

Meghalaya CM Reviews Health Sector Progress, Sets Target Of Over 90% Institutional Deliveries

Shillong, Jul 16: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Thursday chaired a review meeting on the state's health sector with Health Minister Wailadmiki Shylla, focusing on improving healthcare outcomes and strengthening service delivery across Meghalaya. The meeting reviewed key health indicators under the Meghalaya Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS) and examined the improvements reflected in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6). According to the Chief Minister, the state has recorded a reduction in maternal deaths, attributed to an increase in institutional deliveries supported by initiatives such as the Chief Minister's Safe Motherhood Scheme (CM-SMS), which provides transport assistance to pregnant women.

Despite the progress, the government has set a target of increasing institutional deliveries to more than 90 per cent. The review also



discussed measures to improve first-trimester registration of pregnancies, ensure timely iron and folic acid supplementation for expectant mothers, and strengthen

antenatal and postnatal care through Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), and Anganwadi workers. In addition, the

government reviewed plans to expand the Community Caregiver Initiative with the support of Village Organisations and Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The meeting also

focused on strategies to improve child nutrition by promoting exclusive breast-feeding during the first six months, ensuring adequate nutrition, encouraging appropriate birth spacing, and intensifying awareness of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension through lifestyle modifications and preventive healthcare measures. The Chief Minister stressed that healthcare must be accessible, equitable, and responsive to the needs of rural and remote communities. "Our focus is on building a robust health system that not only reduces maternal and child mortality but also empowers families with preventive care and community-based support," Sangma said. Officials also reviewed strategies to strengthen infrastructure, including upgrading primary health centers, improving referral systems, and integrating digital health platforms for better monitoring and outreach.

Four-winged Begonia species discovered in Arunachal, rare plant find

Itanagar, Jul 16: A new plant species with a striking four-winged fruit has been discovered in Arunachal Pradesh, with botanists from the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) naming it *Begonia quadricornulata*. The discovery was made in Papum Pare district, during field surveys in Senki View on the eastern edge of the Itanagar Wildlife Sanctuary, a region that sits at the junction of the Himalayan and Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspots. With this addition, Arunachal now records 50 species of *Begonia*.

While documenting flora along moist stream banks, BSI researchers Rohan Marity, Umeshkumar L. Tiwari, and Sudhansu Sekhar Dash came across a small group of plants with upright stems and soft white-to-pink blooms. After detailed morphological analysis and comparison with known species, the team confirmed it was new to science. *Begonia quadricornulata* is immediately recognizable for several unusual traits, Four-



horned winged fruit, the Latin name refers to quattuor(-four), cornu (horn) and alatus (winged). As the fruit matures, four horns on the ovary develop into four distinct wings. The fruit is also coated in dense reddish-brown wool. Female plants are covered in stiff, bristly red to brown hairs that give the leaves a wool like texture.

Petioles can reach up to 50 cm, almost twice as long as those of related species like *B. handelii* and *B. tessaricarpa* and unlike its cousins that bloom in clusters, the female plants of this species bear

just one flower at a time. The excitement of the discovery is tempered by concern. Between 2019 and 2025, the team located only 2 subpopulations with about 11 mature plants in total.

Researchers noted that the area faces growing threats from road construction, grazing by livestock, and invasive plant species. Due to the small population and limited data, the species has been listed as "Data Deficient" for now. Scientists hope further surveys in the remote subtropical forests of the Eastern Himalayas will reveal more populations.

Assam madrasa sealed after molestation claims, 148 girls sent home

Bongaigaon, July 16: Authorities in Assam have sealed a madrasa in Bongaigaon district following serious allegations of molestation against one of its staff members. In a swift response to the incident, officials ensured the safe relocation of 148 girl students, sending them back to their homes while investigations proceed. The allegations surfaced earlier this week, prompting immediate intervention by district administration and law enforcement agencies. The madrasa, which had been functioning as a residential institution, came under scrutiny after complaints were lodged by students and guardians. Officials stated that the safety and well-being of the children was the foremost priority, leading to the decision to shut down the premises until further notice. Police have registered a case



and initiated a detailed inquiry into the allegations. The accused individual has been taken into custody for questioning, and authorities have assured that strict legal action will follow if charges are substantiated. The incident has sparked widespread concern among parents, community leaders, and education

activists, who have called for stronger safeguards in residential institutions. District officials emphasized that the relocation of the students was carried out in coordination with guardians to ensure minimal disruption and maximum security. Counseling and support services are being arranged for the

affected children, with child protection units stepping in to monitor their welfare. Civil society organizations have condemned the incident, stressing that educational institutions must remain safe spaces for children. They have urged the government to strengthen monitoring mechanisms, conduct regular in-

spections, and enforce strict compliance with child safety norms across all schools and madrasas. The Assam government has reiterated its commitment to child protection, announcing that a special task force will review safety standards in residential educational institutions statewide. Officials noted that while madrasas play an important role in providing education to marginalized communities, accountability and transparency must be upheld to prevent exploitation. The incident has reignited debate over the regulation of private and religious educational institutions, with calls for stronger oversight and community involvement. As investigations continue, the focus remains on delivering justice, restoring trust, and ensuring that every child's right to a safe learning environment is protected.

Nagaland CM, deputies meet Gadkari, seek support for highways

Kohima, Jul 16: Kohima, July 16: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Thursday met Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi along with Deputy Chief Ministers T.R. Zeliang and Yanthungo Patton to seek the Centre's support for key road infrastructure projects in the state. During the meeting, the delegation raised Nagaland's National Highway priorities, including pending highway projects, and requested the declaration of the Foothill Road and other strategic corridors as National Highways. The leaders also discussed measures to strengthen road connectivity across the state. Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton said the meeting with the Union minister was productive and focused on matters relating to infrastructure development and connectivity. He said the delegation discussed issues concerning



the state's road network and the need to improve transport infrastructure. The meeting was part of the state's efforts to secure Central support for the development and expansion of its road infrastructure. The delegation also raised concerns about delays in ongoing highway projects and urged the Union Minister to expedite approvals and ensure timely release of funds. They underscored that road development in Nagaland

faces unique challenges due to difficult terrain, high rainfall, and maintenance costs, requiring sustained Central support. Union Minister Gadkari assured the Nagaland leaders of the Centre's commitment to improving road infrastructure in the Northeast. He acknowledged the strategic importance of the Foothill Road and other proposed corridors, and directed officials to examine the state's proposals in detail.

Sikkim launches CM-SAATHI, free JEE NEET coaching begins

Gangtok, Jul 16: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Thursday launched the CM-SAATHI (SATHEE) Initiative, an education programme aimed at providing free coaching and academic support to students preparing for national-level entrance examinations such as JEE and NEET. The initiative has been launched by the Government of Sikkim in collaboration with IIT Kanpur under the Government of India's SATH-EE Initiative. According to the Chief Minister, the programme will offer expert video lectures, study materials, mock tests, practice questions, doubt-solving support and technology-enabled learning to students, with the objective of making quality coach-

ing accessible regardless of financial background. South The Chief Minister said the programme builds on the state's Lakshya Centre of Excellence and is intended to ensure that deserving students are not disadvantaged due to limited resources. More than 2,000 students from over 40 government and private schools across Sikkim are expected to benefit from the initiative.

The programme will also include collaboration with IIT Kanpur to strengthen the professional capabilities of Science and Mathematics teachers in the state. During the launch, Tamang said he had requested the Ministry of Education and IIT Kanpur to consider extending similar support for preparation for other

national-level competitive examinations, including CUET, CLAT, NDA and UPSC Foundation, so that students from different academic streams can benefit.

The Chief Minister urged students to make full use of the opportunity and appealed to principals, teachers and parents to support and motivate them in their academic pursuits. He also expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Education, Government of India, IIT Kanpur, the SATHEE team and the Education Department for their support in implementing the initiative. According to the Chief Minister, the programme is aimed at expanding educational opportunities and supporting students' academic aspirations in the state.

Manipur CM urges to end NH-37 extortion as fuel transporters threaten closure

Imphal, July 16: Manipur's petroleum and LPG transporters' groups have requested Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh to take prompt action to curb suspected extortion along National Highway-37, saying that if the matter is not handled by July 31, operations will be suspended. In a memorandum submitted on Wednesday, nine transport bodies, including the All Manipur Petroleum Products Transporters Association, claimed that tanker operators transporting fuel between Imphal and Jiribam are being forced to pay illegal collections despite being escorted by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The associations said petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) and LPG tankers have been operating on the Imphal-Jiribam stretch of NH-37 under security escort since ethnic violence erupted in the state in May 2023. According to the memorandum, nearly 100 tankers in each convoy are allegedly made to pay illegal "taxes" to "looters" along the highway. The transporters claimed that the amount demanded has risen sharply over time. "Initially, the amount collected was Rs 200 per truck, but it has now increased to Rs 7,000 per truck," the memorandum stated. The associations said they had repeatedly brought



the matter to the attention of the authorities, but the alleged extortion had continued without any effective intervention. "We have raised this extortion issue many times, but it is still continuing. The transporters are no longer in a position to bear these expenses," they said. The

organisations urged the chief minister to ensure that the alleged illegal collections are stopped before July 30. They warned that if no action is taken by then, the movement of petroleum and LPG tankers along the route will be suspended from July 31.

Tripura intensifies malaria fight, IMEP-3 shifts focus to Dhalai, says Health Secretary Gitte

Agartala, July 16: Tripura Health Secretary Kiran Gitte on Thursday said the state has made significant progress in reducing malaria cases over the past few years, with Dhalai now remaining the only district where ma-

laria continues to be a major public health challenge. He stressed that the launch of the Intensified Malaria Elimination Programme-3 (IMEP-3) has set an ambitious target of eliminating new indigenous malaria cases by 2027. Ad-

dresssing the IMEP-3 review meeting, Gitte said that while northeastern states and several other parts of the country continue to face malaria infections, the Government of India has consistently extended support in the fight against

the disease. "Over the last few years, we have witnessed a steady decline in malaria cases in many districts. In Tripura, only Dhalai district remains significantly affected, while the other districts have returned to a normal pattern.

However, the challenges still remain, and with the launch of IMEP-3, our responsibility has become even greater," he said. Highlighting the state's innovative interventions, the Health Secretary said Tripura has introduced several

novel strategies tailored to its geographical and epidemiological challenges. Among these, he noted that intensified malaria screening during the dry season has played a crucial role in detecting infections early and controlling the

spread of the malaria parasite. Gitte lauded the dedication of frontline health workers, saying their commitment has substantially increased malaria testing across the state. As a result, Tripura has not only succeeded in identifying more

cases but has also significantly reduced malaria-related deaths.

He, however, emphasized that greater attention must now be directed towards vulnerable pockets such as rubber plantations.

NE/EAST

NEC sanctions Rs 13.58 crore for Meghalaya healthcare, education and infrastructure projects

Itanagar, July 16: Several sectors in Meghalaya are set to receive fresh financial support from the North Eastern Council (NEC), which approved fund releases of more than Rs 13.58 crore during May and June 2026 for healthcare, education, energy, cultural initiatives and infrastructure-related works. The funding will facilitate the installation of a 1.5 Tesla MRI machine at Tura Civil Hospital, expanding advanced diagnostic facilities for patients in the Garo Hills region. Assistance has also been approved for upgrading facilities at Shillong Polytechnic and setting up a multidisciplinary training-cum-resource centre through NERCORMS to promote technical skills



and research. The council has extended support to cultural and community spaces, including the Seng Khasi Cultural

Complex and Seinraij Jowai Community Hall. Improvement works at Lewduh Market have also been taken up to enhance facilities for people involved in trading, farming and daily market activities. In the renewable energy sector, the NEC has cleared funding for preliminary studies and surveys related to the proposed Mawblei, Myntdu Leshka Stage-II and Selim hydropower projects, which will help assess their future feasibility. Beyond Meghalaya-specific projects, the council released an additional Rs 18.93 crore to universities, technical institutions, NGOs and other organisations in the region during the same period. The funds supported various programmes, including the In-

dustry Academia Research Conclave 2025 hosted by NIT Meghalaya and the Miss & Mister Beauty Pageant 2026 organised at NEIGRIHMS, Shillong.

The NEC reported that work on the Shillong–Umroi Airport Road was completed in June 2026, adding that the upgraded corridor would ease airport connectivity and benefit regional movement. The North Eastern Council has released over Rs 13.58 crore for healthcare, education, energy and community projects across Meghalaya. The funding covers an MRI unit in Tura, market and campus upgrades, hydro surveys and improved airport road access.

Memorandum of Understanding with a Norwegian company for establishment

Itanagar, July 16: Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Norway-based Tidal Sail AS for the implementation of a 500 kW River Kinetic Energy Demonstration Project, which aims to establish India's first river kinetic energy demonstration plant in the state. The agreement was signed between the Centre for Earth Sciences & Himalayan Studies and Tidal Sail AS under the India-Norway Green Partnership.

