on Mondays.

Five people were arrested after a kidnapped infant was rescued in Hyderabad and sold for Rs 1.5 lakh

Hyderabad, July 04: Within three days of a one-month-old newborn girl being abducted from outside a train station, Cyberabad Police were able to rescue her and apprehend five members of an interstate child trafficking ring.The baby was abducted on June 30 at around two in the morning while her mother, 25-year-old Malan Bourav Shantha Bai, a circus performer from the Bidar region of Karnataka, and members of her troupe were sleeping on the sidewalk outside the Lingampally Railway Station. The baby’s cries roused her up, and she spotted two men running away with the child in an autorickshaw. She pursued them, but she was unable to stop the kidnappers.Police filed a case under the Juvenile Justice Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) in response to her allegation. Three special teams were formed, and investigators examined hundreds of CCTV cameras across Cyberabad, Hyderabad and Malkajigiri, tracked the suspects’ movements and cracked the case within 72 hours,” said Cyberabad Commissioner of Police M Ramesh. Police arrested Mohammed Zuber of Vikarabad and Mohammed Irfan, an autorickshaw driver with a previous theft case, for carrying out the kidnapping.The investigation revealed that the duo had conspired to kidnap a newborn in exchange for money

after being approached by Saadequa Maqsood alias Naziya, a resident of Neredmet. According to Ramesh, “the conspiracy started when Rehnuma Ali, a 30-year-old childless woman from Kolkata, allegedly sought to procure a baby illegally.”

Investigators claim that she went to her Hyderabad aunt, Nimmi Jahan Ali, also known as Seema Ali. After that, Seema got in touch with her friend Naziya, who then asked her fiancée Zuber to arrange a newborn in exchange for money.

Zuber and Irfan allegedly saw the complainant dozing off at Lingampally Railway Station while searching for a target.According to the detectives, “in the early hours of June 30, they hired an autorickshaw belonging to an acquaintance, reached the spot, and allegedly snatched the one-month-old girl from her mother’s lap before taking her to Naziya’s house.” According to police, on July 1, Rehnuma Ali and her aunt took a plane from Kolkata to Hyderabad to claim custody of the abducted baby. Officers discovered throughout the investigation that Zuber had received an online transfer of Rs 1.5 lakh as payment for the baby’s illicit sale. Police located the five suspects, detained them, and successfully recovered the baby before they could flee Hyderabad with the youngest.

At Kashi Vishwanath Temple, a PAC Jawan accidentally fired, injuring three people

Varanasi, July 04: According to authorities, a Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) jawan stationed at Gate No. 4 of the Baba Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, accidentally fired a carbine, injuring three people.According to a police officer, Nikyni Gupta, Ram Babu, and Vikas Yadav were the injured. Three nearby onlookers were injured by the chips that were shattered when the bullet struck a stone.They were brought to Kabirchaura’s Divisional Hospital. According to the doctors, none of the three suffered severe injuries after receiving first aid. ”A carbine accidentally fired when a PAC soldier was clearing a group of worshippers close to Kashi Vishwanath Dham. The issue is being looked at. Medical care has been provided to the injured. After visiting the injured at the hospital and inspecting the area, Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Shiv Hari Meena said that everyone was safe.Amamath Chauhau was identified as the soldier whose carbine fired. He was assigned to the 48th PAC Battalion. He is scheduled to retire in 2027 as a soldier from the 1987 class.Senior police and administrative officials examined the security procedures and examined the site following the incident.

The temple complex and its environs then underwent additional security measures. According to police, the incident looks to be an unintentional firing from a carbine. However, a comprehensive inquiry into the complete sequence of events is in progress to elucidate the circumstances surrounding the firing of the shot and ascertain whether any security protocol neglect occurred.

In a defamation case, a DMK MLA was granted bail for remarks made against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay

New Delhi, July 04: Judicial Magistrate Chidambaram granted bail to Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MLA Anitha R Radhakrishnan on Saturday in a case alleging that he made disparaging statements about Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Vijay Joseph on June 20 during a public meeting.In relation to a case filed at the Athoor Police Station, Radhakrishnan was arrested on Friday.He made explosive accusations of political coercion against members of the newly formed Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) in an address to the media shortly after his arrest. He claimed that the legal action against

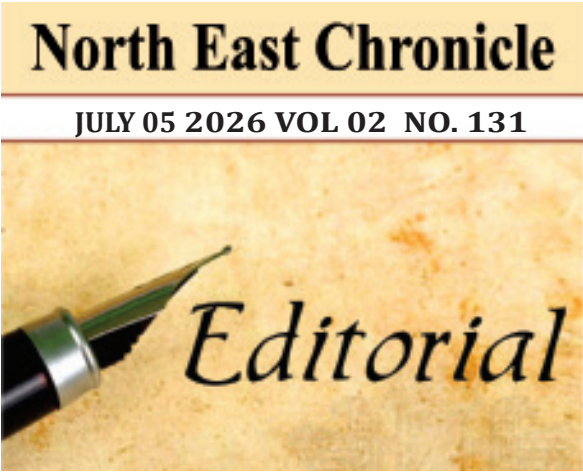
him is part of a planned campaign to force his resignation from the Assembly and entice him to defect to the TVK. ”It was not horse-trading, but camel-trading that was offered to me; it will never happen,” the MLA said, characterizing the advances as significantly more aggressive than conventional political maneuvering.According to Radhakrishnan, he was offered “full support” if he left the DMK. He rejected these initiatives and reiterated his allegiance to Chief Minister MK Stalin and the party president. He stated, “I would continue to remain in the DMK, and there is no question of me leaving the

party... I would never surrender to pressure,” highlighting the fact that decades of party service, not financial gain, were the foundation of his political career. According to Sections 352 and 353(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, the MLA was charged with making remarks that could cause a breach of peace. Radhakrishnan said that officials had circumvented this process in order to guarantee his rapid arrest as a kind of intimidation, even though he had already expressed his intention to comply with a Section 41A notice and appear before police on July 10.In addition to the imminent legal allegations,

Radhakrishnan attacked the policies of the current administration.

He criticized the administration of concentrating only on aggressive political retention while disregarding important socioeconomic issues in his Srivaikuntam seat, such as unlawful lottery sales, ganja trafficking, and





Minority Rights and Public Debate

The recent order of the Bombay High Court, delivered by Justice Madhav J Jamdar, has drawn attention not merely for its legal outcome but for the democratic questions it raises. In setting aside an externment order issued by the Mumbai Police against activist Saeed Ahmad Abdul Wahid Chaudhary, the court reaffirmed a basic constitutional principle: the right to dissent cannot be curtailed without clear and compelling evidence of threat to public safety or property. In doing so, the judgment briefly but firmly illuminated the boundaries between state power and citizen liberty, reminding that constitutional rights are not conditional permissions granted at convenience but guaranteed protections that must be respected even in politically charged times. At the heart of the order lies a simple yet powerful idea: citizens have the right to protest government decisions and raise slogans.

The court's question—why should such expression be treated as wrongdoing—cuts through an increasingly familiar narrative where dissent is often equated with disruption. In a democracy, protest is not an act of hostility toward the state but an essential form of participation in it. The police, as the court observed in spirit, are servants of the people and not extensions of political authority. When this understanding weakens, the space for democratic engagement begins to shrink, replaced by fear and hesitation. Externment orders are preventive in nature and are meant to be used sparingly, only when there is credible material to show that an individual poses a genuine threat to law and order. In this case, the court found that such justification was absent.

The significance of this finding lies not just in the relief granted to one individual but in the reaffirmation that extraordinary powers cannot be exercised in an ordinary or routine manner. When preventive measures become substitutes for punishment, they risk turning into tools for silencing political expression rather than maintaining public order. The judgment arrives in a broader political context marked by deepening polarisation and shrinking common ground. Public debates around issues such as the Citizenship Amendment Act, the National Register of Citizens, the Babri Masjid verdict, and disputes surrounding the Gyanvapi mosque have generated intense emotions and sharp divisions. These are not merely policy questions but matters closely tied to identity, faith, and minority rights. In such an environment, dissent is often viewed through a lens of suspicion, and the boundaries between legitimate protest and perceived provocation become blurred. One of the underlying concerns highlighted by the court's intervention is the gradual narrowing of

democratic space. When governments rely heavily on legal instruments to manage political disagreement, there is a danger that such tools begin to serve purposes beyond their intended scope. Laws designed to maintain public order can, in practice, become mechanisms that discourage participation and silence opposition. Over time, this creates an atmosphere where citizens may hesitate to express disagreement, not because they lack conviction, but because they fear consequences.

Justice Jamdar's observations also reflect the judiciary's constitutional responsibility to act as a check on executive overreach. In a system of separation of powers, courts play a crucial role in ensuring that state action remains within legal and constitutional limits. The question posed by the judge about whether citizens are being reduced to "slaves of government" for opposing official decisions is not merely rhetorical; it highlights the risk of institutional imbalance. When administrative authority is exercised without restraint, the very idea of accountable governance is weakened. Justice Jamdar's observations also reflect the judiciary's constitutional responsibility to act as a check on executive overreach. In a system of separation of powers, courts play a crucial role in ensuring that state action remains within legal and constitutional limits.

The question posed by the judge about whether citizens are being reduced to "slaves of government" for opposing official decisions is not merely rhetorical; it highlights the risk of institutional imbalance. When administrative authority is exercised without restraint, the very idea of accountable governance is weakened. The importance of dissent in a democracy cannot be overstated. It is through disagreement that societies evolve, correct errors, and accommodate diverse perspectives.

Treating protest as a threat rather than a right undermines this process. The court's intervention, therefore, serves as a reminder that the strength of a democracy is not measured by the absence of dissent but by its ability to tolerate and engage with it. A state that fears criticism risks isolating itself from the very citizens it represents. While the order may be viewed as a routine judicial correction in a specific case, its broader significance lies in the reflection it invites.

It asks whether democratic institutions are maintaining their intended balance or gradually shifting toward a model where authority outweighs liberty. Even if such moments are rare, their importance lies in the clarity they provide. They reaffirm that constitutional principles remain active, not dormant, and that rights continue to be enforceable, not merely theoretical.

Strengthening Assam's Dairy Cooperatives Through Cold Chain Innovation and Value-Added Technologies

Assam's dairy sector is entering a critical phase of transformation as the state government, led by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, engages in high-level discussions with Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh on strengthening dairy cooperatives through modern infrastructure, improved procurement systems, and advanced processing technologies. The focus of these deliberations is not merely incremental improvement but a structural overhaul of the dairy value chain, aimed at unlocking the full potential of rural milk production and linking it efficiently to expanding urban and national markets. At the centre of this vision lies the urgent need to develop a robust cold chain ecosystem, expand processing capacity, and introduce value-added technologies such as Tetra Pak packaging and milk powder production, all of which are essential to ensure long-term sustainability, price stability, and enhanced farmer incomes in Assam's dairy economy.

The proposed target of increasing daily milk procurement to 10 lakh litres represents both ambition and necessity. Assam's rural economy is deeply dependent on livestock-based livelihoods, and dairy farming has long served as a critical source of supplementary income for thousands of households. However, despite this potential, structural inefficiencies in storage, transportation, and processing have limited the sector's ability to scale. Milk, being highly perishable, requires immediate chilling and timely transportation to processing facilities. In the absence of an extensive cold chain network, dairy cooperatives are forced to operate within narrow geographic boundaries, often selling milk within 24 to 48

hours of procurement. This constraint not only limits their bargaining power but also exposes them to price volatility and wastage risks during periods of excess production.

A key focus of the ongoing policy discussions is the establishment of modern infrastructure such as chilling plants, refrigerated transport systems, Tetra Pak units, and milk powder plants. These interventions are essential for addressing the core challenge of perishability that currently defines the dairy sector in Assam. Chilling plants at the village or cluster level can significantly reduce spoilage by ensuring that milk is preserved immediately after collection. Refrigerated tankers can then transport the milk safely to processing units without compromising quality. However, while these measures strengthen the existing system, they alone are not sufficient to fully transform the sector into a competitive and scalable industry.

This is where value-added processing technologies like Tetra Pak packaging and milk powder production become strategically important. Tetra Pak technology allows milk to be sterilised and packaged in a way that significantly extends its shelf life, often up to three to six months without refrigeration. This dramatically expands the market reach of dairy cooperatives, enabling them to supply milk to distant urban centres, retail chains, malls, and increasingly digital distribution platforms such as e-commerce and quick commerce networks. By removing geographical limitations, Tetra Pak packaging empowers cooperatives to shift from localised, low-margin sales to broader, brand-driven market participation, where quality and consistency be-

come key determinants of price realisation.

Similarly, milk powder technology offers even greater logistical and economic advantages. By converting liquid milk into skimmed or whole milk powder, cooperatives can drastically reduce the volume and weight of their output, making transportation and storage far more efficient. Milk powder also provides a stable, long-shelf-life product that can be stored and sold according to market demand, reducing pressure to sell immediately after production. This flexibility not only stabilises income for cooperatives but also provides consumers with a reliable dairy product that can be used across diverse applications, from household consumption to industrial food processing.