The project is supported by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Innovation Norway. It will demonstrate a technology that generates electricity directly from river currents without the need for major civil infrastructure, offering what officials described as an environmentally sustainable and cost-effective renewable energy solution. Arunachal Pradesh Science and Technology Minister Dasanglu Pul, who attended the signing ceremony, termed the agreement a milestone in the state's clean energy transition. She said the partnership reflected a shared commitment to innovation, sustainability and international coop-



eration. Pul noted that Arunachal Pradesh's extensive river systems offer significant renewable energy potential and expressed confidence that the project would strengthen energy security while ensuring environmentally responsible utilisation of natural resources. She also thanked the MNRE, the Ministry of External Affairs, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Innovation Norway, Tidal Sail AS and other partner institutions for supporting

the initiative. Norwegian Ambassador to India May-Elin Stener said Arunachal Pradesh's river systems make it an ideal location to demonstrate river kinetic energy technology, which could complement existing renewable energy sources and improve long-term energy security. She said the project reflected growing cooperation between Norway and Arunachal Pradesh in areas such as geothermal energy, geotechnical engineering and

sustainable infrastructure, and re-affirmed Norway's commitment to promoting green technologies and knowledge partnerships. CES&HS Director Tana Tage said the demonstration project would help diversify the state's renewable energy portfolio and explore decentralised power generation for remote and inaccessible regions. According to Tage, successful implementation of the technology could reduce dependence on fossil fuels, lower carbon emissions, preserve river ecosystems and position

Arunachal Pradesh as a leader in next-generation renewable energy innovation. He also highlighted CES&HS's expanding collaboration with Norwegian institutions, including the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute, in geothermal energy and sustainable infrastructure development. Officials said the MoU marks a new phase in India-Norway cooperation in renewable energy and is expected to facilitate the deployment of advanced river kinetic energy technologies in Himalayan river systems, contributing to sustainable development and long-term energy security in Arunachal Pradesh.

Abandoned triggers bomb scare



Shillong, July 16: A brief bomb scare disrupted normal life in the heart of Shillong today after an abandoned bag and trolley were spotted near the OB Mall parking area at Khyndailad, reports Newmai News Network. The alarm was raised around 11.30 am when people noticed the luggage lying unattended. Word spread quickly, triggering panic among shoppers in the busy commercial area.

Police rushed to the spot, sealed off the parking area and blocked all vehicles coming from IGP towards Khyndailad. The cordon triggered heavy traffic congestion across the city centre during peak hours. A

bomb disposal team was called in. However, before it arrived, the owner turned up at around 12.30 pm to claim the items. Police said the man had left the trolley and bag while heading to the MUDA Complex for work and had forgotten to collect them. After verifying his identity and statement, police cleared the area and reopened the road for traffic. The crowd, which had gathered in anxiety, heaved a sigh of relief after the owner was identified. No suspicious material was found. Police have appealed to the public to report unattended baggage immediately and avoid leaving belongings in public places.

Tripura's infrastructure allocation rises from Rs 3,000 crore to Rs 8,000 crore Minister

Agartala, July 16: Tripura's budgetary allocation for infrastructure development has increased from around Rs 3,000 crore during the previous Left Front government to nearly Rs 8,000 crore over the past eight years, state Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy said on Tuesday. Addressing a government function after the inauguration and foundation stone-laying of several development projects, the minister said the increase reflected the state's focus on strengthening public infrastructure despite its limited financial resources.

"The infrastructure budget has risen from about Rs 3,000 crore to nearly Rs 8,000 crore. For a

small state like Tripura, this is a significant increase," Singha Roy said. The minister said the state government had sanctioned Rs 43 crore for expansion of the Tripura Sundari Subdivisional Hospital and estimated that around Rs 70 crore would eventually be required to transform it into a fully equipped healthcare facility. Recalling earlier developments, Singha Roy alleged that the previous Left Front government had considered closing the Tripura Sundari Subdivisional Hospital after the Gomati District Hospital became operational. He said he had appealed to the then chief minister at the time to retain the hospital, considering the

large number of people dependent on its services.

The finance minister also alleged that structural deficiencies in the Gomati District Hospital building, constructed during the previous regime, had affected healthcare delivery. According to him, the state government has now approved more than Rs 100 crore for the expansion of the Gomati District Hospital, and the tendering process has already begun. Singha Roy credited the present government with expanding healthcare infrastructure across the state, saying investments in hospitals and medical facilities formed part of a broader push to improve public services.

Tripura CM bats for decentralised GB Pant Hospital inspection

Agartala, July 16: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday conducted a surprise inspection of the GB Pant Hospital here and directed officials to address deficiencies in infrastructure, maintenance and patient care at the state's premier government healthcare facility. Saha, who also holds the Health portfolio, reviewed the hospital's infrastructure, maintenance, availability of doctors and allied health staff, and other facilities during the visit. Speaking to the reporters after his visit, Saha said, "We are trying to decentralise the whole healthcare delivery system and make sure that the government hospitals function in a corporate style. GB Pant hospital being the prime referral hospital recorded the highest footfalls of patients from across the state." "We want to simplify the whole system. The medical services related to mother and child care shall be shifted to Mother and Child Care hospital coming up at IGM hospital. The eyecare unit will be shifted to the dedicated eye hospital which is coming up just a kilometre away from GB hospital. It will be under the administrative control of GB hospital," he added. "I have directed the secretary to address all the issues, ensure proper maintenance of facilities and resolve the problems faced by patients. I will visit the hospital again to review the progress," he said.

Mob vandalizes Assam Rifles vehicles



Guwahati, July 16: Tension gripped Senapati town late Tuesday night after a mob vandalized two Assam Rifles vehicles and set ablaze a Bolero Camper, following protests against the alleged entry of Assam Rifles personnel into the jurisdiction of NSCN (IM)'s designated camp at Oklong village.

According to reports, the unrest was triggered by unverified messages circulated on social media claiming a confrontation between the Assam Rifles and the Naga Army near Huthrong Brigade. The messages, which began circulating around 9:02 p.m., urged the public to assemble at the town's traffic point for "necessary action." A large crowd soon gathered, accusing the security forces of violating ceasefire ground rules. The agitators marched towards the Assam Rifles Company Operating Base (COB), demanding withdrawal of troops from Oklong. The protest turned violent as stones were allegedly pelted at the camp, government property was vandalized, and an Alto car and waiting shed near the camp were set on fire. Security forces resorted to firing tear gas shells to disperse the mob. No serious injuries were reported on either side, and the situation was brought under control later in the night. Official sources clarified that the Assam Rifles had earlier conducted an operation in Makuilongdi and Oklong based on specific intelligence regarding unauthorized movement of armed cadres. Three individuals were detained for verification but released after confirmation through the village chairman. Civil society groups in Senapati alleged that public anger stemmed from the perception that the Assam Rifles prioritized operations in peaceful areas instead of pursuing justice for the recent killing of six Naga civilians. They said this perceived shift in focus fuelled resentment and contributed to the unrest.

Massive landslide sweeps away 2 houses, eatery, shop in Mizoram

Agartala, July 16: At least two houses, a roadside eatery and a shop have been swept away by a massive landslide in a village in south Mizoram's Lunglei district early Tuesday, officials said.

No casualty has been reported as the occupants and their belongings were evacuated before the incident, which also affected traffic movement on National Highway 2 linking Lunglei with Lawngtlai district, they said. The landslide swept away two houses that stood on the other side of the road in Tawipui South village at around 5 am, officials said.

The area has experienced several minor mudslides over the past few days, starting on July 9. Residents living near the affected area had already moved their belongings to safer locations on Monday after signs of an imminent landslide became apparent, officials said. The occupants of the affected buildings had also been relocated, preventing any loss of life, officials said. The company, which monitors the highway, is yet to clear the debris as the area continues to experience soil drops from the cliff, they said. Tawipui South is located about 45 km from Lunglei and about 30 km from Lawngtlai town, which has been cut off from the



rest of the state due to the landslide. Mizoram has been experiencing incessant rain since around July 3, causing landslides, rockfalls and floods at several locations. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned of heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms with lightning in almost all parts of the state, including Aizawl for three days from Tuesday to Thursday.

Manipur home minister vows arrests in Naga hostages murder, Meitei arson cases

Imphal, July 16: Manipur home minister Govindas Konhoujam on Monday said that operations are still underway to apprehend those involved in the killing of six Liangmai Naga hostages in Kangpokpi district and the recent arson of six Meitei houses at Kanto Sabal in Imphal West district. Speaking to reporters at the New Secretariat, Imphal, the minister expressed hope that more arrests would be made within the next couple of days.

He stated that security forces are actively pursuing all individuals connected to the abduction and subsequent murder of six Naga hostages. On May 13, eighteen Liangmai Naga members were detained at Leilon, a Kuki village in Kangpokpi district. Six of them were held hostage by Kuki groups, and their mutilated bodies were recovered on June 10. The discovery came two days after Naga groups released 14 Kuki members following negotiations led by

the United Naga Council (UNC) and the state government. In protest against the killings, Naga groups have imposed an indefinite economic blockade along national highways and inter-district roads, cutting off essential supplies to Kuki-dominated areas in Kangpokpi. The home minister made these remarks while handing over two fully-equipped ambulances to the SPs of Bishnupur and Thoubal districts at the New Secretariat complex. Meanwhile,

BJP MLA Heikham Dingo Singh, who inspected the burnt houses, described the arson as "very disheartening" and noted that it occurred in front of one of the largest Army camps in the state. Manipur police earlier confirmed the arrest of two individuals — Kamrang Lhouvum, chief of Hengiang village, and Pagin Hangshing of Khunkho village — in connection with the mob disturbance and attempted arson at Kanto Sabal.

Assamese judges begin a statewide walkout

Sivasagar, July 16: Members of the All Assam Judicial Employees’ Association initiated a two-day strike at the Sivasagar District Court on Wednesday, part of a broader state-wide protest advocating for the implementation of service-related benefits that have been pending for an extended period. This protest is fueled by concerns over the perceived failure to fully comply with a Supreme Court order issued on October 7, 2009, in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1022/1989, which was based on the recommendations provided by the Shetty Commission. In addition to this specific grievance, the association is highlighting several other service-related demands that remain unresolved. The strike has seen participation from judicial employees across various courts in Assam, causing significant disruptions to the state’s judicial system. This substantial interruption has led to considerable delays in judicial proceedings and administrative functions, severely affecting the operations of courts.

A man with property worth Rs 150 crore was shot and killed by his son at his Ghaziabad home due to a land dispute

New Delhi, July 16: After a dispute over property, a 32-year-old man is accused of shooting and killing his father in Modinagar, Ghaziabad, late on Wednesday night. Before taking off with the firearm, the accused fired four shots from it. To apprehend him, four police teams have been assembled. According to the police, the accused shot his father during a fight over the property while intoxicated.

The victim, 52-year-old Hariom Chaudhary, lived near the Modinagar police station in Budana village. He was one of the wealthy farmers in the region. Chaudhary had a market on Delhi-Meerut Road and 75 bighas of land in Modinagar, according to the police. It is estimated that he is worth approximately Rs 150 crore. Neeshu, his younger son, and Anita, his wife, survive him. According to ACP Modinagar Bhaskar Verma, the father frequently reprimanded Nikhil, the older son, for his alcoholism. He previously received 25 bighas of land and market stalls from Chaudhary. But Nikhil also wanted the remaining land changed to his name. According to reports, his father declined, telling him that he would squander it all on alcohol and other luxuries. Hariom Chaudhary had dinner on Wednesday night with his wife and youngest son, according to the police. The older son arrived home late and drunk. The father chastised him for drinking, which led to an argument. Nikhil allegedly pulled out a revolver and shot his father during the dispute. Hariom fell after being struck in the face by a single gunshot. After then, the accused is said to have fired additional rounds at his face, chest, and abdomen. The body had four to six bullet marks, according to the police. It was discovered during the investigation that Nikhil frequently got into arguments with his parents about drinking. He allegedly fired at his younger brother Neeshu during an argument in 2018 as well. That matter is currently being investigated by police as well.



A worker was killed in the Silkyara tunnel’s concrete liner collapse



New Delhi, July 16: In the early hours of Thursday, a portion of the concrete liner of the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel in Uttarkashi district fell, killing a 21-year-old Jharkhand construction worker, according to officials. Uttarkashi District Magistrate Prashant Arya confirmed the incident, stating that it happened at roughly two in the morning, around 900 meters from the Barkot-side portion of the 4.5-kilometer tunnel. According to Arya, “the fatal incident occurred when a heavy section of the tunnel’s concrete shotcrete lining fractured and collapsed on the worker.” He stated that the worker died at the site after suffering fatal injuries after being hit by falling debris. According to Arya, the tunnel was still open and no other workers were caught in the collapse. As of right now, no additional workers are trapped beneath the rubble. But only until the full inquiry report is turned in will the ultimate information be accessible,” he stated. Senior district authorities, including Barkot, the sub-divisional magistrate (SDM), were instructed by the district magistrate to visit the location, evaluate the circumstances, and provide a thorough report. In the meantime, an investigation has been started by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) to ascertain the precise reason behind the structural breakdown. According to officials, conclusions won’t be made until the factual evaluation is finished. In November 2023, a significant collapse inside the Silkyara tunnel stopped a 60-meter section of the tunnel, locking 41 workers inside for 17 days and garnering international attention. After skilled rat-hole miners physically bore through the last stretch of debris and twisted steel to reach the workers, they were ultimately saved in a convoluted multi-agency operation.