The expansion of such technologies has a direct impact on farmer livelihoods. At the core of Assam's dairy economy are small and marginal farmers who depend heavily on cattle rearing for daily income. For these farmers, profitability is closely linked to procurement prices offered by cooperatives. However, without efficient processing and storage systems, cooperatives themselves operate under financial constraints, limiting their ability to offer remunerative prices. The introduction of advanced technologies can break this cycle by increasing market access, improving product diversity, and strengthening cooperative margins. This, in turn, enables better price transmission to farmers, ensuring that they receive fair compensation for their produce.

A major challenge in the dairy sector, however, is the high cost of production, particularly the cost of feed and fodder. Studies and field assessments con-

sistently indicate that fodder accounts for nearly 60 to 70 percent of total milk production costs. Therefore, any strategy aimed at strengthening the dairy sector must also address the availability and affordability of both green fodder and dry, processed cattle feed. Green fodder is essential for animal digestion and health, while dry feed provides concentrated nutrition necessary for higher milk yield. Ensuring a stable supply of both types of fodder at reasonable prices is crucial for maintaining production sustainability and reducing vulnerability to market fluctuations.

In addition to cost considerations, fodder production itself faces risks from environmental and ecological factors. Floods, droughts, and wildlife-related damages, including elephant depredation in certain regions of Assam, pose significant threats to agricultural stability. Therefore, integrating crop insurance mechanisms and risk mitigation strategies into fodder cultivation is essential for ensuring long-term resilience. Without such safeguards, even the most advanced dairy processing infrastructure may struggle to achieve its intended outcomes due to instability at the production level.

The broader vision outlined in the discussions between the state and central leadership also emphasises the importance of strengthening dairy cooperatives as institutional pillars of rural development. Cooperatives are not merely economic entities but also social organisations that empower farmers by providing collective bargaining power and access to formal markets. However, their effectiveness depends on governance efficiency, financial stability, and technical capacity. Strengthening the role of the Registrar of Cooperatives and en-

suring better coordination with animal husbandry and veterinary departments is therefore critical for streamlining operations, improving accountability, and ensuring that government schemes reach intended beneficiaries.

Capacity building within cooperatives is another essential component of this transformation. Farmers and cooperative members must be made aware of the benefits of adopting modern technologies such as Tetra Pak and milk powder processing. Training programs, awareness campaigns, and technical workshops can help bridge the knowledge gap and encourage adoption of best practices. Without active participation from grassroots stakeholders, even the most advanced infrastructure investments may fail to deliver optimal results. Therefore, the success of Assam's dairy transformation strategy depends on a combination of technological innovation, institutional reform, and community engagement.

Assam already has examples of successful dairy cooperatives that demonstrate the potential of efficient value chains. These cooperatives have shown that investments in cold chain infrastructure, when properly managed, can significantly increase production capacity and improve market integration. However, scaling these successes across the state requires a coordinated policy approach that combines infrastructure development with financial support, regulatory facilitation, and market access initiatives. The integration of Tetra Pak and milk powder technologies into this ecosystem is expected to play a decisive role in moving from localized success stories to statewide transformation.

The economic implications of such transformation are substantial. A

more efficient dairy sector can generate large-scale rural employment, enhance household incomes, and contribute to broader food security objectives. It can also reduce dependence on external sources of dairy products, thereby strengthening local supply chains and reducing price volatility. Furthermore, by creating branded and value-added dairy products, Assam can position itself more competitively in national and potentially regional markets, opening new avenues for trade and investment.

The policy direction emerging from the current discussions reflects a long-term vision of cooperative-led agricultural modernisation. It recognises that sustainable growth in the dairy sector cannot be achieved through production increases alone but must be supported by efficient processing, storage, distribution, and market integration systems. The emphasis on technology adoption, infrastructure development, and institutional strengthening indicates a shift towards a more holistic development model that seeks to align farmer welfare with market efficiency.

Ultimately, the future of Assam's dairy sector will depend on how effectively these plans are translated into action. The responsibilities now lie with state departments, cooperative institutions, and industry stakeholders to collaborate in designing and implementing a comprehensive roadmap. If executed effectively, the integration of cold chain infrastructure with advanced processing technologies could mark a turning point in Assam's rural economy, transforming dairy cooperatives into powerful engines of inclusive growth, economic resilience, and sustainable agricultural development.

Convenience vs Local Livelihoods: The Growing Debate Over Quick Commerce and Neighbourhood Stores

The rapid expansion of quick-commerce platforms in India has sparked an important national conversation about the balance between technological convenience and the survival of traditional neighbourhood grocery stores. A recent decision reported from Meghalaya, where authorities denied trading licences to certain 10-minute delivery companies, has further intensified this debate. It raises a fundamental question for policymakers and society alike: should the ease of instant delivery come at the cost of local livelihoods that have sustained communities for generations? As India continues to embrace digital transformation in retail, the tension between modern convenience and traditional commerce is becoming increasingly visible, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas where both systems now compete for the same consumer base.

Quick-commerce platforms have undeniably reshaped consumer behaviour. With promises of ultra-fast deliveries, often within 10 to 30 minutes, these services have introduced a new era of convenience-driven consumption. Consumers today can order groceries, snacks, household essentials, and personal care products with just a few taps on their smartphones, receiving them at their doorstep in record time. This model, powered by advanced logistics, dense warehouse networks, and algorithm-driven demand forecasting, has found strong acceptance among urban youth, working professionals, and nuclear households. The appeal is clear: time-saving, ease of access, and frequent discounts that make digital platforms

an attractive alternative to traditional shopping.

Beyond consumer convenience, quick-commerce platforms have also generated employment opportunities, particularly for young people and students. Delivery jobs, warehouse operations, and support roles have become a source of income for thousands who might otherwise struggle to find formal employment. In cities like Guwahati and other growing urban centres, there are visible examples of students and young workers using these platforms to support their education and meet daily expenses. For many, these jobs provide flexible working hours and immediate income, making them an accessible entry point into the urban labour market. In regions where private sector employment opportunities remain limited, the rise of such platforms has created a new, albeit informal, avenue for livelihood generation.

However, while the benefits of quick-commerce platforms are evident, their rapid expansion also raises serious concerns for small, family-run grocery stores that have long formed the backbone of India's retail ecosystem. These neighbourhood shops, often operated by generations of the same family, have traditionally served not just as commercial outlets but also as social institutions embedded within their communities. Unlike large digital platforms backed by significant venture capital investments and sophisticated logistics systems, local kirana stores operate on thin margins and limited scale. They rely heavily on repeat customers, trust-based relation-

ships, and flexible credit systems that allow households to manage their monthly expenses.

The arrival of quick-commerce platforms has disrupted this delicate balance. With deep discounts, aggressive pricing strategies, and rapid delivery promises, digital platforms are increasingly drawing customers away from traditional stores. Many small shopkeepers find it difficult to compete with the pricing power and technological efficiency of these companies. As customer footfall declines, concerns are growing that numerous family-run businesses may eventually shut down, leading to loss of livelihoods and erosion of local economic structures that have existed for decades. This shift is not merely about competition in retail but about the restructuring of community-based economic systems.

One of the most significant differences between quick-commerce platforms and neighbourhood grocery stores lies in the nature of their relationship with customers. Local shops are deeply embedded in the social fabric of their communities. Shopkeepers often know their customers personally, understand their preferences, and extend informal credit during times of financial difficulty. These interactions go beyond transactional exchanges and form part of a broader system of trust and mutual support. In many neighbourhoods, grocery stores function as informal community hubs where everyday conversations, social exchanges, and local information flow naturally. This human element of retail is something that digital platforms, despite their efficiency, cannot replicate.

At the same time, it is import-

ant to acknowledge that consumer preferences are changing, particularly among younger generations who prioritise speed, convenience, and digital accessibility over traditional shopping experiences. Urban lifestyles, characterised by long working hours and reduced free time, have contributed to the growing demand for instant delivery services. For many consumers, the ability to receive essential goods within minutes represents not just convenience but a necessary adaptation to modern life. This shift in behaviour reflects broader changes in urban economics, where time itself has become a critical resource.

The challenge, therefore, lies in balancing innovation with inclusion. Policymakers are increasingly confronted with the task of regulating a rapidly evolving sector without stifling technological progress or undermining traditional livelihoods. The decision in Meghalaya to restrict certain quick-commerce operations has brought this issue into sharper focus, prompting debates across states about whether regulatory frameworks should be introduced to protect small retailers from disruptive competition. While some argue that such measures are necessary to safeguard local businesses, others caution that excessive regulation could hinder innovation and reduce consumer choice.

Another important dimension of this debate is employment quality and stability. While quick-commerce platforms do generate jobs, particularly in delivery and logistics, these roles are often characterised by informal working conditions, limited job security, and income variability. In contrast,

traditional grocery stores, despite their smaller scale, often provide more stable and community-integrated forms of employment. The shift from stable, family-run businesses to platform-based gig work raises questions about long-term economic security and worker protection in the evolving retail landscape.

Furthermore, the concentration of market power in the hands of a few large digital platforms has implications for competition and economic diversity. As these platforms scale rapidly, they accumulate vast amounts of consumer data, control logistics networks, and influence pricing mechanisms. This consolidation of power can make it increasingly difficult for smaller players, including both traditional retailers and new entrants, to compete effectively. Over time, this may lead to a more homogenised retail environment where a few dominant players dictate market trends and pricing structures.

Despite these challenges, it is also possible to envision a more balanced future where traditional and digital retail systems coexist. Some neighbourhood stores have already begun adapting by integrating digital tools into their operations, such as accepting online orders through messaging platforms, using digital payment systems, and partnering with delivery aggregators. These hybrid models allow small retailers to retain their local identity while also benefiting from technological advancements. In this way, digital transformation does not necessarily have to replace traditional commerce but can complement it.

India VIX falls 5% on Fri to pre- West Asia war levels; down 60% from high

Mumbai: India VIX, the Volatility index, slipped 5.2 per cent to a low of 11.65 in Friday’s intra-day trade. In the process, the index was quoting below the 12-mark, and at pre-West Asia war levels after a gap of more than four months

India VIX last quoted below the 12-mark on February 27, 2026 - a day before the West Asia crisis broke out. Following this, India VIX - also called the fear index - zoomed to a high of 28.9 on March 30, as volatility gripped the market amid the US-Iran war.

India VIX, the volatility gauge measures the market’s expectation of future volatility based on Nifty50 index options contracts. It typically declines when market volatility is expected to decrease, indicating lesser uncertainty or risk in the near future and vice versa.

“While the fear of the geopolitical tensions between the US and Iran have subsided leading to a rebound in Global and Indian Markets, the fear Index India VIX has also broken 12 levels on the downside and has collapsed to a 4-month low,” says Sudeep Shah, Head - Technical and De-

rivatives Research at SBI Securities.

The market volatility has been on a decline since mid-June, as US-Iran talks to end the war began, with a formal Peace agreement signed on June 17. At current levels, India VIX is down as much as 60 per cent from its peak in March 2026. On Friday, the index touched a high of 12.29, and a low of 11.65. At 13:25 AM, India VIX quoted around 11.89, down 3.3 per cent. The index, however, is up 26.5 per cent on a year-to-date basis.

Meanwhile, the NSE Nifty 50 index rose 0.5 per cent at 24,300 levels on Friday. Key reasons here Shah expect the India VIX to further continue its weakness, and decline up to 10.5 levels in the coming trading sessions. The expected fall he says, implies further stability in Nifty going forward.

As for the Nifty Levels, Shah sees 24,150-24,200 now acting as a stronger base. On the upside, the analyst expects the Nifty to continue its positive momentum up to 24,550-24,600 levels.

HCL Tech rallies 6% on inking deal with Fortune Global 50 firm

New Delhi: Share price of HCL Technologies rallied 6 per cent to ₹1,145.80 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) in Friday’s intra-day trade after the company announced a strategic partnership with a Europe head-quartered Fortune Global 50 Company to establish an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven operating model for transforming and managing the client’s Global Digital Workplace and Enterprise Networks.

In the past two trading days, the stock price of the information technology company surged 11 per cent. It hit a 52-week low of ₹1,030 on Thursday, July 2, 2026. However, thus far in the calendar year 2026, HCL Tech underperformed the market by falling 30 per cent, as against 7 per cent decline in the Nifty 50. HCL Tech on Friday, July 3, 2027, announced the signing of a significant strategic partnership with a Europe head-quartered, Fortune Global 50 Firm to establish an AI-driven operating model to transform and manage their Global Digital Workplace and Enterprise Networks. The initial term of the agreement is from July 2026 to December 2031, extendable for a further period of 5 years. The estimated value of the agreement during the initial term is \$1.14 billion. This is entirely a net new business for the company, HCL Tech said in an exchange filing. This large-deal win reinforces HCL Tech’s strong positioning in AI-led infrastructure and workplace transformation services, while significantly enhancing long-term revenue visibility through a multiyear annuity contract. The deal also underscores rising enterprise spending on AI-driven op-

erational efficiency, particularly in network and workplace modernization, ICICI Securities said in a note. Analysts at Kotak Institutional Equities believe that the April-June quarter (Q1FY27) will be weak on revenue, impacted by the West Asia crisis and elevated productivity pass-throughs in managed services contracts. Most large companies will struggle to hit the midpoint of their FY27 guidance. The rapid improvement in frontier model capabilities forces us to bake in additional GenAI deflation, cutting revenue estimates by 0 per cent-1 per cent and fair values by up to 21 per cent.