To protect India against shocks, PM Modi advocates reducing reliance on imports

New Delhi, July 16: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is implementing measures to decrease significant imports to safeguard supply chains and alleviate currency pressure amid rising geopolitical risks. The Prime Minister’s office has directed key ministries to identify goods with high import dependence that can be substituted by domestic products. This initiative may involve subsidies and incentives to enhance local production, with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry preparing a list of over 100 products, including electronics, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, semiconductors, automobiles, and machinery. Recently, the cabinet approved an additional financial support of 1.9 trillion rupees (\$19.7 billion) for chip and smartphone manufacturing and a policy aimed at increasing local fertilizer production due to disruptions caused by the Strait of Hormuz closure. India’s manufacturing heavily relies on imports, particularly from China, making the sector vulnerable, as highlighted by recent disruptions in the auto and tech industries. The ongoing conflicts, particularly the Iran war, have further exposed India’s dependencies, resulting in energy shortages and soaring import bills that pressured the currency to record lows. Economists point out that the global landscape of industrial policies has shifted towards self-reliance, becoming essential for India’s economic strategy. The nation’s manufacturing capacity building is pivotal, with the aim of narrowing the trade deficit, preserving foreign exchange, and establishing India as an alternative manufacturing hub to China. Free trade agreements, such as those with the European Union, are anticipated to enhance investment and bolster India’s manufacturing landscape. A taskforce, led by Shaktikanta Das, is developing a blueprint for import substitution, with inputs from the Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council. The government may extend manufacturing incentives to both private and foreign entities for setting up factories or urge state-owned firms to boost capacity via joint ventures. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has encouraged states and industries to pinpoint competitively manufactureable products domestically, emphasizing efforts to reduce import dependence and enhance local supply chains. India, as the world’s third-largest oil importer, faces vulnerabilities due to geopolitical tensions, especially with most of its oil sourced from the Middle East and Russia. Proposed sanctions from the US may exacerbate these vulnerabilities. While crude oil and gold imports might be challenging to replace, the government identifies potential to lessen dependence on items like pulses and edible oils through agricultural reforms. Long-term strategies are being considered for sectors where immediate substitution is not feasible, particularly where critical components for electric vehicles hinge on Chinese supplies.



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CM Mann claims that with public backing, Punjab’s ascent to the top will continue



New Delhi, July 16: Bhagwant Singh Mann, the chief minister of Punjab, stated on Thursday that his government was working to make Punjab the best-performing state in the nation with the help of its citizens. He claimed that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government had kept its promises by implementing programs in social welfare, healthcare, education, and power. Speaking at a public gathering in Mukerian, Mann stated that his politics were more about enhancing people’s lives than gaining political power. He claimed that the Congress was involved in a power struggle and had threatened to abolish social programs if elected, while his government was concentrating on increasing public welfare. Mann appealed to people to support the AAP on the basis of its governance record, claiming that a stronger mandate would prevent “opportunistic” parties from reversing welfare initiatives. He also targeted the Shiromani Akali Dal, alleging that its previous governments had failed to work in the interests of Punjab and accusing its leadership of misleading people through false promises. Highlighting his government’s initiatives, Mann said over 68,000 youths had received government jobs without corruption, 90% of households were receiving free electricity, and toll plazas closed by the

government were saving around ₹70 lakh daily. He said canal water usage for irrigation had increased from 22% to over 88% since the AAP government assumed office, while recharge points created in canals and rivers had improved groundwater levels in several areas. According to NITI Aayog data, the Chief Minister claimed that Punjab has achieved the top spot in primary and middle school education following investments in teacher training, smart classrooms, and school infrastructure. He also emphasized the Mukh Mantri Sehat Yojana, which gives all 65 lakh families in the state health cards with cashless treatment up to ₹10 lakh. He claims that the program has given health cards to over 30 lakh beneficiaries and provided care valued at about ₹650 crore. Mann mentioned the Mawan Dhiyan Satkar Yojana, which started providing monthly financial aid to almost 32 lakh women on July 1. He further stated that following registration in August, women who were unable to register during the first phase will receive three months’ worth of benefits collectively. Additionally, the Chief Minister reaffirmed that anyone found guilty of sacrilege affecting the Guru Granth Sahib would be held legally accountable and that such cases would be handled properly in compliance with the law.

Delhi High Court informs the Center over a request to force-feed Sonam Wangchuk

New Delhi, July 16: On Thursday, the Delhi High Court ordered the Center to make sure that government physicians assess activist Sonam Wangchuk’s health on a daily basis and to offer any necessary medical care if his condition worsens. As part of a protest led by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP), which is calling for the resignation of Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan due to purported anomalies in the examination system, Wangchuk has been on a hunger strike since June 28. Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia’s bench noted that every citizen’s life is valuable and that the government must take all reasonable medical measures to save it. “While noticing the assurances given by the Solicitor General we observe that life of citizens is precious and all medical attempts must be made by the government authorities to appreciate the same and we direct that medical condition of Sh Wangchuk shall be regularly monitored on daily basis and depending on the opinion of doctors, whatever medical intervention is required be taken, considering his deteriorating condition. The petition is disposed of,” the court said in its order. Advocate Rakesh Kumar Saini filed a petition asking the Delhi government and the Center to move Wangchuk to a hospital and give him medical care, including force-feeding if needed. According to Saini’s petition, Wangchuk’s health has declined dramatically throughout the hunger strike, and the activist has reportedly lost 8.5 kg. It stated that his life might be in jeopardy in the next two days if the fast persisted. It would be extremely embarrassing for the nation and the globe if he died,” the appeal said. This came after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, speaking on behalf of the Center, gave the court his word that Wangchuk’s health would be checked every day by government physicians and other medical professionals. He additionally stated that, in light of their evaluation of his declining health, any medical action deemed required would be carried out as soon as possible. In a letter on Tuesday, opposition leaders and more than 1,800 members of civil society, including academics, artists, and activists including Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah, Arundhati Roy, Nivedita Menon, Jean Dréze, Lalita Ramdas, and Kavita Srivastava, urged Wangchuk to put an end to his hunger strike. “His life is invaluable to the entire world because it embodies a commitment to humanity and the environment that is as profound as his commitment to democracy,” said Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on X. The CJP has been protesting at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar since June 20, amidst controversy stemming from remarks attributed to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant regarding the “senior” designation for lawyers. The CJI allegedly labeled “youngsters” as “cockroaches” and “parasites” but later clarified that these comments were misquoted and aimed at individuals entering the legal field with “fake and bogus degrees.”



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The center lowers the export tax on gasoline while raising the windfall tax on diesel and jet fuel

New Delhi, July 16: The government has announced an increase in the windfall profits tax on diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) exports amid rising tensions in West Asia as a result of the US-Iran confrontation. But the Center has also declared that starting on Thursday, July 16, it will reduce the gasoline tax for the next two weeks. According to the Ministry of Finance’s official gazette, the Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) rate on diesel exports has been raised from ₹8.5 to ₹15.5 per litre. In a same vein, SAED on ATF exports has increased from ₹7.5 per litre until July 15 to ₹14.5 per litre. In the meantime, the export tax on gasoline has been reduced from ₹4 per litre to ₹2.5. The ministry further stated that the current duty rates on gasoline and diesel approved for domestic use will remain unchanged. The tension between the United States and Iran intensified last week, coinciding with this increase in windfall earnings and jet fuel. The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital route for 20% of the world’s supply of gas and oil, was renewed by the US and Iran, who also launched further strikes in the area.



Diesel and ATF were subject to an export charge that the government had previously imposed on March 27. The rates were updated every two weeks. Additionally, petrol was subject to an export tariff starting on May 16.

Additionally, the windfall tax increase is meant to prevent exporters from abusing price disparities brought on by the increase in crude oil prices. The government claims that this tax increase was also meant to guarantee petroleum goods would be available domestically. Fuel

costs in India’s various industries decreased earlier this month after the war’s de-escalation and the reopening of the Hormuz Strait. According to reports, the cost of commercial LPG, which is used in hotels and restaurants, was reduced by ₹183.50 every 19-kg cylinder. The biggest private fuel retailer in India, Nayara Energy, lowered the price of gasoline by ₹5 per litre and diesel by ₹3 throughout its whole country. Additionally, it was claimed that the price of ATF was lowered by ₹5 per litre.

The center tightens its exit policy after 100 ISRO scientists quit and retire early

New Delhi, July 16: Amidst a mass departure from the Indian space agency, the Department of Space (DoS) has issued a new direction to major ISRO space research centers, tightening regulations on voluntary retirement and resignations. The memorandum, which was sent on July 14 to organizations such as the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) and the UR Rao Satellite Centre (URSC), instructed them not to regularly accept requests for voluntary retirement or resignation from Group ‘A’ scientific and technical staff connected to Gaganyaan, India’s esteemed human spaceflight program, and other “important missions.” Of late, it is noticed that there has been spate of requests for voluntary retirement and resignation from Group ‘A’ Scientific/Technical personnel of ISRO including those associated with the prestigious Gaganyaan and other important missions/projects severely impacting the implementation of projects of national importance,” as per the directive. Because of this, it has been determined that petitions for voluntary retirement and resignation

from scientific and technical staff connected to the Gaganyaan and other significant missions and projects may not be routinely granted,” it continued. These centers were instructed to provide “clear recommendations” from their directors to the Department of Space for a final decision on any such requests from scientific or technical staff, including those with and below the rank of scientist and engineer. A significant administrative adjustment established in 2020 that permitted ISRO center directors and heads to accept voluntary retirement and resignation requests from Group A scientific and technical workers up to the scientist/engineer-SG level is reversed by the order. The Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), the Space Applications Centre (SAC), the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC), and the Master Control Facility (MCF) were among the centres that were issued the directive. The recent

order comes amid reports of over 100 personnel departures from ISRO, particularly from the URSC in Bengaluru and VSSC in Thiruvananthapuram. Notably, senior scientist Victor Joseph T, who directed the LVM3 project crucial for the Gaganyaan mission, left after 13 months in February. Many departing scientists have migrated to burgeoning space startups, following the Indian government’s push for private players in the space sector beginning in 2020 and the introduction of the Indian Space Policy in 2023. Currently, India boasts over 400 registered space startups, attracting around \$500 million in investments, with \$150 million in 2025 alone. Prominent companies include Pixxel, Dhruva Space, Skyroot Aerospace, Agnikul Cosmos, and Bellatrix Aerospace. ISRO has also faced significant mission setbacks, particularly with the PSLV, which encountered two failures within a year. In January, PSLV-C62 deviated during a mission, while PSLV-C61/EOS-09 failed due to chamber-pressure issues that destroyed the intended radar satellite.

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Madrid Residents Turn Protest Into Performance

Spain’s housing crisis reached the residents of Madrid’s Calle Tribulete 7 when their building was purchased by an investment fund. Faced with rising rents, pressure to leave and disruptive construction work that affected some apartments, the tenants responded in the way many communities do when their homes are threatened: they organised, sought legal support and contacted campaign groups.

But they also chose a different form of resistance — creativity.

Instead of limiting their struggle to protests and legal battles, the residents transformed their homes into spaces of public expression. They invited musicians to perform inside their apartments and opened their private lives to the wider community. A month later, they brought their furniture onto the street, turning everyday activities into a powerful public statement. They cooked, knitted, played chess, worked remotely and relaxed in armchairs while a local band performed. It looked like a neighbourhood celebration, but behind the performance was a serious demand: the right to remain in their homes.

The action reflected a changing style of housing activism in Spain. After the 2008 financial crisis, campaigns focused heavily on stopping bank evictions and challenging mortgage abuses. Organisations such as the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca became symbols of resistance, helping many families facing foreclosure.

Today, the nature of the crisis has shifted. Increasingly, entire residential buildings are being bought by investment funds, creating pressure on long-term tenants through rent increases, redevelopment plans and changing uses of housing.

The struggle of Tribulete 7 represents a broader battle over who gets to live in central Madrid. The building’s residents include young families, pensioners, migrants, teachers, healthcare workers, writers and artists — people who form the social and cultural identity of the Lavapiés neighbourhood.

Their response was shaped by that identity. They used music, performance and community events because those were the tools they already had. Their protest showed that housing is not only about bricks and rent agreements; it is about friendships, memories, culture and belonging.

The campaign also highlights a growing concern that neighbourhoods like Lavapiés risk losing the communities that make them unique. Rising property values, tourist accommodation and investment-driven housing models have placed increasing pressure on long-term residents. Critics argue that planning changes designed to regulate tourism may unintentionally make it easier for

residential buildings to be converted into tourist accommodation. In areas already facing housing shortages, such changes could accelerate displacement and weaken local communities.

For residents of Tribulete 7, the fight has moved beyond public demonstrations. They have launched legal action against their landlord, with the case potentially becoming an important test in Spain’s housing debate. The building’s owners dispute the allegations and are defending their position.

Whatever the legal outcome, the tenants have already achieved something significant. They have shown that resistance does not always have to appear in traditional political forms. A concert in a living room, neighbours sharing food on the street and residents turning ordinary routines into a public performance can become powerful acts of protest.

Their movement demonstrates that communities under threat can defend themselves not only through legal arguments but through solidarity and imagination.

The battle for Tribulete 7 is ultimately about more than one building. It represents a wider question facing cities around the world: whether urban neighbourhoods will remain places where people build lives, or become assets traded by investors.

The residents of Madrid’s Lavapiés have answered that question with creativity, courage and community.

The story of Tribulete 7 also reveals how housing struggles are becoming increasingly connected to questions of identity, democracy and the future of cities. When residents are forced out of long-established neighbourhoods, the loss is not only personal but collective. Small businesses disappear, community networks weaken and the cultural character of an area gradually changes. A city may continue to grow economically, but it risks losing the human relationships that give its streets meaning.

The residents’ campaign shows another way of understanding urban resistance. Instead of presenting themselves only as victims of a housing crisis, they have positioned themselves as active citizens defending a way of life. Their concerts, gatherings and public actions have transformed a private dispute into a shared conversation about the right to remain in the places people have helped build.

Across Europe, similar tensions are emerging as cities struggle to balance tourism, investment and the needs of permanent residents. The experience of Tribulete 7 offers a reminder that housing is not merely a financial asset; it is a foundation for communities, culture and social stability.