Challengers will continue to outperform incumbents, the brokerage firm added. For HCL Tech, analysts forecast a constant currency (c/c) revenue decline of 0.6 per cent and year-on-year (YoY) growth of 2.9 per cent. The brokerage firm expects a sequential revenue decline of 1.1 per cent in the services business, while the products business will likely report moderate growth of 1 per cent quarter-on-quarter (QoQ).

The decline in the services business is seasonal and is also impacted by ramp-downs in a couple of accounts. Analysts expect a 30 bps QoQ and 50 bps YoY increase in earnings before interest tax (EBIT).

They expect moderate restructuring charges, though lower than 122 bps of Q4FY26. Q1FY26 margins were low due to utilization rate decline and investments in market expansion. However, analysts expect a healthy total contract value (TCV) of deal wins in the \$2.2-2.5 bn range.

Nifty Pharma rallies 2%; Laurus, Ipca, Aurobindo, Torrent hit record highs

New Delhi: Shares of pharmaceutical companies continued their upward movement, with the Nifty Pharma index hitting a new high at 25,861.50, up 2 per cent on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) in Friday’s intra-day deals. In comparison, the Nifty 50 was up 0.5 per cent at 24,292 at 01:42 PM.

In the past month, the Nifty Pharma index outperformed the market by surging 7.4 per cent, as compared to 4.2 per cent rise in the Nifty 50. Thus far in the calendar year 2026, Pharma index surged 14 per cent, as against 6.7 per cent decline in the benchmark index. Aurobindo Pharma, Piramal Pharma, Lupin, Ipca Laboratories, Zydus Lifesciences, Torrent Pharmaceuticals, Biocon, Dr Reddy’s Laboratories and Sun Pharmaceutical, from the index rallied up to 5 per cent in intra-day deals.

Aurobindo Pharma, Ipca Labs, JB Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals, Laurus Labs and Torrent Pharmaceuticals hit their respective record highs, while Sun Pharma and Zydus Lifesciences touched 52-week highs. The global pharmaceutical industry continues to evolve amid rising healthcare needs, scientific advancement, pricing pressure, tariff-related uncertainties, evolving regulatory landscape, patent expiries, geopolitical uncertainty and

increasing expectations around access and affordability. As per IQVIA, global medicine spending is expected to reach approximately \$2.6 trillion by 2030, growing at a 5-8 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), driven by a wider use of innovative therapies, particularly in developed markets, and partly offset by loss of exclusivity and increasing adoption of generics and biosimilars. The US de-grew 6 per cent to ₹14,117 crore as stronger traction from new and exclusivity launches (Lupin), Innovative sales (Sun Pharma) was pulled down by lower sales of cancer drug gRevlimid due to significant competition. EBITDA de-grew 7 per cent YoY due to high US-exclusivity base to ₹11,027 crore and margins stood at 23.2 per cent, ICICI Securities said in its special report. The Contract Development and Manufacturing Organisation (CDMO) and pharmaceutical services landscape continues to benefit from innovator demand for reliable, high-quality development and manufacturing partners. Global biopharmaceutical companies are seeking partners with end-to-end capabilities, regulatory track record, cost competitiveness, speed-to-market execution and resilient supply networks.

For Indian companies, the CDMO



opportunity is supported by strong chemistry capabilities, manufacturing scale and the ability to serve global customers across development and commercial supply, Dr Reddy’s Labs said in its FY26 annual report. On the guidance, Sun Pharma expects high single-digit consolidated top line growth for the financial year 2026-27 (FY27) based on the company’s current understanding of the regulatory and macro environment. The company in the Q4 earnings conference call said it expect FY27 R&D spend to be 6 per cent to 7 per cent of the sales for the next year. The transformation of company’s portfolio is well underway, and momentum is building. The company is making significant investments in novel technologies, scale and strengthening integrated capabilities offerings towards laying foundation for future growth, it added. Accord-

ing to media reports, the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) reached out to Indian pharmaceutical manufacturers through the Indian Drug Manufacturers’ Association (IDMA) for help in addressing a shortage of a key cancer drug. The medicine at the centre of the shortage is ifosfamide, a chemotherapy drug used to treat several cancers, including testicular cancer, soft tissue sarcoma, and certain lymphomas, NDTV reported.

Meanwhile, in the January to March 2026 quarter (Q4FY26); most of the pharma players did well in Europe on the back of new launches & acquisitions besides currency benefits. Growth in India, which stood at 15 per cent to ₹15,285 crore, was driven by increased patient volumes, higher offtake of high-value brands (diabetic), increased penetr

Online food delivery isn’t slowing down: Why Indians are ordering

New Delhi: Online food delivery is set to become one of the biggest growth engines of India’s food services industry, with consumers ordering more frequently than ever before. A new Redseer report says the segment could nearly double its market share by 2030 as convenience, premiumisation, and Tier-2 city demand reshape eating habits. India’s online food delivery industry is showing little sign of losing momentum. After years of rapid expansion, the sector is now entering a new phase of growth, fuelled by changing consumer habits, rising disposable incomes and the rapid expansion of organised food brands beyond metro cities.

According to Redseer’s State of India’s Food Services Market 2026 report, online food delivery is expected to increase its share of the country’s food services market from 11% in FY26 to 18% by FY31, growing at a robust 20-22% compound annual growth rate (CAGR).

The findings suggest that ordering food online is no longer a convenience reserved for urban consumers but is becoming a mainstream consumption habit across India. The biggest reason behind the sector’s sustained growth is convenience. Consumers are increasingly choosing to order meals instead of cooking, particularly during busy workdays, weekends and social gatherings. Faster deliveries, a wider choice of cuisines and improved app experiences have made food delivery an integral part of urban lifestyles. The report notes that India’s food services market is expected to expand from around \$90 billion in 2025 to nearly \$150 billion by 2030, with online delivery emerging as one of its fastest-growing segments. Improved internet penetration, smartphone adoption, digital payments and expanding delivery networks have enabled food delivery platforms to tap new customer bases outside traditional urban markets. Restaurant brands are also responding by opening cloud kitchens and delivery-focused outlets in these cities, allowing them to expand with relatively lower investment compared to traditional dine-in restaurants. The report highlights that new-age food brands derive around 90% of their revenue from online channels, compared with roughly 50% for



legacy restaurant chains. The rise of cloud kitchens has further accelerated online food delivery. The next phase of growth is unlikely to be driven solely by discounting. Instead, restaurant brands are focusing on operational efficiency, faster deliveries, premium positioning and customer loyalty to improve profitability while maintaining growth.

Redseer also notes that only a small percentage of organised food service companies have crossed the ₹500-crore revenue mark, highlighting the significant headroom for expansion as demand continues to rise.

With organised food services expected to capture a larger share of India’s overall restaurant industry over the next five years, online food delivery is poised to remain one of the strongest growth drivers. As convenience, digital adoption and premiumisation reshape consumer

behaviour, ordering food online is becoming less of an occasional indulgence and more of an everyday habit for millions of Indians.

Unlike traditional restaurants, cloud kitchens operate without expensive dining spaces, allowing businesses to reduce rentals and staffing costs while serving customers entirely through delivery platforms. The report estimates that cloud kitchens generate EBITDA margins of around 12%, compared with approximately 8% for comparable dine-in restaurants, making the model increasingly attractive for expanding food brands. These brands are built specifically for delivery, with focused menus, standardised recipes and cloud kitchen operations that allow them to scale rapidly across multiple locations. As a result, several digital-first brands are expected to record 25-30% revenue growth in FY26, significantly outpacing the broader organised food services market. Consumers are spending more on premium food. The nature of online ordering is also changing. Consumers are no longer ordering only quick meals or budget options. Premium burgers, gourmet pizzas, specialty coffee, desserts and healthier meal options are seeing rising demand as disposable incomes increase.

Which public sector bank offers better fixed deposit returns SBI vs PNB FD rates

Mumbai: Fixed deposits (FDs), also known as term deposits or time deposits, continue to be among the most preferred investment options for conservative investors seeking stable returns and capital protection. By locking in funds for a fixed tenure, depositors earn a predetermined rate of interest either at regular intervals or on maturity. The certainty of returns and low risk make FDs suitable for meeting short-term financial goals, building an emergency corpus and generating post-retirement income. Among public sector lenders, the State Bank of India (SBI) and Punjab National Bank (PNB) are two of the largest players. While both banks offer competitive interest rates across various tenures, a comparison of their latest FD rates shows that each has strengths depending on the investment period and depositor category. On five-year deposits, including tax-saving FDs, SBI offers 6.05%, slightly higher than PNB’s 6.00% for general customers. According to rates effective July 1, 2026, Bank of India and Punjab & Sind Bank offer the highest peak interest rate of 6.85%, followed by Indian Bank at 6.80%, Bank of Baroda at 6.75%, and Union Bank of India and Bank of Maharashtra at 6.65%. Canara Bank and Indian Overseas Bank offer peak rates of 6.60%, while UCO Bank and SBI offer 6.45%. Apart from interest rates, investors should also compare factors such as liquidity, premature withdrawal rules, interest payout options and additional banking facilities before choosing an FD. PNB, meanwhile, offers nomination facilities, flexible interest payout options and loans against fixed deposits, making its products attractive for customers seeking liquidity without breaking



their deposits. For investors focused solely on returns, PNB offers better rates on certain special tenures and additional benefits for super senior citizens. However, SBI remains competitive across key maturity buckets and continues to be a preferred choice because of its extensive branch network, diverse FD offerings and strong nationwide presence. SBI offers a wide range of specialised deposit products, including FCNR(B), NRE, NRO and RFC fixed deposits for non-resident Indians. It also provides non-callable term deposits between ₹1.01 crore and ₹3 crore, which offer interest rates up to 6.80% for general customers and 7.30% for senior citizens, although premature withdrawals are not permitted.

Both banks provide an additional 50 basis points to senior citizens on deposits below ₹3 crore. However, PNB also offers higher rates to super senior citizens, making it a better choice for eligible customers in certain maturity buckets. For the popular one-year tenure, SBI offers 6.25% to general cus-

tomers, while PNB offers 6.10% on exactly one year. However, PNB offers 6.30% for deposits between one year and 389 days and 6.40% for its special 390-day deposit, giving it an edge for investors willing to opt for a slightly longer tenure. For deposits maturing in two to three years, SBI offers 6.40%, marginally higher than PNB’s 6.30%. For three years to less than five years, SBI again leads with 6.30%, while PNB offers 6.10% for deposits up to 1,203 days and 6.10% for deposits between 1,205 days and five years. For domestic fixed deposits below ₹3 crore, SBI offers interest rates ranging from 3.05% to 6.80% per annum for the general public and 3.55% to 7.30% for senior citizens. The bank also provides an additional 50 basis points to senior citizens under its SBI Wecare deposit scheme. PNB offers interest rates ranging from 3.00% to 6.40% for general customers and 3.50% to 6.90% for senior citizens. It also offers higher rates to super senior citizens, with returns going up to 7.20% on select tenures.

France records 2,025 excess deaths at peak of heatwave as Europe braces for more extreme weather

France: France has said it recorded an increase of more than 2,000 deaths during the last week of a record-breaking European heatwave in June as forecasters warn of further extreme temperatures on the continent in the next few days.

Deaths rose 29% in the last week of June compared to the week before, with French health minister Stéphanie Rist adding there had been a “clear increase” in deaths among those over 45.

France saw its hottest day ever on average country-wide on 24 June, with temperatures hitting almost 41C in Paris and half the nation placed under a red heat alert.

News of the death toll comes with parts of Europe, including the UK, braced for more searing temperatures from this weekend.BBC Weather says a large area of high pressure is currently building from the Azores towards Portugal and Spain and that by the weekend, heat is forecast to climb across France and southern Britain.

And as Europe braces for sweltering conditions, millions of Americans celebrating the July Fourth holiday weekend are already being affected by prolonged extreme heat and high humidity in parts of the central and eastern US.

Climate change is driving up temperatures around the world - but particularly in Europe. It is the fastest warming continent, heating up twice as fast as the global average, according to the Copernicus climate service.This is causing increased summer heatwaves, greater pressure on Europe’s water supply, and more intense wildfires.

This summer’s record-breaking temperatures have already proved particularly deadly.



Belgium recorded 1,222 excess deaths during the heatwave – 39% more than usual – with almost half being people aged 85 and over.

The country’s health ministry

said the number of deaths during a heatwave was “unprecedented”.

In France, the number of deaths recorded between 22 and 28 June increased

by 2,025 - nearly 30%, the Public Health France agency announced on Friday. Deaths rose by 62% in the Paris region alone.

The French health ministry

said the figure was likely an “underestimate” and mortality would “therefore be higher than these initial figures”.

Drowning deaths soared during the heatwave, with

French Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez saying on Saturday that 72 people had died by drowning since 18 June.

Meanwhile, unprecedented heat in the Netherlands last week led to about 480 excess deaths, Dutch authorities said on Thursday - most of whom were aged 80 and older.