Their fight continues, but their message has already travelled beyond one Madrid street: protecting homes means protecting the people and stories that make cities alive.

Stability Was the First Step. Burnham Must Now Deliver the Transformation Labour Promised

When Andy Burnham inherits the economic landscape shaped by Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves, he will not be taking control of an economy in immediate crisis. That distinction matters. Britain’s economic situation today is not comparable to the instability that followed the global financial crisis, the years of austerity, the uncertainty created by Brexit, the energy price shock, or the market turmoil that followed the Truss government’s disastrous fiscal experiment. Restoring credibility to economic management, rebuilding confidence in public finances and demonstrating that government can act responsibly are important achievements.

However, stability alone cannot be mistaken for transformation. A country can avoid economic disaster and still remain trapped in long-term stagnation. The central question facing Labour is not whether it can manage existing problems more carefully than its predecessors, but whether it can fundamentally change the economic conditions that have weakened Britain for more than a decade.

The United Kingdom continues to face deep structural problems: weak productivity growth, declining living standards, regional inequality, underinvestment, strained public services, excessive centralisation and reduced openness to global opportunities. These challenges were not created overnight, and they cannot be solved simply through careful budgeting or cautious political messaging. They require ambition, investment and a willingness to challenge long-established assumptions.

Labour was elected with the promise of renewal. Voters did not simply want a government that would avoid mistakes; they wanted one that would improve the economy, rebuild public services and create opportunities across the country. The danger for Labour is that it becomes remembered as a government that restored order without creating a new direction.

The Starmer-Reeves economic approach was built around a clear priority: restoring trust after years of economic uncertainty. That approach had logic. Governments cannot deliver long-term reforms if markets doubt their credibility, investors fear instability or public finances appear uncontrolled. Fiscal discipline is an essential foundation for economic success.

But the limitation of this approach is that stability became too closely associated with caution. Fiscal responsibility was sometimes presented as if it meant limiting ambition rather than creating the conditions for it. A government can be responsible while still making bold choices. In fact, in a period of weak productivity and low investment, excessive caution can itself become economically irresponsible.

Britain’s economic problem is not simply that it has experienced instability. The deeper issue is that growth has been too weak for too long. Productivity has struggled, wages have failed to rise strongly, and many communities outside London and the South East have not shared equally in economic progress.

A successful economic strategy must therefore focus not only on controlling spending but on increasing the country’s productive capacity. That means better infrastructure, stronger skills systems, more housebuilding, greater investment in research and development, improved transport links and stronger partnerships between national government and local communities.

The challenge for Burnham will be to understand that credibility is not the destination. It is the tool that allows

a government to pursue a bigger economic mission.

One of Andy Burnham’s strongest political arguments has always been that economic growth does not happen in abstract national statistics. It happens in communities, cities and regions. Investment decisions, transport systems, housing availability and skills development all shape whether places can succeed.

Britain’s regional inequality is not inevitable. The enormous productivity gap between London and many other parts of the country reflects decades of political choices. Too much decision-making power has remained concentrated in Westminster, while local leaders have often been expected to solve problems without the necessary resources.

True devolution requires more than giving local leaders new responsibilities. It requires giving them the financial powers, institutional authority and long-term funding needed to make meaningful decisions.

The existing model often places responsibility on local governments while keeping major economic levers under central control. This creates a situation where local leaders can be blamed for outcomes they do not have the ability to change.

If Burnham wants to create a different economic model, he must push for deeper devolution. Cities and regions should have greater influence over transport investment, skills policy, housing development, economic planning and investment strategies.

A stronger local economic model would not weaken Britain; it would make the country more competitive. Successful economies around the world often combine strong national institutions with empowered regional governments capable of responding to local opportunities.

Tax reform is another area where Labour has often appeared reluctant to have a broader conversation. The debate is frequently framed as a choice between higher taxes and lower taxes, but the real issue is whether the tax system supports the economy while providing the revenue required for a modern state.

Britain needs a tax system that is fair, efficient and capable of funding public services without discouraging economic activity.

At present, the tax system contains many distortions. Work is heavily taxed, while some forms of wealth receive more favourable treatment. Property taxation remains outdated, and business rates often create difficulties for companies operating in high-cost areas.

Reforming these systems should not be viewed as a political risk or an ideological project. It should be considered part of a long-term growth strategy.

A modern economy needs investment, entrepreneurship and innovation. It also needs public services, infrastructure and social stability. The challenge is designing a system that supports both economic dynamism and fairness.

Avoiding tax reform because it is politically uncomfortable may appear cautious in the short term, but it can limit a government’s ability to pursue long-term economic goals.

The question of Britain’s relationship with Europe remains one of the most important economic issues facing the country. Labour was correct to avoid pretending that Brexit could simply be reversed through political statements. Economic relationships cannot be changed overnight.

Brexit has created new barriers to trade, investment and movement. Businesses face additional costs and complexity, while some sectors that

rely heavily on international cooperation have experienced significant challenges.

A more productive economic strategy requires Britain to rebuild connections wherever possible. That does not mean repeating old political arguments; it means recognising economic realities.

Closer cooperation with Europe in areas such as research, education, energy, trade and mobility would strengthen Britain’s economic position. A country seeking stronger growth cannot afford unnecessary barriers with its largest nearby market.

The future relationship with Europe should therefore be approached not as a political battle but as an economic necessity.

Britain’s universities represent one of its greatest international strengths. They attract students from around the world, produce leading research and contribute significantly to local economies.

Yet higher education has often been treated as a political problem rather than an economic asset. A government committed to innovation and productivity must recognise the role universities play in national growth.

Research institutions, skilled graduates and international partnerships are not luxuries. They are essential parts of a modern economy.

The same principle applies to immigration. Britain requires a migration system that is controlled and effective, but it must also recognise economic realities.

Many sectors depend on international talent, including healthcare, technology, finance, research and education. Public services themselves rely on workers from around the world.

A successful migration policy should address genuine concerns about pressure on housing, wages and infrastructure. But reducing im-

migration simply for political messaging risks damaging economic capacity.

The challenge is not choosing between openness and control. It is creating a system that attracts the skills Britain needs while ensuring communities receive the investment required to manage change.

The legacy of Starmer and Reeves may ultimately be judged as a period of stabilisation rather than transformation. They inherited a difficult economic situation and avoided repeating previous mistakes, but the larger challenge of changing Britain’s economic direction remains unfinished.

Burnham’s opportunity is to take the foundation of stability and use it to pursue a more ambitious agenda.

That means understanding that growth, fairness and openness are not competing objectives. They are connected. A country that fails to invest will struggle to grow. A country that closes itself off will lose opportunities. A country with an inefficient tax system will limit its own ambitions.

The next stage of Labour’s economic project must therefore be about confidence: confidence to reform institutions, confidence to invest in communities and confidence to explain difficult choices to voters.

Britain does not need a government that simply manages decline more effectively. It needs one that believes economic renewal is possible.

The central question for Burnham will be whether Labour can move beyond the politics of caution and embrace the politics of transformation. The opportunity exists, but it will require a willingness to take risks, make reforms and recognise that long-term prosperity cannot be achieved through stability alone.

The Price of Political Silence: Why Defence Spending Needs Honest Debate

For decades, British politics has treated public spending as a subject that demands constant scrutiny. Almost every area of government expenditure is questioned, challenged and subjected to demands for efficiency. Welfare programmes, local government budgets, public services, infrastructure projects and administrative costs are regularly examined through the language of waste, reform and restraint.

Yet one major area of state spending has increasingly escaped the same level of questioning: defence.

Britain’s defence budget occupies a unique position in political debate. While governments frequently argue that there is no money available for hospitals, schools, housing or local services, defence spending is often presented as a special category where criticism must be limited. The argument is usually straightforward: the world has become more dangerous, security threats are increasing, and therefore military spending must rise.

National security is undoubtedly one of the most important responsibilities of government. A country must maintain capable armed forces and protect its citizens from genuine threats. But recognising the importance of defence does not mean accepting that every demand for more spending automatically represents the best use of public money.

The central question facing Andy Burnham’s government will not simply be whether Britain should spend more on defence. It will be whether Britain is getting enough security, capability and value from the billions already committed to the military.

The challenge is not choosing between national security and financial responsibility. The challenge is ensuring that defence spending actually strengthens national se-

curity rather than becoming protected from the scrutiny applied to almost every other part of government. Since the late 1970s, public spending has often been viewed through a sceptical lens. Margaret Thatcher’s government established a powerful political argument that the state had become too large, inefficient and resistant to reform. This perspective shaped decades of political debate, encouraging governments of different parties to promise tighter control over public finances.

Across Westminster and much of the media, spending departments have often been portrayed as organisations that naturally seek expansion, defend outdated programmes and resist change. The solution, according to this argument, has been repeated rounds of efficiency drives, spending reviews and budget restraint.

However, defence has frequently been treated differently.

Despite having one of the largest military budgets in the world, Britain’s armed forces are often described as being underfunded or stretched beyond capacity. Calls for additional resources come regularly from defence ministers, military leaders, industry representatives, defence analysts and political figures.

The argument has become familiar: threats are rising, the armed forces are under pressure, and only increased spending can solve the problem.

This narrative has gained greater strength following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, growing tensions between China and the West, uncertainty about American commitment to European security and concerns about future conflicts.

These developments are serious. But the existence of international instability does not remove the need for careful decisions. A large

er budget does not automatically guarantee a stronger defence system. One reason defence spending receives less public scrutiny than other areas of government is that much of military planning is necessarily confidential.

Citizens can directly experience problems in healthcare, education, transport and housing. They can see overcrowded hospitals, struggling schools or failing infrastructure. Defence operates differently. Many of its activities, capabilities and assessments are hidden behind secrecy because of national security concerns. This creates a democratic challenge.

In a modern democracy, taxpayers have the right to understand how public money is being used. Yet defence policy involves information that cannot always be made public. This creates a difficult balance between protecting national security and ensuring accountability.

The military’s unique status makes this challenge even greater. Armed forces are among the most powerful institutions of the state, with specialised knowledge and capabilities that most politicians and citizens do not possess.

As a result, military assessments often carry significant authority. When senior military figures warn that additional funding is needed, political leaders and journalists frequently accept those warnings with limited challenge. Part of this is understandable. Defence decisions involve serious consequences, and no responsible government wants to appear careless about national security.

But democratic accountability requires more than trust alone. It requires questioning whether spending priorities match strategic needs and whether resources are being used effectively. The debate over defence spending often focuses on

the size of the budget rather than the effectiveness of the spending.

A larger defence budget can be valuable if it improves military capability, strengthens readiness and provides the equipment needed for modern conflicts. But simply increasing spending without addressing inefficiency can result in more money being absorbed by expensive programmes that fail to deliver.

Britain’s Ministry of Defence has faced long-standing criticism over delays, cost overruns and procurement problems. Major defence projects have frequently experienced difficulties, with equipment arriving late, exceeding budgets or becoming less relevant due to changing technology.

Modern warfare is evolving rapidly. The increasing importance of cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, drones, space technology and advanced surveillance systems demonstrates that military strength is not determined only by traditional weapons platforms. A country can spend billions on major projects and still fail to prepare for future conflicts if its strategy is outdated.

The key question is therefore not simply how much Britain spends, but whether it spends wisely. Andy Burnham has positioned himself as a politician focused on practical government and stronger accountability. That approach could provide an opportunity to rethink how Britain approaches defence spending.

A serious defence strategy should begin with clear questions.

What threats does Britain actually face? What capabilities are essential? Which programmes provide genuine security benefits? Which projects are driven more by political pressure or industrial interests than strategic necessity?

These questions are not anti-de-

fence. They are essential to maintaining an effective military.

Burnham has already indicated that transparency and accountability in major defence projects will be priorities. That is an important starting point. Cost overruns and delays do not simply represent financial waste; they can directly affect military readiness.

If equipment arrives late or resources are tied up in unsuccessful projects, the armed forces may become less capable despite receiving additional funding.

Reform should therefore focus on improving procurement, reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and ensuring that military investment reflects the realities of modern warfare. One of the most important realities facing any government is that public money is limited.

Every additional pound spent in one area represents a choice about what cannot be spent elsewhere. A significant increase in defence spending may require reductions in other public services, higher taxation or increased borrowing. That does not mean defence should be neglected. It means governments must be honest about trade-offs. Britain faces multiple forms of insecurity. Military threats are one form, but economic weakness, poor infrastructure, social inequality, climate risks and failing public services also affect national resilience.

A country with strong armed forces but weak public institutions may still struggle to protect its long-term interests. National security should therefore be understood broadly. Economic strength, technological leadership, energy independence, healthcare capacity and social stability all contribute to a nation’s ability to withstand crises. A modern security strategy cannot focus only on military hardware.

Apple distributor Redington with high FII stake set for 22%

Mumbai: Redington share price: Shares of Redington Ltd, which counts Apple Inc, Dell, HP and Microsoft as its vendors, are in a short-term momentum. The supply chain solutions provider and a distributor of technological products saw its stock rising 22% in the last three months. Rally in the shares of the technology distributor came after revenue of the firm crossed the Rs 1 lakh crore mark for the first time in the last fiscal. Revenue in the last fiscal rose 20% to Rs 1.19 lakh crore against Rs 99,561 crore in FY25. However, profit fell to Rs 1,490 crore in FY26 against Rs 1604 crore in FY25. On a quarterly basis too, the firm logged a 25.6% rise in net sales to Rs 33,213.03 crore in the March 2026 quarter against Rs 26,439.68 crore in March 2025 fiscal. According to Bloomberg estimates, the stock has a 12-month price target of Rs 328 against the last traded price of Rs 277.85. All four of the four analysts covering the stock have a ‘Buy’ rating. Sentiments around the stock of the Apple distributor also turned positive after a report said Apple now manufactures roughly 25% of its global iPhones in India. Another positive for the stock is that it recorded a high FII stake of 63.27% in the June 2026 quarter. On the other hand, DIIs owned 16.37% stake in the firm at the end of last quarter. The brokerage expects a gradual recovery in enterprise technology spending, coupled with an upcoming refresh cycle for personal computers and servers, to provide a meaningful boost to the company’s growth prospects over the coming years.