Temperatures reached almost 40C in parts of the country, with most of the deaths reported in the south and east of the Netherlands where temperatures were highest.

While the Netherlands is expecting a cooler week ahead, hot weather is predicted again over the weekend elsewhere.

Temperatures are forecast to reach 40C in the south of France, with peaks of 36C to 37C expected around Bordeaux, Toulouse and Agen.

Météo-France has issued red alerts for Friday and Saturday for forest fires in the southern

part of the country, warning that weather conditions meant the risk of an outbreak was “very high” compared to summer norms.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said nearly 7,000 fires had broken out since the start of the summer season, with about 8,700 hectares burned so far.Nearly 3,000 people were evacuated after a wildfire ignited in the town of Sainte-Marie-la-Mer and spread to Canet-en-Roussillon on Thursday.In the Iberian Peninsula, Aemet weather service has warned of the possibility of another heatwave.Portugal’s government declared a state of alert which will remain in place until midnight on Tuesday.

Temperatures are forecast to exceed 40C in some areas, with overnight temperatures above 25C.In Spain, areas of the southwest are on orange alert as 40C is expected in some parts.

Death Toll from Twin Venezuela Earthquakes Climbs to 2,645



Venezuela, 04 July (H.S.): The death toll from the two devastating earthquakes that struck Venezuela last month has risen to 2,645, while 12,666 people have been injured, the country’s Ministry of Communication and Information said on Friday.

According to Türkiye’s state-run Anadolu Agency, citing the ministry, rescue teams have so far evacuated 6,462 people to safety, while assistance has been provided to 86,117 affected families. The earthquakes damaged 885 buildings, of which 189 were completely destroyed.

The government said that more than 3,300 international rescue personnel were deployed in the affected regions following the disaster. In addition, nearly 30,000 local personnel have been engaged in relief, rehabilitation and recovery operations.

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), two powerful earthquakes measuring 7.2 and 7.5 in magnitude struck northern Venezuela on June 24, just 39 seconds apart. The 7.5-magnitude earthquake was centred about 23 kilometres southeast of Yumare in Yaracuy State, while the 7.2-magnitude quake was recorded approximately 23.9 kilometres northeast of San Felipe.

The ministry said that 890 aftershocks have been recorded since the two main earthquakes. Authorities added that relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts are continuing across the affected areas as the government works to assist victims and restore damaged infrastructure.

Lisa Nandy quits X over fears Musk-owned site pushes ‘abuse and misinformation’

UK: The UK’s culture and media department will stop using X because the site “now favours abuse and misinformation over meaningful debate”, Lisa Nandy has announced.

The culture secretary’s department is the UK’s second to quit the Elon Musk-owned platform over increasing concerns about the way it highlights and prioritises often inaccurate far-right and racist content and is used to incite violence and division.

Two weeks ago the Guardian revealed that Richard Hermer, the attorney general for England and Wales, had told his office to no longer post on X, a decision prompted in part by the platform’s role in stoking disorder in Southampton and Belfast earlier in June.

In a statement on her own X account, Nandy said: “I’ve decided to leave this platform and my department will too.

A platform originally designed for free speech and

expression now favours abuse and misinformation over meaningful debate. It isn’t healthy for our democracy or our communities and I don’t want to support it.”People who wanted to interact with her via social media could do so via Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, Nandy added.

Her decision is all the more significant given the DCMS is responsible for media regulation, even if enforcement against X has so far been left to Ofcom, the media watchdog.

But it is a symbolically important moment and a sign opinion is gradually moving from the view that ministers and their departments should remain on X to get their messaging across, despite the ubiquitous racism and far-right content and regular calls for the UK government to be deposed, a view often endorsed by Musk.

In September last year, Musk linked his desire for a “change of government” in the UK with violent up-

rising as he addressed a far-right march in London via video link.

Musk said: “This is a message to the reasonable centre, the people who ordinarily wouldn’t get involved in politics, who just want to live their lives. They don’t want that, they’re quiet, they just go about their business.

“My message is to them: if this continues, that violence is going to come to you, you will have no choice. You’re in a fundamental situation here. Whether you choose violence or not, violence is coming to you.

You either fight back or you die, that’s the truth, I think.”There was renewed focus on X amid widespread violence in Southampton from people who said they were protesting about Henry Nowak, who was handcuffed as he lay dying from a stab wound after his killer called police and falsely claimed to have been the victim of a racist assault.

message to Trump with colossal funeral for slain Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei

Iran: Four months after he was killed at the outset of the US-Israeli war on Iran, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is being memorialized in a weeklong funeral spectacle stretching across five cities in two countries, with millions of mourners expected to attend.

Despite a costly war against two of the world’s strongest militaries and decades of crushing economic hardship, Tehran is sparing no expense to send off Khamenei in a grand ceremony shrouded in religious symbolism that overlaps with the 250th US Independence Day celebrations.

Authorities say they’ve launched one of the largest logistical efforts in the Islamic Republic’s history, mobilizing government employees, universities, labor unions, firefighters, soldiers, aid workers and even religious “mourning groups” to organize the funeral and manage the millions of “pilgrims” expected to travel to cities and holy sites across Iran and Iraq to bid the aya-tollah farewell. Authorities in neighboring Iraq, where Shiite Muslims are a majority, say millions of mourners are expected to pay respects.

For more than ten days, the overwhelming coverage across Iranian media has been building up to this moment, with tribute songs and documentaries on Khamenei’s life overtaking news of talks with the US that had previously dominated headlines. The scale of the spectacle is designed to send a message to the world and to the Islamic Republic’s enemies:



The regime not only survived an existential war, but will stubbornly immortalize its slain leader as a symbol of its resilience.“We must rise and raise the cry for the nation’s blood to the world so that the world knows that the honorable and noble nation of Iran does not remain silent in the face of oppression... and will not let go of the blood of its Imam (Khamenei),” Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the powerful parliamentary speaker who is leading Iran’s negotiations with the US, wrote in a message published by state media Thursday.

“An epic feat that will show the greatness of a nation’s spirit to the world.”It may also mark the moment when Iran’s new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei makes his public debut after remaining in hiding since his father and family members were killed.

Not to be lost in the ceremony is the apparently delib-

erate symbolism of the chosen dates. Khamenei’s body is scheduled to lie in state on the 250th American Independence Day, while another key day in the procession coincides with a major Shiite commemoration of a historic religious figure’s death.

The entire spectacle unfolds during the Islamic month of Muharram, a period deeply associated in Shiite Islam with mourning, betrayal and martyrdom – specifically the 7th century martyrdom of Imam Hussein, one of the Shia saints to whom Khamenei traces his lineage.Khamenei, whose 37-year brand of rule was defined by stubborn defiance and deep skepticism of the West, was killed on the first day of the US-Israeli war, on February 28. Yet his funeral is being orchestrated as a victory parade across three Iranian cities and two holy sites in neighboring Iraq, showing supporters that the cleric still hasn’t lost, even in death.The leader,

whose assassination by the US and Israel has elevated his status, presided over some of the largest anti-regime protests in Iran’s history, brutally crushing demonstrators who often chanted for his death. In the process, he empowered the regime’s hardline base despite intense domestic and international opposition.

The assassination has made Khamenei far more powerful symbolically in death than he was in life,” Sina Toossi, a senior nonresident fellow at the Center of International Policy, told CNN. “Khamenei is now being framed as a martyred religious authority, akin to revered Shia saints who were martyred, whose worldview was vindicated by the manner of his death.”

Iran’s only previous experiences with funerals on this scale were those of the Islamic Republic’s founder, Aya-tollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in 1989, and Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani in 2020. Both processions de-

scended into chaos and ended in deadly crowd crushes.

Khomeini’s body, displayed in the very same location where his successor Khamenei is scheduled to lie in state for two days, had to be removed by helicopter after frenzied mourners tore at the coffin’s shrouds.Safeguarding the leader’s body, managing the millions of mourners while hosting foreign dignitaries, and orchestrating major events across five cities in two countries is a colossal undertaking. It will require an unprecedented security operation for a country that has only just emerged from internal unrest and war with the US.

The first event where the coffin will be displayed starts at 6 a.m. local time on Saturday, when Khamenei’s body will be placed on an elevated stage erected inside Tehran’s Imam Khomeini Mosalla, a massive mosque complex. Firefighters have installed more than 6,000 overhead water sprinklers across the square to keep the crowds cool under the scorching July sun.

The capital’s international and domestic airports will be shut over the days during the funeral and national holidays have been declared across the cities which Khamenei’s body will pass through. Tehran, a city of 17 million, will undergo the largest traffic operation in its history, banning private vehicles near the procession and opening up more than 700 parking areas to free up space for the millions expected to simultaneously descend on the city.

Number of casualties in Russia’s war on Ukraine reaches 2 million

Mosco: Russia’s decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine has now cost the country some 450,000 lives, according to a new study that estimates the war’s total casualty numbers to have surpassed 2 million.

The research by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) estimates Russia has suffered 1.4 million casualties, including killed, wounded and missing soldiers – a stunning number that amounts to roughly 1% of the country’s population.

The losses are not spread evenly across Russia, with poorer areas and ethnic minorities suffering significantly higher casualty rates. Stories of male populations of small remote villages being virtually wiped

out are becoming more common in Russian opposition media. And according to the study, Russia is currently unable to recruit new troops at the same rate as it is losing them.

“These rates are astounding,” Seth G. Jones and Riley McCabe, the authors of the study, said. “Russian fatalities in Ukraine are more than four times greater than all US fatalities in all wars combined since World War II, and more than nine times greater than all Soviet and Russian fatalities in all wars combined since World War II.”

Meanwhile, Ukraine is estimated to have endured between 525,000 and 625,000 casualties, including 125,000 and 150,000 fatalities. Neither Russia nor Ukraine release official casualty data, but the latest

CSIS figures are broadly in line with western estimates.

Jones and McCabe said that in terms of casualties, the war is becoming much more costly for Russia than it is for Ukraine. They said the casualty rate has likely risen to nearly eight to one in the first half of this year, meaning that for every Ukrainian soldier killed, wounded or missing, there are eight Russians casualties.For much of the war, the rate stood at between two to three Russian casualties to one Ukrainian loss.

Jones and McCabe said that the recent increase is down to Kyiv’s advances in its drone program, especially its ability to greatly extend the “kill zone” – the area around the frontlines that is so saturated with

drones that it makes it almost impossible for Russian troops to enter.

“Ukraine’s defense-in-depth strategy has been effective in killing and wounding Russian soldiers, as well as limiting Russian maneuver,” the said.However, they said there are other reasons why Russia is suffering so much, including “Russia’s attrition strategy, its failure to effectively conduct combined arms and joint warfare, its poor tactics and training, corruption, and low morale.”

Whatever the reasons, the data paints a horrendous picture: with 2 million total casualties, the war in Ukraine has now likely surpassed the battle of Stalingrad, widely considered to be the bloodiest conflict in history.

Skincare for Brides During the Rainy Season



Excessive makeup application in the days preceding your wedding may obstruct pores and lead to breakouts. It is advisable to maintain a straightforward routine that includes moisturizer, sunscreen, and minimal makeup whenever feasible. Are you organizing a wedding during the rainy season? The humidity, perspiration, and erratic weather conditions can impact your skin. Adhere to these straightforward skincare recommendations to

attain a vibrant and healthy bridal glow on your special day.
Cleanse Your Face Twice A Day: Wash your face every morning and before bedtime using a mild, sulfate-free cleanser or one suited to your skin type. Regular cleansing helps remove sweat, oil, and impurities that can make your skin look dull during the monsoon.
Don't Skip Moisturiser: Even if you have oily skin, moisturiser is a must.

Choose a lightweight, hydrating formula to keep your skin balanced and healthy without feeling greasy.
Wear Sunscreen Every Day: Cloudy skies don't block harmful UV rays. Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen daily, whether it's sunny or raining, to protect your skin from sun damage and pigmentation.
Exfoliate And Hydrate The Right Way: Exfoliate once a week with a gentle scrub to remove dead skin

cells and reveal brighter skin. Follow it with a moisturiser. You can also use a face mask once a week—hydrating masks for dry skin, clay masks for oily skin, and soothing masks for sensitive skin.
Go Easy On Makeup Before The Wedding: Heavy makeup in the days leading up to your wedding can clog pores and trigger breakouts. Keep your routine simple with a moisturiser, sunscreen, and light makeup whenever possible.
Hydrate From Within: Beautiful skin starts with good nutrition. Drink plenty of water and eat a balanced diet rich in protein and vitamin C, including foods like paneer, chicken, yoghurt, lentils, leafy vegetables, fruits, and salads to support healthy, glowing skin.
Avoid Last-Minute Skincare Experiments: Don't try new skincare products, facials, masks, or creams during the week before your wedding. If a product doesn't suit your skin, it could cause irritation or breakouts that are difficult to manage before your big day. Stick to a skincare routine your skin already trusts.

The rise of thrifting as a fashionable trend, Indian homes engaged in circular fashion

Each International Fashion Week, along with celebrity trendsetting moments and color trends, highlights a new style, fabric, or silhouette, prompting a near instinctive wardrobe refresh every quarter. While novelty generates enthusiasm, it also contributes to irresponsible disposability. What appears fresh in one season is often relegated to the back of the closet in the following season. So, to counter this sartorial mindset, the discourse around sustainability has been gaining a stronger voice in fashion. It is interesting to note that while sustainability may become the latest social media buzzword as Gen Z opens their arms to pre-loved, thrifty fashion, Indian homes have been practising it in quiet everyday ways for generations. With growing concerns about textile waste, landfill burden, and resource-intensive production, a fashion philosophy is bringing this old habit of mindful consumption back into the spotlight. This is called circular fashion, which is rooted in the idea of extending the longevity of clothes, instead of disposing of them right away. Circular fashion intends to keep the material in 'circulation' for longer. This is in contrast to the mainstream linear model in which garments are produced, bought, worn and discarded, and people jump on the bandwagon for whatever the next trendy style is in the market. Let's hear from an expert more about what circular fashion is, how sustainability can become part of everyday dressing, and what it looks like in India. Development Commissioner for Handlooms at the Ministry of Textiles, explained the patterns of fashion consumption and modern sustainability practices. She also brought in the perspective on the role handloom plays in fashion longevity, a quality that helps inculcate a more intentional relationship with clothes and style. Why is circular fashion becoming urgent now?

Dr Beena observed that there is a clear shift in the way people consume fashion today, especially as older habits of repair and reuse are again being embraced widely. And there's a valid reason for the same. She remarked, "Today, as consumption patterns evolve and textile waste continues to grow globally, these ingrained habits are steadily giving way to faster cycles of use and disposal." This is why the conversation around circular fashion has become urgent. The focus, she advocated, must now shift towards ensuring that the garment remains 'useful, adaptable and valuable, beyond their initial purchase.' There is also a valid reason for this push towards more mindful and intentional consumption.

Dr Beena pointed out that the fashion and textile sector is actually one of the world's most resource-intensive industries. This makes it crucial to look beyond the purchase, and pay closer attention to what happens after a garment has been used. The expert reiterated the value of the post-use life of clothes, whether they can be repaired, upcycled, or reused. How is circular fashion being practised in Indian homes?

India has been practising circular fashion long before it became trendy. Indian habits are already sustainable in nature. Dr Beena informed us that Indian culture already supports this fashion philosophy of continuity rather than excess. She walked us through how Indian households practice: "Long before terms such as sustainability, circular economy, and responsible consumption entered global discourse, Indian households practised them as a way of life. Clothes were repaired rather than discarded. A torn shirt was mended by the local cobbler. Sarees were passed from one generation to another, transformed into kurtas, quilts, home furnishings, and countless other forms."

The Development Commissioner for Handlooms then highlighted an important point about the value of any cloth, which is essentially the very tenet of circular fashion. "Value should be measured not only by ownership, but also by longevity." Did social media play any role in the acceptance of circular fashion?

India is not unfamiliar with the concept of circular fashion, as the expert already walked us through the recognisable practices that Indian households have followed for generations. But what exactly is driving its wide acceptability among the youth? As per Dr Beena, social media has played a role in 'normalising' certain fashion practices. "Across India, a growing number of people are embracing thrift, restitch, repair, and upcycling. Social media has helped normalise outfit repetition, second-hand purchases, and conscious consumption. Consumers today are seeking products that reflect both personal identity and responsible decision-making." On social media, one frequently comes across content that highlights circular fashion, such as creators showing how they upcycled their mother's wedding saree into a new blazer, Gen Z showing thrift hauls, stylists giving tips on how to style one kurta for different events, and even celebrities repeating the same outfit on different red carpet occasions. Dr Beena added to this

and emphasised that social media has helped reshape the perception of sustainable fashion practices: "What was once considered old-fashioned is now being recognised as both practical and aspirational." Indian handloom, the best example: Where can people experience the original circular fashion?

Learning and adopting circular fashion becomes easier when people experience it first-hand. To make the concept more understandable, you need to go behind the scenes, beyond theory and off the screen, to see how repair, reuse, and upcycling actually work. While social media has made sustainability a part of everyday conversation today, these practices have existed for generations in Indian handloom and textile communities. Dr Beena clarified that the shift towards sustainability presents an important opportunity, and that handloom is a 'powerful example' of the circular fashion philosophy. The reason she elaborated on was that handloom textiles remain relevant for decades as they are repaired, adapted, inherited and reused. "Recognising this need, the Development Commissioner for Handlooms, Ministry of Textiles, is supporting Weave The Future as a precursor initiative to Bharat Tex 2026. Conceived as a national platform, Weave The Future brings together artisans, designers, brands, and innovators to explore circular, craft-led approaches to everyday living, while addressing the growing challenge of textile waste through collective action," she announced.

The expert further informed that the fourth edition of Weave The Future is scheduled from July 12 to 17, 2026, at Dilli Haat, New Delhi. It is a valuable opportunity for fashion and art enthusiasts to see in person how discarded textiles can be repurposed across clothing, footwear and home furnishings and everyday materials.

In terms of what visitors can expect, Dr Beena said that they can see upcycled product showcases, circular design solutions, mending workshops, and repair-focused activities that impart practical skills to extend the life of garments. There will also be a silent auction, inviting participants to reconsider ownership and the value of giving garments and objects a second life while supporting a larger social cause.

In the end, the larger takeaway is to look at clothes from the longevity value perspective. You can begin with simple practices, like choosing handloom clothes with durable fabrics, repeating outfits, buying fewer seasonal trendy clothes and focusing on quality.

Your tap water may be the issue, not your hair care regimen

Experts elucidate the impact of hard water on hair health, detailing its contribution to frizz and breakage, while also providing practical advice to safeguard your hair from mineral accumulation. You invest in sulfate-free shampoos, nourishing hair masks and expensive serums. Yet your hair still feels rough, looks dull and seems to shed more than usual. Before blaming your products, it might be worth taking a closer look at something far more ordinary, your tap water. For many people living in cities such as Noida, Bengaluru, Gurugram and other urban centres, hard water is an everyday reality. Rich in minerals like calcium and magnesium, it can quietly alter the way your hair looks and feels, often leaving behind residue that weighs strands down and makes them difficult to manage. While hard water may not be the sole culprit behind every hair concern, experts agree that it can significantly contribute to dryness, frizz and breakage.

What Exactly Does Hard Water Do to Your Hair?
Unlike soft water, hard water contains a high concentration of dissolved minerals. Over time, these minerals accumulate on the scalp and hair shaft, creating a film that prevents moisture and haircare products from penetrating effectively.
Dr Ajay Rana, Founder & Director, ILAMED, President, ISAM, Secretary Asia, UIME, Director, RG Medical College & Research Centre, Aligarh, and Organising Chairperson, COSCON 2026, believes this mineral residue is often mistaken for a more serious hair concern. "While hard water does not directly harm hair follicles to the point of causing hair loss, it can cause problems as the hair grows out, making it appear damaged. High levels of minerals such as calcium and magnesium leave residue that settles on the scalp and hair shaft, leading to dry, rough and unmanageable hair. This mineral build-up increases friction, which can result in hair

breakage, split ends, frizz and a lack of shine." In other words, what many people describe as excessive hair fall may actually be hair breakage. "This breakage is commonly confused with hair fall. In people with sensitive skin

drier and frizzier. Can You Protect Your Hair From Hard Water?

The good news is that while you may not be able to change your city's water supply, you can reduce its impact on your hair. Vijayvergiya recommends tackling the problem at its source. "Using a water softener, either in your water tank or in the shower is a great first step to ensure your hair is not exposed to the damage in the first place." She also suggests choosing shampoos that are specifically designed to remove mineral deposits without over-drying the hair. "A shampoo with a tri-surfactant formula works wonders to deeply yet gently cleanse your hair and scalp of deposited mineral build-up without stripping it of its natural oils." Dr Rana echoes the importance of balancing cleansing with nourishment. "Use a mild clarifying shampoo as needed, about once every one to two weeks, followed by a deep conditioner or hair mask. Installing a water softener or shower filter can also help if you're regularly exposed to hard water." He adds that healthy hair also depends on what's happening inside the body. "Maintaining a healthy diet and treating any nutritional deficiencies or underlying medical conditions is equally important. If hair shedding continues to be excessive despite these measures, consult a doctor for a thorough evaluation to determine the underlying cause and receive appropriate treatment." Hard water may not directly cause hair loss, but it can certainly make your hair look and feel less healthy. Mineral build-up can lead to dryness, frizz, dullness and breakage, often creating the illusion of increased hair fall. Fortunately, a few simple changes, whether it's installing a shower filter, incorporating a clarifying shampoo into your routine or resisting the urge to overwash, can go a long way in protecting your strands. Sometimes, healthier hair isn't about buying more products. It's about paying attention to the water you wash it with.



Hybrid beauty is here to stay and is altering our perception of makeup

For many years, makeup and skincare were categorized distinctly on the beauty shelf. One offered immediate satisfaction, while the other provided enduring benefits. However, these distinctions are now fading as a new generation of consumers seeks products that fulfill both roles. Welcome to the age of hybrid beauty, where foundations serve as skincare, primers contain active ingredients, and lip colors offer nourishment in addition to color. This isn't simply another beauty trend fuelled by social media. It's a reflection of a larger shift in consumer behaviour, one that prioritises efficacy, transparency and skin health as much as flawless finishes. Beauty shoppers today are reading ingredient lists as closely as nutrition labels, looking beyond packaging to understand what a product is actually doing for their skin. Consumers Want More Than Just Coverage

Rajat Aggarwal, Director, Future Makeup, believes the modern beauty consumer is far more informed than ever before. "People don't just ask whether a foundation offers good coverage anymore, they

want to know what's inside it. Ingredients like ceramides, hyaluronic acid, niacinamide and peptides have become part of everyday beauty conversations. Consumers are reading labels, comparing formulations and making purchasing decisions based on efficacy rather than advertising," he says. This growing awareness is changing what consumers expect from their beauty routines. Rather than purchasing separate products for makeup and skincare, they're gravitating towards formulas that offer hydration, protection and nourishment alongside cosmetic

benefits. Innovation Has Shifted from Colour to Formulation

The evolution is also changing how beauty brands innovate. While shade ranges, textures and finishes once dominated product development, formulation science has become just as important. Aggarwal believes this shift is defining the future of the industry. "Earlier, innovation was largely centred around shades, textures and finishes. Today, formulation science has become equally important. Consumers expect transparency, multifunctionality and products that support

their skin while delivering high performance. Beauty is increasingly becoming an extension of wellness, and brands that recognise this shift will define the future of the industry." The message is clear: performance is no longer measured solely by how makeup looks, but also by how it treats the skin beneath. A Dermatologist's Take on the Hybrid Beauty Boom

Dermatologists have long encouraged consumers to pay closer attention to ingredients, making hybrid beauty feel like a natural progression rather than a passing fad.



Salman Khan’s banner refutes CBFC trouble: ‘Maatrubhumi not yet submitted’



Mumbai : Salman Khan’s Maatrubhumi: May War Rest In Peace has been in the headlines ever since news that the movie was stuck with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) circulated on social media. Now, Salman Khan Films, the actor’s produc-

tion house, has issued an official statement calling the reports false and stating that the film has not even been submitted for certification yet.

On July 4, Salman Khan Films shared an official statement on its social media platform. The statement

read, “Any claims suggesting that Maatrubhumi: May War Rest In Peace has encountered issues with the CBFC or that its certification has been put on hold are false. The film has not yet been submitted to the CBFC for certification. Therefore, such reports

are entirely baseless. We request that media outlets and individuals refrain from circulating unverified information. Any official updates regarding the film will be shared by Salman Khan Films through its official channels only.” While the statement clarified that the movie hasn’t been submitted for the certification process, it didn’t reveal when the team plans to send it to the CBFC.

Maatrubhumi was originally scheduled to release in April this year. After the postponement, reports claimed that the Salman Khan-starrer could arrive in theatres in August, around the Independence Day weekend.

However, the makers have not yet announced the film’s revised release date. They have also not issued any statement addressing the latest reports about

the CBFC withholding its clearance certificate.Fans of Salman Khan have been eagerly waiting for updates on the film, especially since the project has already gone through a title change and release delay.

The film was earlier titled Battle Of Galwan before being renamed Maatrubhumi. Speaking about the title change, director Apoorva Lakhia had earlier told Hindustan Times that the decision was not sudden.“Changing the title may feel sudden to SK sir’s fans, but it was never an overnight decision. From the start, we had registered two titles: Battle Of Galwan and Maatrubhumi. As we went through the journey of making our film, we realised it was never just about a battle. At its heart, the film is about humanity, empathy, and the silent battles our soldiers fight,” he said.

Kriti Sanon spotted on dinner date with Kabir Bahia; viral video sparks buzz



Mumbai : Bollywood actress Kriti Sanon was spotted stepping out for a dinner outing with her rumoured boyfriend, Kabir Bahia, in Mumbai on Friday evening. Though the duo arrived at the same venue, they entered the restaurant separately.

In a video doing the rounds on social media, Kabir was seen arriving first, dressed casually in an oversized white T-shirt paired with light blue denims and sneakers. A few moments later, Kriti arrived in a chic all-black ensemble, looking classy. Before heading inside, the actress smiled, waved at the paparazzi and flashed a victory sign. For the uninitiated, Kriti and Kabir have been making headlines for their rumoured relationship over the past year. Although neither of them has publicly confirmed dating each other, they have frequently been spotted together during vacations, family celebrations and so-

cial gatherings.