Brokerage Monarch Capital has assigned a price target of Rs 340, implying an upside of 21.8% on the stock. It expects Redington to clock a revenue/EBITDA/PAT CAGR of 15.7%/16.9%/7.3% over FY25-FY28 estimates. EBITDA margins are expected to rise gradually, led by a rising contribution from higher-margin cloud, technology solutions and services. “We value the company at 12x FY28E EPS, arriving at a Target Price of Rs 340,” said Monarch Capital.

ICICI Lombard share price: Why this stock

Mumbai: ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Ltd shares plunged 15 per cent on Thursday after the insurer’s June quarter profit after tax (PAT) and Combined Operating Ratio (CoR) fell short of analyst estimates, with brokerages saying the Q1 performance reflected industry-wide headwinds.

ICICI Lombard’s Q1 profit fell 46 per cent YoY, hit by weak underwriting performance and lower-than-expected investment income. Excluding the losses in the fire segment and additional claim reserving in lieu of the Supreme Court (SC) verdict in motor TP business, the combined ratio was at 102.3 per cent.

Following its Q1 results, ICICI Lombard shares declined 14.86 per cent to hit a low of Rs 1,544.40 apiece. With this the stock is down 17.85 per cent year-to-date. MOFSL said competitive intensity remains high in the motor OD segment, and the company is following a conservative reserving approach

in the segment after the Supreme Court judgement, which has impacted claims during the quarter. The commercial lines segment is facing heightened competition, but ICICI Lombard is well-positioned to capture profitable business within the segment, the brokerage said. “We downgrade our rating to Neutral with a target of Rs 1,960 (based on 28x FY28E EPS) as the offset on the higher COR in the quarter can only come from 1) a tariff hike in Motor TP business, 2) commission alterations in the overall Motor business, and 3) realignment of Motor OD profitability. The visibility on each of these factors is bleak,” MOFSL said.

“The fire line industry-wide fell 27.8 per cent in Q1 with ICICIIGI declining more sharply (~32 per cent) as it prioritised underwriting discipline over volume. Management attributed the fire pricing pressure to a relative soft reinsurance renewal cycle,” Nuvama said.

EPFO credits 8.25% interest to 34 crore accounts ahead of schedule

Mumbai: EPFO has credited 8.25% interest for the financial year 2025-26 to 34 crore member accounts by July 15, the first time in its history that the exercise has been completed this early. In previous years, the process stretched well into September or even November. This year, it is done. would reach accounts by mid-July through the organisation’s new automated system.

Ultraviolette unveils cashback plan as it steps up push for EV adoption

Aizawl: Electric motorcycle manufacturer Ultraviolette has rolled out a nationwide cashback programme aimed at accelerating electric vehicle (EV) adoption by offering financial incentives to customers switching from petrol-powered two-wheelers.

The company’s newly launched ‘Kill the Petrol Bill’ initiative allows buy-

ers of the Ultraviolette F77 and X-47 electric motorcycles to earn cashback based on the kilometres covered by their existing two-wheelers over the past two years. Under the scheme, customers will receive ₹1 cashback for every kilometre ridden, with total benefits capped at ₹30,000. A rider who has travelled 20,000 km during the period, for example,

will be eligible for ₹20,000 in cashback. Ultraviolette said customers can also save between ₹3,000 and ₹5,000 per month on fuel expenses after switching to its electric motorcycles.

“The rising cost of petrol has been a topic of widespread discussion for some time now, but there has been relatively little action that directly helps

consumers transition away from fuel dependency,” said Narayan Subramaniam, CEO and Co-founder of Ultraviolette. He said the programme is aimed at making EV ownership more accessible while supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of accelerating electric mobility through lower running costs, advanced technology

and a superior ownership experience.

Ultraviolette said it continues to strengthen its market position through sustained product innovation, expansion of its retail footprint, growing customer adoption and progress in international markets as it seeks to capitalise on India’s expanding electric two-wheeler market.

India’s EV market could grow 5X by FY31. These 2 auto leaders already have a head start

New Delhi: India’s electric passenger vehicle (PV) market is no longer in the early adoption phase. It’s entering a period of rapid growth. Yesterday, we discussed how three electric two-wheeler companies are winning the EV race. But the opportunity extends beyond two-wheelers. Electric four-wheelers are now emerging as the next major growth engine, supported by new launches, improving charging infrastructure, and favourable government policies. In FY26, EV sales touched 2.3 lakh units for the first time, up 85.6% year-on-year. At the same time, penetration reached 4.9% of total PV sales. This was driven by its

multi-powertrain strategy and a diversified fuel mix: Petrol (46%), CNG (27%), EV (14%), and Diesel (13%). TMPV sustained its market leadership in the Indian EV segment with a 39.0% market share. Domestic EV wholesale volumes grew by 45% year-on-year to 89,393 units. As a result, revenue grew by 63.8% year-on-year to ₹13,410 crore. The segment also reported a PBT of ₹813 crore and a profit of ₹774 crore during the year. Management stated that the EV business’s profitability is expected to strengthen, driven by falling costs.

To meet the high demand, TMPV is quickly ramping up production. The immediate goal

is to cross a 10,000-unit monthly production run rate for EVs, with further capacity increases planned for the coming months. It has announced a capex of ₹33,000-35,000 crore between FY26-30 for new products, Software-Defined Vehicles (SDVs), and advanced EV powertrains. The momentum has continued into Q1FY27, with EV registrations surging nearly 89.3% year-on-year to 82,737 units, showing that demand remains strong. The penetration also topped 12% for the first time during the quarter. The future growth runway remains structural, too. Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles expects annual EV passenger vehicle

sales to reach 10-11 lakh units by FY31, about 5x FY26 levels. This would bring EV penetration to 15-20% of the Indian passenger vehicle market. This structural shift is creating a multi-year growth opportunity for these two market leaders, leading

India’s EV transition. Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles (TMPV), part of the Tata Group, is India’s third-largest PV player (13.6% market share) and the largest EV player. It recorded its highest-ever domestic wholesale volume of 6.3 lakh units in FY26, up 14% year-on-year. This growth was nearly double the Indian PV industry average of 8%.

RIL Q1 results 2026: Jio may add 70-95 lakh subscribers; Retail to log healthy growth

Mumbai: The Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) is likely to deliver flattish profit growth for the June quarter, as strength across oil-to-chemical segment (O2C), Retail and Jio are seen partly offset by weaker upstream. Emkay Global expects RIL to report 2.8 per cent YoY drop in net profit at Rs 17,567 crore on 38.9 per cent YoY rise in sales at Rs 3,38,420 crore. Ebitda is seen rising 4.9 per cent YoY to Rs 45,013 crore while Ebitda margin is pegged at 13.3 per cent, down 431 basis points (bps) YoY or 171 bps QoQ. Emkay expects O2C Ebitda to rise 2 per cent QoQ to Rs 14,800 crore. Upstream Ebitda is seen falling 5 per cent QoQ to Rs 3,960 crore; Retail Ebitda is seen rising 1 per cent QoQ to Rs 6,990 crore. Jio’s average revenue per user (ARPU) is seen rising 1 per cent QoQ, with subscribers addition likely at 95 lakh in Q1FY27.

“Reliance Industries’ Q1 Ebitda is estimated to increase 8.9 per cent QoQ to Rs 48,100 crore (up 12 per cent YoY), supported by growth across all major segments except upstream. O2C EBITDA is expected to rise 25 per cent QoQ, driven by stronger GRMs and improved petrochemical spreads. Jio Ebitda is likely to



increase 2.4 per cent QoQ, supported by subscriber additions of 70 lakh and a marginal improvement in ARPU to Rs 215 (vs Rs 214 in 4QFY26),” ICICI Securities said. This brokerage expects retail Ebitda to grow at 7 per cent YoY to Rs 6,830 crore, with Upstream the only weak segment, with Ebitda seen declining due to lower KG-D6 gas production volumes.

Elara, which sees RIL’s Q1 profit rising 2.4 per cent to Rs 18,512 crore, said RIL consolidated Ebitda may grow 8 per cent YoY, led by an Ebitda growth of 12 per cent in digital services (telecom) and 10 per cent in re-

tail, while oil -to-chemicals Ebitda is likely to be flat YoY, and E&P Ebitda likely to drop 21 per cent. This brokerage sees RIL’s Q1 gross refining margin (GRM) at \$23 per barrel vs an estimated \$12 per barrel in Q1FY26.

Kotak Institutional Equities, meanwhile, expects adjusted net income at Rs 19,004 crore. It said the O2C segment will likely benefit from strong SEZ refinery earnings, US ethane based petchem, and weak rupee. It sees a relatively muted retail business with 12 per cent YoY revenue growth, and weak oil & gas business on declining production.

Revenue, PAT, ARPU growth in focus for Reliance’s IPO-bound arm Jio Platforms Q1 preview

Mumbai: Reliance Jio Q1 results preview: Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries (RIL) is set to announce its results for the quarter ended on June 2026 on Friday, July 17. The company will also announce its standalone earnings for the IPO-bound digital entity Jio Platforms, along with consolidated results. Reliance Jio is expected to report another steady quarter, driven by healthy subscriber additions, improving ARPU and continued momentum in its 5G fixed wireless and broadband businesses. Revenue and operating profit are likely to grow in double digits year-on-year, while investors will closely watch ARPU trends, subscriber growth, 5G expansion and Jio Platforms’ IPO roadmap. Centrum Broking is expecting Reliance Jio to clock a revenue of 34,236.9 crore, up 10.9 per cent YoY and 2.6 per cent QoQ. Ebitda came in at Rs 18,650.6 crore, up 11.7 per cent YoY and 3 per cent QoQ, while margins are seen increasing 21 bps to 54.5 per cent for the quarter. Net profit is likely to come in at Rs 7,530.9 crore, up 12.2 per cent YoY but down 2.9 per cent QoQ.

“Subscriber base is expected to increase by 7 million QoQ, while ARPU expected to grow by 1 per cent QoQ led by steady 5G FWA addition and higher number of days in the quarter. Reliance Jio has covered 90 per cent districts with 5G services and focus is on adding more 5G devices to their network. Jio is also seeing strong traction in terms of 5G FWA and fixed broadband addition,” it adds. Motilal Oswal pencils Reliance Jio’s



revenue to come in at Rs 34,200 crore, up 10.9 per cent, while Ebitda is seen at Rs 18,600 crore with margins of 54.4 per cent for the quarter. Net profit is seen at Rs 7,370 crore, up 9.8 per cent YoY with PAT margins coming in at 21.5 per cent for the quarter. It has given a Rs 505 value to RIL’s stake in Jio Platforms. “It expects 2.6 per cent QoQ revenue growth driven by continued momentum in home broadband and one extra day QoQ. Build in 1 per cent QoQ growth in blended ARPU to Rs 216 and 8.7 million and 7 million overall and wireless subscriber net adds. Jio Platforms IPO valuations and listing timelines remain the key monitorables,” it added. Reliance Jio’s EBITDA is likely to increase 2.4 per cent QoQ, supported by subscriber additions of 7 million and a marginal improvement in ARPU to Rs 215 (vs. INR 214 in 4QFY26) said Antique Stock Broking. It believes that Jio may partly offset by weaker upstream for the quarter. Reliance Jio’s Ebitda is expected to rise 3.6 per cent QoQ, driv-

en by a 1 per cent increase in ARPU to Rs 215, supported by strong subscriber growth of 7-8 million, PL Capital. Reliance Jio continue to add subscribers and it is set to deliver mid -single digit, top-line growth. Reliance Jio has introduced new plans in short validity periods of 30 days and 28 days. Cricket and gaming data packs have been introduced to rev up ARPU, said Elara Capital in its recent note. “We believe this momentum is likely to continue, driven by the 5G rollout, tariff hikes, strategic alliances, and robust cash flows. While competitive intensity has moderated due to market consolidation, challenges such as high debt levels for weaker players and regulatory obligations persist,” it added. Equirus Securities is expecting RIL to post a strong quarter with continued momentum in Jio through ARPU gains and subscriber additions. It has cited ARPU and subscriber base growth, price hikes in telecom and capex updates as the key things to watch out for. Reliance Industries’ digital arm Jio Platforms has filed its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on June 19, 2026, the day it held its 49th annual general meeting (AGM) post listing. It is a fresh-issue only IPO of up to 27 crore equity shares. Proceeds are earmarked to repay debt of Reliance Jio. Telecom players like Reliance Jio, continue to gain market share, supported by higher customer stickiness, improving financial performance, and favourable market conditions, said Axis Securities.

Rupee fall: 65 quarters of Nifty earnings since 2009 reveal

Mumbai: Elara Securities, in its latest analysis of Nifty earnings since 2009 covering 65 quarters, said rupee depreciation has supported reported sales more consistently than earnings quality. The brokerage added that the final impact on earnings depends on cost pass-through, import intensity and balance sheet exposure.