Most recently, the rumoured couple was seen enjoying a holiday alongside Kriti’s sister Nupur Sanon and singer Stebin Ben. For the uninitiated, talking about Kabir Bahia, he is reportedly a UK-based entrepreneur and businessman with interests in the travel and hospitality sector. He has largely stayed away from the entertainment industry despite often making headlines due to his alleged relationship with Kriti.

On the work front, Kriti was recently seen in Cock-

tail 2, where her performance as Ally received appreciation from audiences and critics alike. The actress made her acting debut in Bollywood with Heropanti alongside Tiger Shroff.Over the past 12 years, she has established herself as one of Hindi cinema’s leading actresses with films such as ‘Bareilly Ki Barfi’, ‘Luka Chuppi’, ‘Mimi’, ‘Bhediya’, ‘Crew’, ‘Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya’ and ‘Do Patti’. She also turned producer recently with ‘Do Patti’ under her banner, Blue Butterfly Films.

Dhurandhar to hit Japanese screens July 10; Ranveer Singh greets fans



Mumbai : Aditya Dhar’s blockbuster ‘Dhurandhar’ is all set to be released in Japan on July 10. On Thursday, Jio Studios dropped a special video in which Ranveer Singh could be seen inviting Japanese audiences to experience the film on the

big screen. He also greeted the fans in Japanese, saying “Konnichiwa,” which translates to “hello.”

Written, directed and produced by Aditya Dhar, and produced by Jyoti Deshpande and Lokesh Dhar, Dhurandhar now embarks

on its next chapter, bringing its larger-than-life cinematic experience to audiences in Japan. Presented by Jio Studios and produced by B62 Studios, the film released in India on December 5, 2025, and has since emerged as one of the biggest theatrical successes in Hindi cinema. The film features a strong cast including Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, Rakesh Bedi, R Madhavan, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal and Sara Arjun. The second installment, Dhurandhar: The Revenge, was released in March 2026 and further amplified the franchise’s global success. With its massive box office performance, the series went on to cross the ₹3,000 crore mark worldwide, becoming the first Indian film franchise to achieve this milestone.

Celina jaitly set for acting comeback in sister Nivedita biopic



Mumbai : Celina Jaitly is all set to return to the big screen with one of the most significant roles of her career. The actor will headline a biopic on Sister Nivedita, directed by filmmaker Ram Kamal Mukherjee and produced by Aritra Das Creation in association with Assorted Motion Pictures.

Sister Nivedita, born Margaret Elizabeth Noble in Ireland, was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda who dedicated her life to India. Renowned for championing women’s education, social reform and humanitarian work, she also played a key role in inspiring Indian nationalism. Speaking to HT City, Celina opened up about portraying the iconic figure and said, “Working with a visionary filmmaker like Ram is unlike any other acting experience for me. With directors of his calibre,

you don’t merely perform a character, you surrender yourself to becoming the soul of that era.” The actress revealed that her connection with Sister Nivedita began years before she ever imagined playing her on screen.

“My father was posted in Binaguri in West Bengal. My parents and I would often travel to Darjeeling

with military convoys, and one of the places where we often stopped was Roy Villa, where Sister Nivedita spent her last days. My parents would walk around the grounds, and even military convoys would pause there to take in the breathtaking energy and view of Roy Villa. Looking back, I realise something about the place

always moved me. I had no idea that one day, far in the future, I would be the chosen one. I now feel perhaps it was Sister Nivedita herself calling this young girl who studied in Kendriya Vidyalaya,” she shared.

Calling the film “less like a role and more like answering a calling,” Celina said she deeply admires Sister Nivedita’s unwavering commitment to India. “What moves me most about Sister Nivedita is that she was not born in India, yet she chose India in every fibre of her being. She dedicated herself completely to a civilisation, its people, its spiritual philosophy and, above all, its mission. She didn’t merely admire India, she lived for India,” the actress said.The project also reunites Celina with Ram Kamal Mukherjee after their acclaimed collaboration on Season’s Greetings.

Preity Zinta deepfake case hearing July

Mumbai : Preity Zinta has approached the Bombay High Court. The actress has requested the removal of AI-generated deepfake videos, morphed images, and other unauthorised content featuring her circulating on social media and other platforms. Justice Madhav Jamdar heard the case on Friday. According to reports, the court, after hearing the actress’ plea, has asked all parties, including online platforms, to find a way to take down the content in question. The next hearing in the case is now scheduled for July 6.

Preity Zinta has filed a case in the Bombay High Court, stating that several AI-made deepfake videos, edited photos, and chatbot conversations are using her identity without her permission. In her plea, the actress requested the court to order the removal of any such content that uses her face, name, or identity without her permission. She has also requested the court to stop anyone from creating or sharing AI-generated content featuring her without her permission in the future. During the hearing, Justice Madhav Jamdar asked all the parties to come up with a process to remove the disputed content from websites and online platforms. The court did not pass any interim order and scheduled the next hearing for July 6.Meanwhile, on the professional front, the actress is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film ‘Batwara 1947’. The makers of the film recently unveiled the character posters of the core cast of the drama. The character posters show Shabana Azmi, Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Karan Deol, Ali Fazal, and Abhimanyu Singh in a fresh avatar. Although “personality rights” is now a commonly used term, there is no single statute in India that specifically defines or governs these rights. Instead, they have evolved through judicial decisions over the years.

Zenofar Fathima makes filmmaking comeback with the reel files season 4

Mumbai : After her debut in podcasting with Real Talk With Zen, Zenofar Fathima returns to directing as The Reel Files Season 4 expands its psychological horror universe with an intriguing new cast. After many episodes of connecting with audiences through thoughtful conversations on the podcast, filmmaker, actress, and entrepreneur Zenofar Fathima is returning to her primary focus: directing. As the founder of Zen Film Productions, Fathima is stepping back into the director’s chair for The Reel Files Season 4, continuing her horror anthology series known for blending suspense with emotionally resonant storytelling.

As a director, Zenofar has consistently approached horror as a vehicle for exploring human behavior, personal fears, and the complexities of everyday life. Rather than relying solely on traditional genre conventions, her work focuses on psychological tension, moral ambiguity, and the unsettling realities hidden beneath familiar situations. This approach has helped shape a distinctive creative voice that



balances atmosphere with substance. While her podcast showcased her ability to engage with entrepreneurs and entertainers through meaningful dialogue, filmmaking remains the medium through which she most fully expresses her vision. Her return to directing marks an evolution of those conversations, bringing questions about identity, fear, and human nature into a cinematic space.

Season 4 features an unexpected lineup of personalities making their foray into narrative horror. International star Abdu Rozik, known for his

work in music, boxing, and television, will appear in a role that departs from the warmth and charisma he is widely known for. His participation was made possible with the support of his management team, JGITL.

Also joining the anthology is Emirati content creator and Chai with Ahmad host Ahmad Al Marzooqi. Making his acting debut, Al Marzooqi steps into a suspense-driven role that marks a shift from his public persona. To prepare, he has been taking acting tips from celebrity friends including Kriti Sanon, Aditya Seal, and

Vivian Dsena. He was also recently seen in a high-production promotional campaign for Netflix’s Stranger Things. Entrepreneur and Dubai Bling personality Ebraheem Al Samadi, best known for the Forever Rose brand, also joins the guest cast, exploring a darker and more mysterious side of performance in his first scripted role.

The series continues its tradition of drawing horror from contemporary life, such as the dangers of digital self-image and the influence of viral trends. Season 4 expands this scope, delving into themes of perception, vulnerability, and the consequences of decisions made in moments of fear. Each story is designed to provoke reflection as much as suspense.Beyond The Reel Files, Zenofar is developing a black comedy project starring Abdu Rozik and Ebraheem Al Samadi as charismatic conmen. The concept was conceived during an episode of Real Talk With Zen before evolving into a scripted production—a rare instance of a podcast conversation directly inspiring a film project.

Tollywood welcomes Bollywood’s rising stars with red carpet

Hyderabad : Tollywood continues to attract a new generation of Bollywood actresses eager to establish themselves on a bigger canvas. Rasha Thadani is making her Telugu debut with Srinivasa Mangapuram, Shanaya Kapoor is stepping into the industry with Zombie Reddy 2, while Wamiqa Gabbi will be seen in the much-awaited spy thriller Goodachari 2. For many young Hindi actresses, Telugu cinema has emerged as an attractive platform to showcase their talent before reaching a wider national audience.

“Preity Zinta made an impression with Kalisundam Raa, Katrina Kaif appeared in Malliswari, Ameesha Patel starred in Badri, and Shilpa Shetty featured in Sahasa Veerudu Sagara Kanya two decades ago. Telugu cinema gave them visibility at an important stage of their careers before they became major Bollywood stars,’ says a senior producer. The trend is no longer confined to newcomers. Established Bollywood names such as



Sonakshi Sinha, who made her Telugu debut with Jata dhara, and Mrunal Thakur have become sought-after faces in Telugu cinema, reflecting the industry’s growing national appeal.

Producer Vishnu Vardhan Induri believes the presence of Hindi actresses has become a strategic advantage for Telugu cinema’s pan-India ambitions. “Today’s Telugu films are no longer made only for the southern market. They are released across the country, so casting a familiar Bollywood actress naturally widens the film’s appeal,” he says. “A recognised Hindi face helps create curiosity among North Indian

audiences and strengthens the film’s marketing. In the same way Telugu audiences get excited when they see familiar stars in Malayalam or Hindi films, Hindi viewers are more likely to connect with Telugu films featuring actors they already know.” Deepika Padukone won praise for her role in Kalki 2898 AD, sharing screen space with Prabhas, Amitabh Bachchan, and Kamal Haasan. She has now been cast opposite Allu Arjun in his upcoming sci-fi entertainer Raaka. Janhvi Kapoor, meanwhile, has quickly become a familiar face in Telugu cinema with Devara and Peddi.

Asha Bhosle was a tomboy, recalls sister Usha Mangeshkar after elopement

Mumbai : Asha Bhosle’s voice belonged to the world, but behind that dazzling musical life were chapters of estrangement, reunion, hurt and healing that remained intensely personal. Recently, Usha Mangeshkar revisited one such memory, recalling the day she met her sister after years of distance, a meeting that happened when they came together to sing a duet.

The moment was not just professionally important for Usha. It was also the

first time she was seeing Asha after the latter had left home and married Ganpatrao Bhosle at a very young age. Asha was only 16 when she eloped with Ganpatrao, who was nearly 20 years older than her. peaking to Filmfare, Usha shared that when she finally met Asha again, her sister had already become a mother to Hemant.

“It was the first time I was seeing her after marriage. She had just become a mother to Hemant. She left home when



she was around 14-15. And now, after all those years, that was the first time I saw her again,” Usha said.Usha said

she could not stop staring at Asha because the image in front of her was so different from the sister she remembered from childhood.“Before that, I only remembered her as a little tomboy, wearing pants and shirts, a waistcoat, just seven or eight years old, riding a bicycle, roaming around, getting into fights. That’s how I had always seen her. So I imagined she’d still be the same, laughing, joking, teasing everyone, always ready to playfully chase

and hit people. But when I saw her, I just kept staring. She had a huge tikka on her forehead. Her hair was tied up, she was wearing a plain white sari. She had gold bangles on her hands and a wristwatch. And she looked at me,” she recalled.

Usha further remembered that Asha immediately noticed her untidy hair and scolded her for not pinning it properly.“She asked me why my hair was such a mess and whether I didn’t have

any hairpins. I wasn’t wearing any, and I just kept looking at her. Then she handed me a hairpin and said, ‘Wear this. Come with your hair properly pinned,’” Usha said.Looking back at that meeting, Usha said Asha’s manner of speaking had changed drastically after marriage.“The way she spoke had changed so much. The way she used to speak then and the way she spoke now, it was completely different. A huge difference,” she added.

The government removes barriers to highway safety, and Suwendu authorizes the installation of speed regulators on NBSTC buses

Kalkata, July 04: The Suwendu Adhikari government has announced a series of measures to improve road safety across the state, including the removal of barricades from national highways, the installation of speed governors in buses operated by the North Bengal State Transport Corporation (NBSTC), and the use of body cameras by traffic enforcement and investigation officials. The choices were made during an administrative review meeting held by Suwendu on Friday at Uttarkanya, the state's branch secretariat in Siliguri. After the meeting, Shankar Ghosh, the state tourism minister, stated that the administration had decided against installing barriers on highways. "The chief minister has stated that obstacles on highways should be removed to ensure that cars move more smoothly and safely. In addition, following the recent road tragedy in Mainaguri, it has been agreed that speed governors would be put in all buses operated by the NBSTC," he stated. In Mainaguri, four persons died, and 30-odd passengers were injured when the NBSTC bus rammed into the rear of a truck. Government sources said barricades on highways often hindered the free flow of traffic and were at times misused for illegal practices. "There are reports that during the tenure of the Trinamool government, such barricades were set up on highways to illegally collect money from vehicles, especially goods vehicles.