On Thursday, the domestic currency was trading 4 paise lower at 96.30 against the greenback, down for the fourth straight session. According to Elara’s strategy note, in sharp depreciation phases, defined as annual rupee weakness of more than 5 per cent, median Nifty50 sales growth rises to 14.9 per cent, aided by inflation and pricing action. Profit after tax growth, however, lags at 11.6 per cent, compared with 16.8 per cent during phases of rupee appreciation, the broking firm said. Elara said a weak rupee can flatter nominal growth, but crude prices, imported inputs, freight costs, forex debt servicing and delayed pass-through absorb part of the benefit before it reaches profit after tax. It said that



in past sharp-depreciation phases, energy, consumer staples and financials showed better PAT conversion, while IT retained top-line translation support but PAT lagged sales.

“The Nifty forex sensitivity analysis shows weak INR beneficiaries are not simply the highest exporters, but companies where currency gains flow through P&L after hedges, imported cost, and FX liabilities. We see two set of beneficiaries: exports-led beneficiaries: pharma, CDMO, IT services, textiles, upstream & refiners; realization- and pricing-led beneficiaries: steel, aluminium, and automobile,” it said. It said the ongoing rupee depreciation

cycle may not replicate the earlier trend exactly. “The US-Iran truce and Brent below \$75/bbl reduce probability of an extreme cost shock, but two consecutive years of above-trend rupee depreciation means restocking at higher landed cost can still pressure Q1-Q2FY27 margin,” it said. Elara also sees realisation- and pricing-led benefits for companies whose revenues are derived in the domestic market but whose prices track global and landed cost, as a weaker rupee lifts realisation to offset higher input cost.

These include steel, aluminium and automobile companies. The brokerage added that consumer discretionary, healthcare and materials may see sharper slippages, reflecting either imported-cost pressure, weak pass-through or sector-specific earnings headwinds. Diagnostics, paints, cement, FMCG and luggage are among the sectors where meaningful imported inputs and limited immediate pass-through can lead to margin compression, the brokerage said.

US launches fresh strikes on Iran as Trump warns Tehran it ‘better behave’

Tehran: The US said it had launched a fresh wave of strikes against Iran on Wednesday as President Donald Trump warned Tehran it “better behave”.

The US military said “Iranian military capabilities used to threaten vessels” moving through the Strait of Hormuz had been targeted. Air defences also sounded in the capital Tehran, according to state media.

Iran meanwhile said it had struck US military targets in the region, including in Bahrain and Kuwait, as a fifth day of renewed hostilities strained their preliminary deal to end the war.

Iran’s top negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, told state media Tehran had “no reason” to abide by the deal if it did not benefit from it.

Trump had threatened late on Tuesday to attack bridges and power plants should Iran not return to talks next week.

Asked by reporters late

on Wednesday whether he would give a deadline before doing so, he responded: “I don’t like giving deadlines, but they pretty much know, they know the story... they better behave.”

He later told delegates at a defence summit that Iran was “not happy right now”.

“They want to settle so badly. They don’t like what we’re doing,” he said. “We’ll find out whether we want to settle with them or if we just finish it off.” A previous threat by Trump in April to bomb Iran’s civilian infrastructure drew condemnation at the time from UN human rights chief Volker Türk, who said it would be a war crime.

Despite the renewed fighting, Trump welcomed what he saw as a potential olive branch from Tehran in freeing an American detainee that the US president said had been “wrongfully detained” in December 2024.

“She is now safely out-



side of Iran, and in good condition,” Trump wrote on Wednesday evening on his Truth Social social media platform. “The United States of America appreciates this gesture of Goodwill by Iran!”

The woman, Dena Karari, was on her way back to the US, according to her attorney, Jared Genser, in a post on X. The latest US strikes marked the second wave its military said it had carried out during daylight hours

on Wednesday. It said it had “further degraded Iran’s ability to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz” earlier in the day, and that it had also fired on a ship attempting to violate its renewed blockade of Iran’s

ports. A 90-minute wave targeted Iran’s coastal defences and cruise missile storage and launch sites on Greater Tunb Island, US Central Command (Centcom) added. At 21:00 ET (01:00 GMT) on Wednesday, Centcom

said the second wave of US attacks had been completed. Its statement said the US had hit Iranian “command centers, air defense sites, missile and drone capabilities, and coastal surveillance facilities”, including in Bandar Abbas, an Iranian city on the Strait of Hormuz.

In addition to the air defences sounding in Tehran, state media reported that in Ahvaz, near the head of the Gulf, a hospital was evacuated due to nearby missile strikes. In response to the US strikes, Iran said it had targeted US army communication systems and storage facilities in Jordan using drones, state media reported. Jordanian state media reported that its military had intercepted eight drones and that the attack led to no injuries or material damage. Centcom also said it had redirected two commercial vessels since reimposing its blockade on Iranian ports on Tuesday evening, which

stops vessels from transiting to and from Iranian ports and coastal areas.

The blockade had previously been lifted as part of a deal that was struck by the two countries last month - known as a memorandum of understanding - that aimed to end the months-long conflict. However, a dispute over the strait has become a key point of contention.

In response to the renewal of the US blockade, Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) warned the US that it should “expect the closure of other oil and gas export routes that serve the interests of the United States and its allies”. It did not elaborate on which routes could be affected.

Ongoing US-Iran hostilities have underscored the strategic importance of the Strait to the global economy, with a sharp rise in oil prices triggered by tanker traffic virtually stalling through the key shipping lane.

Rocked by string of blackouts, Cubans’ ability to endure reaches a limit

Cuba, Havana: Between the first and second nationwide blackouts that Cuba suffered in July, I was in line behind two psychologists wearing white medical coats and openly discussing their patients.

“I don’t worry about the people who say they are stressed out,” one said to the other psychologist in the line to buy food that’s trucked in weekly from the countryside. “It’s the people who say they are fine. There is something really the matter with them.”

Cuba’s energy grid failed again on Tuesday, for a third time this month, plunging nearly 10 million Cubans into darkness and further uncertainty. Anxiety over the future is hitting an all time high here.

As the communist-run island’s economy unravels and the Trump administration piles on with ever punishing sanctions, the Cuban revolution would seem to be drawing its final breath.

But if there is anything I have learned in nearly 15 years of living in Havana it is how much Cubans can endure and how effective the government is at maintaining control. Never easy, life for most Cubans has become excruciatingly hard. Power, water and fuel are increasingly precious luxuries which you are lucky to have any of these days and positively greedy to expect to have all three at the same time.

After the second nationwide blackout on Friday, my neighborhood in Havana went 36 hours without power. Finally, at 4 a.m. local time on Sunday, I was awakened by lights from the house next door which were lit up like



Christmas-eve. I could see my neighbors in the sudden illumination rushing around in the middle of the night doing all the washing and cooking and charging they could with the precious few hours of electricity. The next morning, once again in a blackout, I chatted with my neighbor Jorge, who is helping me and several people on our block turn our small patches of grass in front of our homes into vegetable gardens to comply with a quixotic government mandate for people to grow their own food.

He was overjoyed with our brief return to the 20th century. The uncertainty is playing tricks with all our minds. No one knows when the power will go off and for how long. Sometimes the electricity comes back after an all-day blackout but then in a fleeting few minutes it clicks off again, and the whole neighborhood lets out a collective, audible groan. Everyone I know seems exhausted.

The government here maintains a WhatsApp channel

to update residents on exactly how long they have been without power. It is no longer uncommon to see blackouts that stretch past 30 hours. If you get electricity for even a few minutes, the count resets to zero. Realizing they are being had, Cubans respond to their government on the chat with emojis of excrement or the US flag.

Some have taken to banging pots and pans late at night, but there are still no organized protests in a country where the government regards dissent as thinly veiled treason.

Increasingly Cubans realize they are living a climactic moment in their island’s roller coaster history, and there may be more jolts to come.

Each morning on Cuban state TV, a presenter who clearly has the worst job on the island, is tasked with forecasting the daily power deficit in the same way the local news in other countries reports the weather or traffic. With the hotter summer months now upon Cubans and more energy required to counter those

scorching temperatures, that shortfall is worsening. “The solutions for Cuba’s energy crisis now can longer come from within Cuba, they have to come from outside,” Jorge Piñon, a senior energy researcher with the University of Texas in Austin, told CNN.

Beyond the blockade the Trump administration has placed on oil shipments, Cuba’s energy sector is crippled by a lack of state investment in its antiquated power plants over several decades to which there’s no easy fix, according to Piñon.

“Cuba produces enough oil on its own,” Piñon said. “But at any moment, half of the thermoelectric plants are down for maintenance.” There is no sign that help is on the way. The US seizure of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro cost Cuba a key ally with the largest oil reserves in the world. Russia is increasingly embroiled in its war with Ukraine and not able to send more aid to an island that already owes their former Cold War patron billions of dol-

lar. The Trump administration says the pressure campaign is designed to hit high-ranking government officials, not regular Cubans.

But there is little sign those at the top are being forced to tighten their belts.

In a July interview with USA Today, Raul Guillermo Rodriguez Castro, the grandson and chief of security of former Cuban President Raul Castro, showed off a gold chain, luxury brands and access to a Jet Set life unimaginable to the majority of Cubans. Castro, who has been identified by Cuba as the island’s interlocutor in ongoing talks with the Trump administration despite not holding a high-ranking position in government, lamented that most Cubans do not share the perks that come with his lineage.

Cubans I know were scandalized by the brazen remarks at a time when their already tenuous standard of living is plummeting.

It’s like they don’t know we live, how our salaries every day are closer to being worthless,” a Cuban friend named Homero told me recently over lunch. Conscious of how little Homero made in his state job, I invited him to the simplest restaurant I could think of.

But as we looked at our menus, Homero let out a loud sigh, and I realized how badly I had failed to put him at ease. Every plate of food on the menu, he told me, costs more than he now earned each month. Mexico, so far, is heeding Trump administration threats to not dispatch any oil shipments out of fear of US economic sanctions.

Trump Announces Development on Truth Social



Washington: US President Donald Trump announced on Wednesday that Iran has released an American woman who had been wrongfully detained in the country since December 2024. While initially withholding her identity and details surrounding her release, Trump expressed appreciation to Iran for what he described as a goodwill gesture.

Sharing the news on his Truth Social platform, Trump wrote, “Iran has allowed an American citizen to leave the country. She was wrongfully detained

in December 2024 during the tenure of ‘Sleepy Joe Biden.’ She is now safely out of Iran and is doing well. The United States appreciates this goodwill gesture by Iran.”

According to a CNN report, following the President’s Truth Social post, the White House and the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs were contacted for details regarding the woman’s identity. Her lawyer later identified her as Dina Karari.

International human rights lawyer Jared Genser wrote

on X, “I am delighted and relieved to announce that my client and American citizen Dina Karari is now free. She had been trapped in Iran since December 2024 on false allegations.” He thanked President Trump for his efforts and said his client is safe and on her way back to the United States.

A US official said that, as of last month, the US government was monitoring the cases of at least six American citizens detained in Iran. Of them, two had been officially designated as wrongfully detained by the United States.

Heating oil customers to get up to £350 compensation

UK: Heating oil customers whose deliveries were cancelled when the war in the Middle East caused a price surge are to receive compensation of up to £350 each following an investigation by the UK competition watchdog.

As the crisis unfolded, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said it was investigating heating oil suppliers after complaints that existing orders were being scrapped, with customers offered new deliveries at a significantly higher price.

In a report published on Wednesday the CMA will say that about 1,700 customers were affected by these possible breaches of contract. While they had received refunds for their original order, many had to agree to pay a lot more or go

without fuel.

The Iran war caused an energy price shock and at its peak, in April, heating oil jumped 92% to 123p a litre. Amid the turmoil the CMA said that some people may have paid between £150 and £350 more for their heating oil.

After being contacted by the watchdog, a number of suppliers have agreed to compensate those affected. Those who paid more will receive a payment covering the difference, while those who did not buy replacement oil will have their original orders honoured at the agreed price.

The CMA’s chief executive, Sarah Cardell, said 1,700 customers had been “left in limbo” after their orders were cancelled. “While it’s encouraging that some suppliers have agreed

to compensate customers, a number of firms still have not,” she said. “We’ll be pressing them to do so and are preparing to take enforcement action if they don’t.”

The regulator is still in talks with the holdout suppliers, adding that it is prepared to take court-based enforcement action against companies that fail to compensate customers voluntarily. About 1.5m households in the UK, mostly in rural areas that are not connected to the mains gas network, rely on heating oil (paraffin, also known as kerosene) to warm their homes, cook food and provide hot water. Unlike mains gas and electricity, the oil is typically bought in large volumes, meaning households can face bills of £500 or more at a time.

Seven Britons among those killed in Spain wildfires

Spain: Seven Britons were among those killed in the deadly wildfires in southern Spain, authorities have confirmed.

Twelve of the 13 victims were foreign nationals, Spanish authorities said on Tuesday after completing post-mortem examinations, according to local media and Agence France Presse (AFP).

The wildfires, which tore through Spain’s Almeria

province on Thursday, have become one of the country’s deadliest.

A spokesperson for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office previously said it was “supporting British nationals affected and their families and remain in close contact with the Spanish authorities”. In a statement, officials said seven of the victims were from the United Kingdom, three from Belgium, one from

France and another from the United States, as cited by AFP and local media.

“The 13 people who died are eight women and five men, all adults,” the public body responsible for identifying the victims added. Among the British nationals who died were couple Pete and Fran Gillam, who lived in Bédar, the village that bore the brunt of the wildfires. Their deaths were confirmed by their family.

Posting on Facebook, their daughter Danielle Gillam-Kirton, from Sheffield, said the family were “heartbroken to share that we have received confirmation from the police that Mum and Dad did not survive the fire”.

Nearly 1,500 people were evacuated from Almeria province as firefighters battled the flames.

British man Malcolm Timbrell, 70, who lives in the village of Bédar and sur-

vived the fires, spoke to the BBC outside his destroyed home high on the hillside.

His wife and friends are believed to be among those killed during the wildfires.

Timbrell described the moment he was separated from the group, and attempted to take refuge in some abandoned cars: “Of the six cars, four of them instantly combusted and as each one started to go, I moved back one car.

Harnessing Gardening to Improve Your Mental Abilities

People who are enthusiastic about gardening frequently indicate that it transforms into more than merely a hobby; it becomes a valuable avenue for improving both mental and physical health.

Gardening is an outstanding form of exercise and plays a significant role in reducing stress and depression. Additionally, this activity provides considerable cognitive engagement, highlighting yet another key benefit of participating in this pursuit.

Staying Sharp details that gardening can help to decrease depression and sadness in people, and these benefits to one's mental health that come from gardening are well documented. However, it is important to note that these issues that negatively

impact one's mental health can also cause a decline in one's cognitive skills. Any activity that can counter the loss of cognitive skills is a valuable one in terms of boosting one's brain power.

While it is not entirely clear why gardening helps brain stimulation so much, some experts believe that, in part, the repetitive actions that come from some gardening tasks like weeding help the brain by developing a sense of control that might be missing elsewhere in one's life. Gardening can also help to alleviate issues of brain fatigue that come from the hectic nature of everybody's everyday lives, and this type of activity can help to clear people's minds and boost their problem-solving and reasoning abilities.

Earth Easy notes that researchers have found signs that gardening can help



tion Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Gardening helps to develop organizational and spatial skills and to be successful in gardening, you also have to pay

attention to scheduling and avoid procrastination, all of which engage the brain in various ways. Gardening can boost feelings of success and purpose in people of all ages, which can boost one's brain strength.

ILS Rehabilitation Solutions notes that gardening also can help patients with brain injuries, a connection that further emphasizes the strong connection between brain health and gardening. It is common to use pesticides and herbicides while gardening, but some believe that there are reasons to pause on this front.

Many gardeners are growing increasingly concerned about the impact that herbicides and other similar substances have on one's health. Toxics Action Center notes that there have been multiple documented issues with

herbicides when it comes to headaches, dizziness, and far more serious medical issues, and this leaves a fair number of gardeners committed to the idea that they don't use herbicides at all just to be safe. Here are some useful tips on the basic do's and don'ts of home gardening.

There is no shortage of reasons to take up gardening as a hobby, as it provides wonderful opportunities for physical activity and improvements to one's mental health. In addition, however, gardening also provides solid brain stimulation that can improve brain function in gardeners of all ages.

Few other activities can benefit a person in so many ways and with the variety of gardening styles available, there is a type of garden to fit every age and ability.

A makeup guide designed to assist you in preventing lipstick from bleeding



Lock everything in place Once your lipstick is applied, lightly place a tissue over your lips and dust translucent setting powder over the tissue using a fluffy makeup brush. This technique helps set the lipstick without excessively dulling the colour.

Another effective method is to use a makeup setting spray after completing your entire makeup look. While setting sprays primarily secure your overall makeup, they can also help your lip colour last longer by reducing product movement.

A well-applied lipstick can significantly enhance your appearance; however, lipstick bleeding can swiftly spoil even the most meticulously applied makeup.

Lipstick bleeding happens when the color extends beyond the natural lip line, resulting in an untidy look. This problem is particularly prevalent with creamy, glossy, or intensely pigmented lipsticks and may become increasingly apparent as the day progresses.

Fortunately, by utilizing appropriate preparation, products, and application methods, you can maintain your lipstick's fresh and defined look for hours. Start with smooth, hydrated lips

Clean up the edges For a polished finish, use a small concealer brush with a tiny amount of concealer to clean around the edges of your lips. This not only sharpens the lip line but also creates an additional barrier that helps prevent lipstick from feathering.

You can also apply a small amount of translucent powder around the outer lip line to absorb excess oils throughout the day, further minimising the chances of bleeding.

Be mindful throughout the day Even the best lipstick application may require minor touch-ups after eating or drinking. Instead of repeatedly layering more lipstick, gently blot away any uneven colour before reapplying a thin coat. Carry your lip liner with you for quick touch-ups, as redefining the edges is often more effective than adding excess lipstick.

Not all lipsticks perform the same. Creamy and glossy formulas are more likely to migrate beyond the lip line, while matte and long-wear formulas generally stay in place better. If you frequently experience lipstick bleeding, consider using transfer-resistant or long-lasting lipsticks.

That doesn't mean you have to avoid glossy lips altogether. If you prefer a glossy finish, apply a matte lipstick first, then add gloss only to the centre of your lips, not all the way to the edges. This minimises movement while still giving your lips a fuller appearance.

Apply lipstick with precision Instead of swiping lipstick directly from the tube, consider using a lip brush. A lip brush allows for more precise application, especially around the edges of the lips, reducing the risk of over-application.

Apply thin layers rather than one thick coat. After the first layer, blot your lips with a tissue and apply a second layer. Building up the colour gradually helps improve durability and keeps the lipstick from becoming too thick or slippery.

Elevate tank tops to achieve a chic appearance rather than resembling basic vests

Tank tops need not resemble ordinary vests. Here are some suggestions on how to pair them with trousers, blazers, skirts, and accessories to create stylish summer ensembles.

Tank tops have now evolved beyond their role as mere layering essentials. Previously limited to casual wear at home or as undergarments, they have transformed into a key component of a summer wardrobe.

A quick glance at Instagram or Pinterest reveals their widespread popularity; they are paired with linen trousers, maxi skirts, oversized shirts, tailored shorts, and even blazers. The difference between a tank top that looks like an innerwear vest and one that feels fashion-forward has very little to do with the top itself. It's all about styling. The right bottoms, accessories and layers can instantly elevate even the simplest ribbed tank. Whether you're dressing for brunch, work, travel or a casual coffee run, here's how I make tank tops feel like a complete outfit instead of an afterthought.

Tank tops for women

1. Women Gym Tank Top: A relaxed tank like this is perfect for athleisure-inspired outfits. Instead of pairing it with leggings alone, I like balancing its sporty vibe with wide-leg cargo trousers or relaxed denim. The breathable viscose fabric also makes it ideal for hot summer days when comfort comes first. Style tip: Throw an oversized white shirt over it, add chunky sneakers and a crossbody bag for an effortless airport-ready look.
2. Jockey Super Combed Cotton Rib Tank Top: A classic ribbed tank is one

of those wardrobe basics you'll wear repeatedly. The fitted silhouette makes it ideal for tucking into high-waisted jeans, trousers or midi skirts. Because it's simple, it gives you endless styling opportunities depending on the accessories you choose. Style tip: Add gold hoops, layered necklaces and tailored linen trousers to make it feel polished rather than basic.

3. Toochki Cotton Crop Tank Tops: Cropped tanks work best when the rest of the outfit feels slightly oversized. High-waisted wide-leg jeans, loose linen trousers or oversized shirts help balance the shorter silhouette while creating a relaxed, street-style look that's perfect for summer. Style tip: Layer an open striped shirt over the tank and finish with sandals and a canvas tote.
4. Do It All High-Neck Tank: High-neck tanks naturally look more elevated because they offer cleaner lines and a structured neckline. The mesh back panel and sweat-wicking fabric make this one practical enough for active days while still looking stylish enough for casual outings. Style tip: Pair with tailored shorts, sleek sunglasses and white trainers for a sporty yet polished outfit.
5. MIXFIT Premium Cotton Tank Top: If minimal dressing is your style, this cotton tank is a great starting point. Its clean silhouette works beautifully with neutral separates and timeless accessories. Think of it as a blank canvas that lets statement trousers, handbags or jewellery shine. Style tip: Wear it with beige linen trousers, leather sandals and a woven handbag for effortless summer dressing.



6. TRASA Ribbed Racerback Tank Top: The racerback silhouette instantly gives any outfit a more contemporary feel. It hugs the body without feeling restrictive, making it ideal for layering under oversized blazers, lightweight jackets or open shirts. It transitions easily from daytime errands to evening plans with just a few accessory changes. Style tip: Pair with straight-leg jeans, an oversized blazer and loafers for an elevated smart-casual outfit. Styling tricks that instantly elevate a tank top

Choose high-waisted trousers or jeans instead of low-rise bottoms to create a more balanced silhouette. Layer an oversized linen or cotton shirt over your tank for effortless dimension. Add a structured blazer to instantly make a simple tank office-appropriate. Tuck your tank into wide-leg trousers or tailored shorts rather than basic leggings. Layer delicate gold chains or statement earrings to draw

attention upward. Finish with structured handbags instead of oversized totes to make the outfit feel intentional.

Play with textures by pairing ribbed tanks with linen, satin or denim.

Stick to neutral colours if you want a timeless, quiet luxury aesthetic.

The biggest mistake people make

The reason tank tops sometimes resemble innerwear isn't because of the top, it's because everything else feels too casual. Pairing them with old leggings, flip-flops and minimal styling often makes the outfit look unfinished.

Instead, think of a tank top as you would a crisp white T-shirt. It deserves thoughtfully chosen trousers, interesting accessories and polished footwear. Even one elevated piece: a blazer, statement necklace or tailored pants; can completely change the overall look. Simple doesn't have to mean boring. In fact, some of the most stylish summer outfits start with nothing more than a well-fitted tank top.

Maintaining fresh skin during the humid monsoon season requires specific care

The monsoon season introduces humidity that can adversely affect your skin. Therefore, here are some recommendations for maintaining fresh skin during the humid conditions of the monsoon.

The rainy season offers a much-needed respite from the intense summer heat; however, it also presents distinct challenges for individuals with oily skin. The heightened humidity levels encourage the sebaceous glands to generate surplus oil, resulting in a greasy appearance and an increased susceptibility to acne, blackheads, and clogged pores.

With these simple yet effective makeup tips, you can enjoy a polished, professional-looking lipstick application that stays exactly where it belongs. Whether you're wearing a bold red for a special occasion or a subtle nude for everyday elegance, following these steps will help you achieve clean, flawless lips with confidence.

1. Cleanse your face twice

- a day
- A gentle cleanser is the foundation of any skincare routine for oily skin. During the rainy season, dirt, sweat, and excess oil accumulate quickly on your skin. Washing your face twice daily with a mild, sulfate-free foaming cleanser helps remove impurities without stripping away the skin's natural moisture. Avoid washing your face too often, as excessive cleansing can trigger the skin to produce even more oil. If your face feels greasy during the day, use oil-absorbing blotting papers instead of washing it repeatedly.
2. Never skip a toner
- Many people overlook toner, but it plays an important role in balancing oily skin. An alcohol-free toner containing ingredients like witch hazel, niacinamide, or green tea extract helps minimise the appearance of pores, remove leftover impurities, and regulate excess sebum production. Using toner after cleansing also prepares the skin to absorb

sorb moisturisers and serums more effectively.

3. Moisturise every day
- One of the biggest misconceptions is that oily skin doesn't need moisturiser. In reality, skipping moisturiser can cause the skin to become dehydrated, prompting it to produce even more oil. Choose a lightweight, oil-free, non-comedogenic gel moisturiser that hydrates without leaving a greasy residue. Ingredients such as hyaluronic acid and aloe vera provide hydration while keeping the skin fresh and comfortable.
4. Wear sunscreen even on cloudy days
- Cloudy skies do not block harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. UV exposure can still damage the skin, leading to premature ageing, pigmentation, and uneven skin tone. Opt for a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher, a matte finish, and specifically formulated for oily skin. Gel-based or water-based sunscreens are ideal during the rainy season as they feel light and do not

clog pores.

5. Exfoliate once or twice a week
- Dead skin cells, combined with excess oil, can block pores and cause acne. Gentle exfoliation once or twice a week helps remove this build-up and promotes smoother, clearer skin. Avoid harsh scrubs with large abrasive particles, as they can irritate the skin and worsen inflammation. Instead, choose mild chemical exfoliants containing salicylic acid or glycolic acid, which penetrate deep into pores and dissolve excess oil effectively.
6. Use clay masks weekly
- Clay masks are especially beneficial for oily skin during humid weather. Ingredients like kaolin clay and bentonite clay absorb excess oil, draw out impurities, and leave the skin feeling refreshed. Using a clay mask once a week helps control shine and minimises the risk of clogged pores without over-drying the skin.
7. Maintain good hygiene
- The rainy season increases exposure to bacteria and pol-

lutants that can aggravate oily skin. Avoid touching your face frequently, clean your mobile phone regularly, and change pillowcases every few days to prevent the transfer of dirt and oil. If you wear makeup, always remove it before bedtime with a gentle makeup remover or micellar water, then follow with your regular cleanser. Sleeping with makeup on can clog pores and trigger breakouts.

8. Stay hydrated and eat a balanced diet
- Healthy skin starts from within. Drinking plenty of water helps maintain skin hydration and supports its natural detoxification process. Include fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and antioxidant-rich foods in your diet. Limiting sugary snacks, fried foods, and excessive dairy may also help reduce acne flare-ups in some individuals. Green tea, nuts, and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids can contribute to healthier skin by reducing inflammation.

ENTERTAINMENT

Ram Kapoor discusses wife Gautami's past

Mumbai: Popular television star Ram Kapoor, who is currently seen as a contestant in the reality show “Lock Upp: Sach Ya Sazaa”, has opened up about his love story with wife Gautami Kapoor. The actor also spoke candidly about Gautami’s first marriage, revealing that she was unhappy and lacked family support when she decided to end it.