The removal will improve traffic and would also stop such practices," said a source. Ghosh said that the state had also decided to equip officials with body-worn cameras while carrying out traffic enforcement, revenue collection and investigations related to road accidents or safety violations. "The body cameras will be used by officials during revenue collection and while investigating accidents or road safety-related issues. The digital recordings will enhance transparency and help strengthen traffic management," said the minister. Suwendu announced on Friday that the state



government had decided that digitally signed copies of land records, including the record of rights (RoR) and plot information, would be available online free of cost. In a post on social media, Adhikari said the application fee previously charged for obtaining land records and plot information had been abolished with immediate effect. Under the new system, citizens can now download digitally signed copies of their record of rights (khatian) and plot information online without paying any application or authentication charges. Later in the day, at the administrative meeting in Uttarkanya, Adhikari instructed the officials to expedite the acquisition of land for the civil airport at Hasimara and for the airports in Malda and Balurghat. "He has made it clear that there should be no delay in land acquisition for airports, railway network, highways, overbridges and flyovers," said the tourism minister. At the meeting, it was also decided to extensively install CCTV cameras in all offices of the state land and land reforms department. The state will also depute officers at Uttarkanya to monitor the land acquisition process, said sources. Adhikari also issued a warning

to elected legislators, particularly those who ran on Trinamool's ticket, in north Bengal. "Around 80% of elected lawmakers of these local bodies, from panchayats to municipal corporations, are staying away for fear of retaliation. The same is true in the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA). This cannot continue. "Either you surrender to the police or resign from your posts," the chief minister told reporters at Bagdogra airport before departing for Calcutta. He stated that the VB G RAM G and other schemes had been launched in the state and required adequate implementation. "A spate of developmental projects have been launched in North Bengal. The execution of such projects and the implementation of social schemes should not be hampered by the lack of elected representatives. They must do their obligations, or we will take the required actions under the regulations to guarantee the effective operation of these rural organizations," Adhikari added. The chief minister also took stock of the situation during the current monsoon season. The southwest monsoon is active in north Bengal, causing flash floods, landslides, and waterlogging.

Centre Busts 10 Myths About Engine Damage Caused By Excessive Water Use On E20 Petrol



New Delhi, July 04: On Friday, the government released a thorough reply to what it described as false information spreading on social media regarding the country's E20 ethanol blending scheme, denying charges ranging from high water use and engine damage to insurance invalidation and environmental impact. In a 10-point explanation, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas stated that the program, which allows fuel to include up to 20% ethanol, is backed by scientific research, worldwide experience, and regulatory protections. The government denied accusations that manufacturing one liter of ethanol requires 10,000 litres of water, stating that only excess rice cleared after satisfying national food security requirements is diverted for ethanol production. It said that ethanol distilleries use around 3-5 liters of processed water per litre of ethanol and are increasingly using Zero Liquid Discharge technologies to recycle water. The ministry also said maize, which now accounts for more than 40 per cent of ethanol supplied under the programme, requires significantly lower irrigation than paddy and is being promoted through higher minimum support prices. The government also dismissed assertions that E20 is an untested fuel, noting that ethanol-blended fuels have been used internationally for decades. It cited countries, including the United States, Brazil, Canada, Thailand, Japan and several European nations, as having adopted ethanol blending at varying levels.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Drops Cryptic Post During Intense India Debut Debate

England: After sitting on the bench for three matches during India's tour of the United Kingdom, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi may finally get the chance to make his India debut against England in the second T20I on Saturday. The Indian squad began the tour with two T20Is against Ireland before travelling to England for a five-match T20I series. Sooryavanshi did not play in the two T20Is against Ireland and was benched in the first match against England, which was washed out due to India's batting. The 15-year-old powerful opener has thrown a significant hint on social media, implying that his turn to wear the India shirt has finally arrived. Taking to Instagram, Sooryavanshi shared a story with the caption "new chapter", dropping a big hint over his senior India debut, ahead of the second T20I against England. India bowling coach Morne Morkel, who attended the press conference on the eve of the 2nd T20I, suggested that it won't be fair if Sooryavanshi is rushed into the team by sacrificing either

Abhishek Sharma, who was the No. 1 ranked T20I batter in the world before the start of the series, or Sanju Samson, India's Player of the Tournament at T20 World Cup 2026. "I think we need to respect the fact that we had our No.1 batter in T20 cricket, Abhishek Sharma. Sanju was the player of the World Cup," Morkel said in the press conference on Friday. "Samson had a great IPL. So, as a coaching staff, it's only fair to show trust and support for your players. Yes, a young man is knocking on the door, and that's exciting. "But for not just those two players at the top, but for the entire group, it's good that we show our support." Morkel emphasized the importance of team management demonstrating support for its players, regardless of whether they are being considered for selection.

It's about supporting some of the men who have won World Cups and played well in difficult situations, and then developing from there to improve our top order as much as possible in these circumstances."

Delhi withdraws the hybrid work mode order as tensions ease in the Middle East

Vancouver, July 04: With tensions in the Middle East lessening after Iran and the US agreed to a cease-fire, the Delhi government has lifted its 'work from home' directive for government employees. As part of a statewide effort to conserve gasoline, the Rekha Gupta administration required employees to work two days from home. The decision was in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's request in May to save gasoline during the Middle East turmoil. The goal was to minimize gasoline and diesel usage in the national capital. Along with this, the office hours were modified. Furthermore, a 20% reduction in fuel allotment for government cars was enacted, and numerous ministers decreased the size of their convoys. The Delhi government had designated Wednesdays and Saturdays as work-from-home days for its staff. With the order now revoked, the exemption from coming to

office has ended. The government has reinstated earlier office timings - 10:00 AM to 6:30 PM. Meanwhile, the MCD - Municipal Corporation of Delhi - will continue to operate from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced the action in May, stating that the 90-day program will focus on lowering gasoline use, increasing public transportation, and pushing the adoption of Made-in-India products in the face of energy instability caused by the Middle East crisis. To offset the instability of gasoline costs caused by the conflict, Prime Minister Modi has advocated for a reform in how India operates. He urged residents to cut gasoline and diesel usage by taking the metro and public transportation wherever possible, carpooling when private vehicles are required, choosing train transit for cargo moving, and boosting the use of electric vehicles whenever practicable.

Brazil's Endrick breaks silence on Carlo Ancelotti's decisions with limited game time at the FIFA World Cup 2026

Mexico: Brazilian striker Endrick, who has had minimal playing time for Brazil in the FIFA World Cup 2026, has voiced trust in coach Carlo Ancelotti's ability to do what is best for the squad, stating that players would be given opportunities in the tournament in due time, according to ESPN. Endrick has yet to start a game, having only appeared as a substitute against Haiti, Scotland, and Japan, and he did not play in Brazil's first group-stage encounter against Morocco. However, the Real Madrid striker stated that he trusts coach Carlo Ancelotti to make choices based only on the team's best interests, rather than individual individuals.

He commended Ancelotti's wisdom and confidence, stating that his judgments are frequently successful, and that he is willing to obey any orders from the coach without hesitation. "He won't do what's best



for me or for Endrick. Or even for Matheus Cunha. He'll do what's best for the team. He's not afraid; he does what he thinks is right, and things just happen. It seems like God is watching over him, and he's inspired because everything Carlo does just works out. When the coach tells me to do something, I won't look back -- I'll just do whatever he asks," he said as quot-

ed by ESPN. Endrick said he is grateful to be part of the World Cup squad and sees simply being in the team as an achievement. He added that all players are ready to contribute, trusts the coach's decisions, and believes everything will happen in due time, saying he came to show his identity as a player. "I'm very grateful to be here. For me, just being with this group

and competing in a World Cup is a victory. I think all 26 players are eager to play and are all very well prepared. I'll put my trust in God and in the coach, who will do what's best for the team. Rest assured that things will happen at the right time. I didn't come here to experience something extraordinary; I came to show who Endrick is," he said.

Bimal Gurung downplays BJP leader's tirade and takes conciliatory approach



Darjeeling, July 04: Fissures between the BJP and its ally, the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, are becoming more obvious at the grassroots, despite the fact that Bimal Gurung, the hill party's president, appears to be adopting a more conciliatory position, aware that the BJP is in power both at the Centre and in the state. The tensions originate mostly from a continual movement of followers to the BJP at a time when the Morcha is striving to reestablish its organizational foundation after the BJP took power in Bengal. Sanjeev Lama, the BJP president of Darjeeling (hills), launched a vitriolic attack on Gurung without naming him. "Some political leaders in the hills probably do not want hill issues to be solved as they fear that their politics might come to an end if the issue is solved," Lama said on Wednesday. "Sometimes they talk about the

GTR, sometimes he says that Union home minister Amit Shah has asked him to be the guardian ... sometimes they say the 'chapter is closed'," said Lama. For some days, Gurung has been stating that the Centre is looking at setting up a Gorkhaland Territorial Region (GTR) on the lines of the Bodoland Territorial Region in Assam. Gurung had also talked about Shah's purported statement. Gurung's wife Asha, who is heading the women's wing of the party, had said that the chapter with the BJP was "closed" at the grassroots level. Lama also alleged that hill leaders were talking about regionalism to be in power.

"I think this talk about regionalism by certain leaders is only a medium to get the public on the streets and create unrest so that they can come to power and reap its benefits," said Lama, clearly

hitting out at Gurung, who has been talking on the issue. Lama also said: "The public knows about everything from 2007. How the GTA was accepted. What were the promises made, what was actually delivered and how tones changed as per convenience." Gurung had launched the Gorkhaland agitation in 2007 and promised to deliver Gorkhaland by March 10, 2010, failing which he had repeatedly declared that he would "shoot" himself on his forehead. Gurung had also joined hands with the BJP and the Trinamool Congress in the last decade. On Thursday, Gurung, who had in the recent past launched a tirade against the BJP, seemed to mellow down. "There is no rift.

"At the lower levels, some immature people who know little about politics are making statements, and I have nothing to say about them," Gurung added. The Morcha chairman has stated that he has solid relationships with prominent BJP officials like as Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, and Bhupendra Yadav. "This is why the issue of constitutional guarantee (for the planned new hill body) is being discussed..." I just want justice to be served to the people of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and the Dooars," Gurung stated on Thursday.

Colombia defeated Ghana to go to the FIFA World Cup's last 16

Missouri: On Friday, waste-ful Colombia defeated feeble Ghana 1-0 to become the final World Cup last 16 qualifier. The South Americans controlled the game at Arrowhead Stadium, but only Jhon Arias' early goal demonstrated their supremacy, as they now prepare to face Switzerland in Vancouver on Tuesday. Ghana midfielder Thomas Partey fizzed a chance just wide in the first minute, but it was a false dawn for the African country. Colombia was forced to make an early substitution as Jhon Cordoba pulled up with an apparent groin injury and was replaced by Luis Suarez. Alidu Seidu replaced the injured Marvin Senaya minutes later, forcing Ghana to make their own substitution. Colombia took the lead in the 14th minute when substitute Suarez showed perseverance on the right wing and crossed for an unmarked Arias to head home. That handed Carlos Queiroz's goal-shy Black Stars, who only scored twice in the group stage, a big concern. Colombia, cheered on by a fanatical crowd in Kansas City, proceeded to dominate, playing flowing, imaginative football in pursuit of a second goal.

Pakistan Star, Bought by Kavya Maran's Sunrisers Leeds, Lands in Big Trouble



England: Abrar Ahmed, Pakistan's mystery spinner, is in a pickle since his likely selection for the two-match Test series in the West Indies may jeopardize his prospects of playing in The Hundred in the UK, where he was purchased by an Indian owner, Sunrisers Leeds, according to a news source on Friday. According to Telecom Asia Sport, Abrar is facing the country vs. club argument, and he must decide whether to join the national squad for red

ball cricket or his franchise for white ball cricket. "Abrar and his agent are in a fix because if he gets chosen for the Test team to play in the West Indies. The Hundred starts from July 21, while the first Test commences on July 25. Abrar's signing caused a major controversy in Indian cricket circles as the Kavya Maran-owned franchise Sunrisers Leeds came under fire for signing the Pakistani player for a big sum of 190,000 pounds (approx. INR 2.3 crore). Kavya

Maran had faced online backlash with fans criticising the move and accusing the franchise of ignoring national sentiment. The controversy intensified after reports suggested that Kavya herself raised the paddle during the bidding war that secured the services of a Pakistani spinner. Sources close to Abrar's agent said it would be a big blow if the spinner is not released to take part in The Hundred. "Sunrisers Leeds owner has faced backlash from 140 billion people and has resisted that, so it will be imperative that Abrar plays in The Hundred," sources told telecomasia.net. Pakistan's national selection committee is due to announce the squad for the two-Test series on Monday, and they are considering Abrar as they need a leg-spinner, who is seen as a strong weapon against the West Indies batters. India halted bilateral cricket with Pakistan in the wake of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, blamed on militants based across the border. The two countries only play each other in multi-national events like the World Cup, Champions Trophy, and Asia Cup. The boycott came a few months after Pakistan players featured in the inaugural edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL). Since then, Pakistani players have been banned from the IPL, while all Indian owners of teams in Leagues around the world do not select them. It was only following a threat by the England and Wales Cricket Board that "no discrimination" would be allowed against Pakistani players that Sunrisers Leeds bought Abrar in the auction.

England Seek Sleep to Counter Rowdy Mexico Fans Before Knockout Clash

New Delhi: England are taking extra precautions ahead of their FIFA World Cup Round of 16 clash against co-hosts Mexico after witnessing the chaotic scenes that unfolded outside Ecuador's team hotel earlier this week. Thomas Tuchel's side are expected to stay behind enhanced security in Mexico City, with roadblocks likely to be put in place around the team's hotel to prevent supporters from gathering outside on the eve of Sunday's knockout clash at the iconic Estadio Azteca.

The additional measures come after hundreds of Mexico fans descended on Ecuador's hotel before the Round of 32 fixture, setting off fireworks, revving vehicle engines and chanting deep into the night in an attempt to keep the visiting players awake. The celebrations and noise became so



intense that Ecuador players were forced to step out onto their hotel balconies to see what was happening outside. According to The Athletic, FIFA is expected to approve enhanced security arrangements around England's hotel, with decisions on roadblocks being taken on a case-by-case basis depending on the fixture

and local intelligence. The governing body is also understood to be keen to avoid a repeat of the scenes witnessed before Mexico's victory over Ecuador. England have also altered their travel plans for the first time during the tournament. Unlike their previous matches, where the squad arrived in the host city one day before kick-off,

Tuchel's side will travel to Mexico City two days ahead of the contest. The decision is driven not only by security considerations but also by the challenge of playing at altitude. The Estadio Azteca sits around 2,240 metres above sea level, with the thinner air expected to affect both player conditioning and the movement of the ball.

Praggnanandhaa Finishes Grand Chess Tour Rapid Event as Joint Leader Overall



Zagreb: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa won three matches in a row on the final day to tie for the first place with Firouzja Alireza of France on 12 points as the rapid section of the Croatian leg of the Grand Chess Tour ended here. Having fallen a little behind after the second day, Praggnanandhaa reserved his best for the last three rounds and defeated Ivan Saric of Croatia, Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania and Anish Giri of the Netherlands to finally catch up with Alireza. The other Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan remained within striking distance of the two leaders with a fine

finish in the rapid section to reach 11 points while world champion D Gukesh of India and Vincent Keymer of Germany are right on their toes with 10 points each. With 18 rounds in the blitz section still to be played, Giri is on eight points and is a full point ahead of Deac and Jorden van Foreest of the Netherlands while Saric stands last with just two points in his bag. For Praggnanandhaa, things started moving right after the opening against Saric who has been struggling in the event. The Caro Kann defense gave the Indian an active position right from the beginning and though it took a long time to convert, Praggnanandhaa was always in command. In the second game, Praggnanandhaa crashed through the defenses of Deac out of a Petroff defense and by move 15, the writing was already on the wall. The Romanian lost a piece soon and never recovered. In the final game of the day, Praggnanandhaa was on fire against generally dependable Anish Giri as he won a pawn out of a Catalan opening and then ended the game efficiently with fine tactical ma-

noeuvres. The game ended in a mere 34 moves. For Gukesh, this turned out to be a contrasting day compared to Praggnanadhaa as the youngest ever world champion could only draw all the three games to fall behind a little. Abdusattorov, Keymer and Alireza all split points with Gukesh. Young Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa dealt another stunning blow to hometown hero and world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen, defeating the Norwegian in a classical game for the second time at Norway Chess 2026 and boosting his bid to become the first Indian champion of the prestigious event. World champion D Gukesh's title hopes ended after another heavy Round 8 defeat to French Grandmaster Alireza Firouzja, leaving him bottom of the table on eight points and still unable to halt a worrying run of form since his 2024 world title triumph. In a remarkable achievement in the elite double round-robin event, Praggnanandhaa became the only player to beat Carlsen twice in classical games this year, underlining his growing stature.

Australia Goalkeepers Kept Unaware of World Cup Penalty Shootout Goalkeeper Switch

Arlington: Australia goalkeeper Patrick Beach had no idea he was going to be taken off for the World Cup penalty shootout with Egypt Friday as coach Tony Popovic came under fire for the baffling decision. Beach, 22, headed to the tournament as number two to seasoned Socceroos shot-stopper and captain Mathew Ryan. But in a shock he started every game and proved rock solid, only to be substituted deep into extra-time in the last 32 clash against Egypt in Dallas as penalties loomed. Popovic brought on Ryan but he failed to pull off a save and Egypt won 4-2 on spot kicks to set up a last-16 meeting with Argentina after the game finished at 1-1. "You have to talk to the coaches about that," Beach told Australian media of the goalkeeper switch. "I found out at the same time you guys did." Obviously there was a plan that was put in place, and it wasn't for us to know about.

"The coaches made a decision, and as far as it goes, Matty and I are here to do the job of whatever works best for the team and brings the best outcome for our team." Ryan was similarly in the dark, saying: "No, no, I wasn't told before the



match." Former Australian goalkeeper Mark Bosnich said he was "astounded" by the move, while another goalkeeping icon Mark Schwarzer added: "I personally believe that the goalkeeper who's playing should stay in there." Ex-Socceroo Robbie Slater called it a failure by the coaching staff. "Beach was in terrific form and now we will never know if that form translates to a saved goal in the penalty shootout," he said in a column for The Australian newspaper. "Again, this is on the coaching staff and as far as I am concerned this is another fail." Slater was similarly outraged by defender Lucas Herrington being asked to take

one of the penalties. The 18-year-old hit the bar. "This should never have been put at his feet," he wrote. "With Australia in a penalty shootout for World Cup survival surely someone in the Socceroos brains trust should have said 'do we really want to hang this on an 18-year-old?'" Popovic defended the gambles and said he was proud of the team. "Okay, it didn't work, so we can look at many things in the reasons behind it, but with Maty's experience, and I think if you look at his record in saving penalties," Popovic said. "We just felt that Maty's experience was the difference."

On turning to Herrington in such a pressure situa-

tion, Popovic said: "I'm sure you'd be saying something else if the young kid scored." Herrington, who looked devastated afterwards, insisted he was ready to play his part. "The coaching staff trusted me, I was confident going into it, I knew where I wanted to put it, unfortunately, it is just part of football, I missed," he told Australian reporters. For Australia's opener against Turkey, the Socceroos' presumed starting goalkeeper was Mathew Ryan, who entered this tournament as a veteran of three World Cups and the team's captain. Manager Tony Popovic instead turned to a 22-year-old keeper, who would be playing in just his third

Brandon Miller Storms Past 17-Year-Old Cooper Lutkenhaus to Clinch the Prefontaine Classic 800m Title in Dominant Fashion

Eugene, Ore.A: This was shaping up to be the Cooper Lutkenhaus Show. The 17-year-old phenom was leading the 800 meters with the finish line just around the corner. That's when Brandon Miller made his move and stole not only the win but the show. Miller finished in 1 minute, 43.68 seconds to hold off Lutkenhaus during the Prefontaine Classic at Hayward Field on Friday night. "He's an amazing competitor. Everything he does, it makes me so excited because it pushes me to be better," the 24-year-old Miller said about Lutkenhaus on the Peacock broadcast. "At the end of the day, I'm out here competing with the best and he's one of them." The theme of the night was close finishes. Wilma Nielsen held off Juliette Whittaker by 0.18 seconds to win the 1,500. In the men's mile, Liam Murphy used a lean at the finish line to narrowly edge Stefan Nillessen by 0.01 seconds. The men's



two-mile race, though, was all Parker Wolfe as he powered down the home stretch. A pair of reigning Olympic champions earned wins Friday with Valerie Sion taking the women's discus and Ethan Katzberg capturing the hammer throw. The women's pole vault saw Sandi Morris edge fellow American Katie Moon. Reigning 100 and 200 world champion Melissa Jefferson-Wooden is easing into this season. She's only raced in two individual events so

far heading into a stacked 100 on Saturday. Scheduled to be in the field with her will be fellow American Sha'Carri Richardson, Jamaican twins Tia and Tina Clayton and another powerful Jamaican in Shericka Jackson. There will be heats and those who advance will race again about two hours later. Jefferson-Wooden won the Pre event last season, while Richardson was victorious in 2024. B" My goal is to execute. That's always been

my goal," Jefferson-Wooden said. "That's the thing that has gotten me to where I am today." Kenny Bednarek and Noah Lyles had a spicy competition in the 200 a year ago, leading to a shoving and shouting match after they crossed the finish line of a hotly contested race won by Lyles. Lyles won't be in the field for the 100 on Saturday, but Bednarek will be on the starting line along with reigning world champion Oblique Seville of Jamaica.

India vs England 2nd T20I: Parthiv Patel Reacts to Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's Debut Chances

Chandigarh: Former India wicketkeeper and JioStar expert Parthiv Patel believes 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is likely to get an opportunity at some stage in the ongoing series against England, but not in the Playing XI for the second T20I in Manchester. Speaking on JioStar's Game Plan, Patel said communication from team management will be key while handling the young batter's development. "I feel Vaibhav Sooryavanshi will definitely get an opportunity at some point in this series. But at this stage, communication is extremely important. When you're part of the coaching staff, you have to make sure you communicate clearly with the players. Even if you're not going to play him, you have to tell him that. He's a 15-year-old kid, so you need to be very careful with him and advise him to be pa-



tient," Patel said. He added that India already have established options in the top order. "Sanju Samson was the Player of the Tournament in the T20 World Cup. Ishan Kishan, who is batting at three, is the ICC's No. 1-ranked T20I batter, while Abhishek Sharma is No. 2. At this point in time, there isn't a place for Vaibhav in the XI, and that needs to be communicated to him really well," he added. Pa-

tel also stressed that India's batting needed a strong performance in the previous game, highlighting the importance of adapting to conditions after the Ireland series. "The way India's first two games against Ireland went, it was important for India to produce this kind of batting performance. There were obviously doubts about whether India could adapt to certain conditions and whether they could change

their game plan. Looking at those games in Ireland, in my opinion, this innings was necessary for India, where you see a complete batting performance," he said. On Sanju Samson's dismissal in the first T20I, Patel noted that conditions made batting tricky. "The ball was swinging a bit, there was some spongy bounce as well, and it wasn't coming onto the bat nicely. So, it was very important to be in a decisive position while playing that shot. Sanju Samson was still slightly moving when he played it. The ball stopped a bit, and because of that, he lacked control," he said. After single-handedly taking India to the semifinals, a supremely confident Samson (89) bludgeoned the England bowling attack including Archer, who had dominated his battle against the Indian opener in last year's bilateral series.

England Recall Pace Duo in 16-Man Squad for India ODI Series

New Delhi: England have named a 16-man squad for the upcoming three-match ODI series against India, with fast bowlers Gus Atkinson and Saqib Mahmood returning to the setup. Sussex all-rounder James Coles received his maiden ODI call-up, while Nottinghamshire pacer Josh Tongue retained his place despite yet to make his debut in the 50-over format. The series, which follows the ongoing five-match T20I contest between the two sides, will begin at Edgbaston on July 14 before moving to Sophia Gardens in Cardiff on July 16. The third and final ODI will be played at Lord's on July 19. Harry Brook will continue to lead England, with experienced campaigners Joe Root, Jos Buttler, Jofra Archer, Adil Rashid and Sam Curran also included in the squad. Atkinson returns to England's white-ball squad for the first time since the tour of India in early 2025, having spent much of the last year focusing on red-ball cricket and recovering from fitness setbacks. Mahmood, meanwhile, continues his comeback after injuries interrupted his international career, with the Lancashire quick featuring in England's ongoing T20I series against India. The biggest talking point in the squad is the inclusion of 21-year-old James



Coles, who is in line to make his ODI debut. The Sussex all-rounder has enjoyed an impressive rise through the domestic ranks after starring for England Lions and producing consistent performances in county cricket. Coles had also earned his maiden England call-up for the T20I series against India earlier this month, underlining the selectors' faith in one of the country's brightest young talents. England have otherwise retained the core of their white-ball squad, with Tom Banton, Jacob Bethell, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks and Rehan Ahmed offering depth in the batting department, while Archer, Atkinson, Mahmood, Tongue and Curran provide a varied pace attack alongside the experience of Rashid and Liam Dawson in the spin department. England announced a 16-man squad for a three-match ODI series against India starting July 14. Key inclusions are

fast bowlers Gus Atkinson and Saqib Mahmood returning after fitness challenges, and Sussex all-rounder James Coles earning his ODI debut. The series follows a T20I contest and will be played at Edgbaston, Sophia Gardens, and Lords. Harry Brook leads the team featuring experienced players like Joe Root, Jos Buttler, Jofra Archer, Adil Rashid, and Sam Curran, maintaining a blend of youth and experience. India posted a competitive 189 for 7 after being asked to bat, with Abhishek blasting 59 off 24 balls and Iyer anchoring the innings with a fluent 68. Shivam Dube's late cameo provided the finishing flourish, while Saqib Mahmood was England's standout bowler with a three-wicket haul. India posted a competitive 189 for 7 after being asked to bat, with Abhishek blasting 59 off 24 balls and Iyer anchoring the innings with a fluent 68.