“Gautami and I are so strong as a couple. When a boyfriend or crush comes into your life, you put your best foot forward, right? I put my worst foot forward. I told her all my worst things, but she started liking me despite that,” Ram was seen telling co-contestants Akanksha Chamola and Pamala Serena. He went on to share that he realised Gautami, whom he met on the sets of “Ghar Ek Mandir” in 2000, was not happy in her first marriage.

“Slowly, I got to know she was not happy in her first marriage, and there was a two-and-a-half-year marriage, and in that time they lived apart. But then, our friendship had grown a lot. I started taking interest.... I used to ask questions and she gave me answers.” “I found out she wanted to end the marriage. She wasn’t getting support from her family. They were saying, ‘Absolutely not.’” Gautami too had feelings for Ram. “Long story short, somehow she was feeling the same about me and she too was scared to say it to me. Gautami has no regrets about what happened to her. Gautami’s first husband is a good guy. He did nothing wrong.”



Hyderabad : Actor Nani is busy with the shoot of The Paradise. There are a lot of speculations surrounding the film because of the delay in the shoot. The film missed two deadlines of release dates and the makers are yet to announce the new release plan. The budget went overboard after the number of working days were increased. A rumor started today that popular producer and distributor Dil Raju has acquired the theatrical rights of The Paradise for

announce the new release plan. The budget went overboard after the number of working days were increased. A rumor started today that popular producer and distributor Dil Raju has acquired the theatrical rights of The Paradise for

a hefty price of Rs 110 crores.

This happens to be the biggest joke of the day. Though Nani has been consistently delivering decent films, his theatrical market hasn’t seen a huge rise. His theatrical market has been near Rs 40-50 crores since years. At this time, no distributor would risk to acquire the theatrical rights for Rs 110 crores. Soon after the speculation started, the producers of The Paradise issued a statement. “We request everyone not to believe the rumours being circulated about the distribution rights of #TheParadise. Any official update will be communicated only through our official handles “, said Sudhakar Cherukuri, the producer of The Paradise. Putting an end to all speculations.

Prabhas drenched in blood in striking new Fauzi poster; worldwide release set for December 3

Hyderabad : Director Hanu Raghavapudi has officially announced the theatrical release date of his much-awaited multilingual film Fauzi. Starring Prabhas in the lead, the period war drama will release in cinemas worldwide on December 3. Produced by Y Ravi Shankar and Naveen Yemeni of Mythri Movie Makers, Fauzi has been in production for several years and is one of Prabhas’ most anticipated upcoming films.

Announcing the release date, Hanu Raghavapudi described Fauzi as “a story rooted in courage, honour and freedom,” hinting at an emotional period drama set against the backdrop of India’s colonial era. Earlier promotional material described the film as “the bravest tale of a soldier

from the hidden chapters of our history,” suggesting that it will blend action, patriotism and historical fiction. Industry buzz also indicates that Prabhas plays a morally complex spy, although the makers are yet to officially reveal details about his character.

In Fauzi, Prabhas plays a larger-than-life soldier, and I wanted his character to reflect the virtues of Arjuna’s skill, Karna’s sacrifice, and Ekalavya’s devotion,” director Hanu Raghavapudi explained. The film is slated for release in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Bengali. Production is currently in its final phase. Prabhas has already completed filming his talkie portions, while a few major action sequences remain to be shot before the film



wraps production. Fauzi features a diverse ensemble cast led by Prabhas and marks the big-screen debut of social media personality Emanvi Ismail. Veteran actors Mithun Chakraborty, Anupam Kher and Jaya Prada also play pivotal roles. The film’s

music has been composed by Vishal Chandrasekhar, who previously collaborated with Hanu Raghavapudi on the acclaimed Sita Ramam. Meanwhile, Prabhas was last seen in The Raja Saab. He also has Spirit and Kalki 2 in his upcoming slate.

Hrithik Roshan reminisces as zindagi na milegi dobara hits the 15-year milestone

Mumbai : Zindagi Na Milegi Dobra (ZNMD), starring Hrithik Roshan, Abhay Deol, and Farhan Akhtar, was released in theatres on July 15, 2011. As the film completed 15 years, the actors took a trip down memory lane and shared posts looking back at memories from the film’s shoot. Hrithik Roshan penned a heartfelt note recalling how his character Arjun allowed him to channel a conundrum he was dealing with in real life. He also thanked director Zoya Akhtar, as well as his co-stars, and said that the team’s biggest achievement was having fun while making a film that continues to inspire audiences.

“15 years of Zindagi Na Milegi Dobra. A film and a journey that continues to amaze me. Arjun was a character who allowed me to channel on screen a conundrum I was dealing with in real life,” wrote Hrithik. He then praised Zoya Akhtar for letting the actor in him run free while shooting for the film. “As we got closer to shooting, across many conversations with Zoya, I found a director and collaborator who let the actor in me run free. The confidence she had in her process was unshakable, and it allowed her to liberate all of us artists on set. We were a bunch of fools having fun, and in hindsight,



creating something meaningful in the process. Thank you, Zo, for allowing us to be fools,” he wrote.

“Today, when I look back at the journey of filming, just as Arjun found freedom in embracing his true self, so did I.

It was a deeply transformative and cathartic experience. One that perhaps cannot be replicated without the right

people around. Here is to my precious co-stars Abhay, Farhan, Katrina, Kalki, and to the incredible team of Ritesh, Zoya, Reema, Javed uncle, Carlos, Shankar Ehsaan Loy, Bosco Caesar, Vaibhavi & the brilliant technical team, and crew. Together, we created a film that continues to speak to audiences even 15 years later,” wrote Hrithik. Lastly, he mentioned that the entire team had so much fun while shooting for the film. “We did this. And most importantly, we had fun while doing it! Thank you, universe, for the opportunity to be a part of this magical film.”

Meanwhile, there may be some good news for Zindagi

Na Milegi Dobra fans! Earlier this year, a Mid-Day report claimed that filmmaker Zoya Akhtar has locked the first draft of the sequel—Zindagi Na Milegi Dobra 2. According to the report, the film is expected to reunite the original trio—Hrithik Roshan, Farhan Akhtar, and Abhay Deol—with the story following their characters in their 40s as they navigate mid-life, changing friendships, and unfinished dreams. Discussions with the three actors are reportedly underway, although the project will depend on their schedules. If all goes as planned, filming is expected to begin later this year after Zoya wraps up Dahaad 2.

Shehnaaz Gill sets the record straight on her bond with co-star Raghav Juyal

Mumbai : Shehnaaz Gill has reacted to dating rumours linking her to Raghav Juyal. The actor urged fans to support Raghav’s upcoming film, calling him one of her closest friends.



Speaking to Pinkvilla, Shehnaaz was asked about the speculation surrounding her and Raghav. She politely shut down the conversation before it could go further. “No personal questions, please,” Shehnaaz said, before steering the conversation towards Raghav’s upcoming film Bhai Tera Star Hai. Rather than reacting to the dating rumours, the Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan actor chose to promote Raghav’s next release. “Mere dost ki film aa rahi hai, Bhai Tera Star Hai, aap please usko support karo” (My friend’s film is coming, please support him). Shehnaaz also made it clear how she sees Raghav,

describing him as a close friend and expressing hope that audiences turn up for his film. “Woh mera bahut acha dost hai, uski film chalni boht zaroori hai” (He is my very good friend. It is important for his film to work).

She went on to praise Raghav’s journey, saying he had earned his place in the industry through hard work rather than family connections. “As a hero, as a main lead woh pehli baar aa raha hai toh logon ko usko support karna boht

at Raghav’s birthday celebration last week. Another viral video also allegedly showed Shehnaaz sitting on his lap as they got into a car and drove away. The two previously worked together in Salman Khan’s Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan. During the film’s promotions in 2023, Salman jokingly commented on their equation, further fuelling the rumours. “I saw a chemistry being built between two people on set. But nothing happened, at least from one person’s end. The other one was eager,” he had said. Raghav later shut down the speculation, saying Salman had only been joking. He also denied being in a relationship with Shehnaaz. “Shehnaaz and I have acted in the film together, that’s it. It is natural for people to ask questions about your co-actors, but no, we are not dating.

Post Malone locked for world cup 2026 closing performance

New York : American singer and rapper Post Malone is all set to headline the closing ceremony of the FIFA World Cup 2026, setting the stage for a landmark performance at the New Jersey Stadium on Sunday, July 19. As announced by FIFA, the closing ceremony will begin 90 minutes before the game, fusing world-class entertainment and football together.

Speaking on Post Malone’s headline performance, FIFA President Gianni Infantino said they are thrilled to have so many stars taking to the pitch, from both the football and entertainment worlds. “At a time when sport, culture and global attention converge, Post Malone will deliver a performance designed to celebrate the tournament’s journey and ignite the atmosphere before the world’s attention turns to the two finalists. We are thrilled to have so many stars taking to the pitch, from both the football and entertainment worlds. The closing ceremony will set the tone for a historic FIFA World Cup final, uniting the passion of 48 teams, 16 host cities and millions of fans on one unforgettable stage,” he said, as per the official

FIFA website. FIFA has unveiled a star-studded lineup of performers at the FIFA World Cup closing ceremony. FIFA announced that Tom Cruise, Laura Pausini, Nicole Scherzinger, Robbie Williams, and internet streamer IShowSpeed will be among the names that will perform as part of the World Cup closing ceremony.

FIFA has also confirmed that Grammy and Oscar-winning singer Jennifer Hudson will perform the US national anthem. The FIFA World Cup 2026 final halftime show will be led by the likes of Justin Bieber, Shakira, Madonna, and popular



K-pop band BTS. The halftime show will also feature performances and appearances by Burna Boy, renowned conductor Gustavo Dudamel, and the PS22 Chorus featuring Coldplay. Lionel Messi-led Argentina will take on England in the FIFA World Cup 2026 semi-final in Atlanta on Wednesday (local time). The winner of the encounter will meet Spain in the final, after La Roja sealed their berth with a 2-0 triumph over France.

Paresh Rawal opens up about Hera Pheri 3 controversy, says he will still return to the film

Mumbai : The journey of Hera Pheri 3 has been anything but smooth. One of the biggest setbacks came in 2025 when Paresh Rawal unexpectedly announced that he was stepping away from the much-awaited comedy. His exit triggered a legal battle after Akshay Kumar, who is also backing the film as a producer, served him with a ₹25 crore legal notice, alleging breach of contract. The controversy dominated headlines for months before the two sides eventually resolved, paving the way for Paresh’s return to the project. Despite that, Hera Pheri 3 is still facing roadblocks, with the franchise’s ownership rights remaining tied up in legal disputes. Now, Paresh has broken his silence on the entire episode, sharing what unfolded behind closed doors and explaining what prompted him to initially walk away



from the film.

In a recent interaction with Vicky Lalwani, Paresh Rawal made it clear that his decision to exit the project had nothing to do with Akshay Kumar. He explained that the issue stemmed from contractual obligations, stating that he could not commit to the film without the approval of producer Firoz Nadiadwala. Paresh said, “No, it wasn’t about, ‘I’m uncomfortable working with Akshay Kumar.’ It was a contractual obli-

gation. If I were to do the film, I needed the approval of Firoz (Nadiadwala, producer) because he is the sole owner of the Hera Pheri franchise. And also of other films like Awara Paagal Deewana, Welcome, and all of that. Until I had his approval, I simply couldn’t commit.”

Reflecting on the legal notice sent by Akshay, Paresh admitted that he was upset about being drawn into a legal dispute, saying the situation left him frustrated. He added,

“When the legal notice came, I thought, ‘Why am I getting dragged into legal issues? Am I here to enjoy making a film or to get caught up in this?’ I told myself I didn’t want to be a part of it anymore. I genuinely believe the legal notice was an emotional reaction. It was probably a case of, ‘How could he say no to me?’ He must have been emotionally disturbed.”

Addressing the delay in receiving Firoz A. Nadiadwala’s approval, Paresh Rawal said the matter was solely between the producer and Akshay, and not something he wished to be a part of. He shared that he never felt the need to probe further into the issue, as it was for them to sort out. Emphasising that there was no strain in his relationship with Akshay, Paresh asserted that the two had never had any personal differences or reason to fall out.

Ranbir Kapoor gets conjunctivitis from daughter Raha ahead of Delhi event

New Delhi : Ranbir Kapoor, Sai Pallavi, Yash and Sunny Deol starrer Ramayana is among the most anticipated films of 2026. Ever since it was announced, the magnum opus has remained in the spotlight, with every update fuelling excitement among fans. As the makers prepare to kick off the film’s promotions with the grand trailer launch in Delhi, the latest reports suggest that Ranbir has been diagnosed with conjunctivitis.

According to an NDTV report, Ranbir Kapoor is believed to have contracted conjunctivitis from his daughter, Raha, who reportedly developed the infection first. Despite the health setback, the actor is expected to attend the grand trailer launch of Ramayana on July 24. The makers have planned a high-profile event in New Delhi, with several key members of the cast likely to be in attendance. A source informed the portal, “Ranbir Kapoor got conjunctivitis. His daughter Raha got it first, and later on, Ranbir got infected too. As Team Ramayana is all set for the massive Pratham Sankalp

at Bharat Mandapam, Delhi, Ranbir Kapoor won’t give the launch a miss. Known for fulfilling his commitments, he might be seen wearing black glasses during the event as a precaution.”

Meanwhile, the trailer of the Nitesh Tiwari directorial has officially received a ‘U’ (Universal) certificate from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), clearing it for viewers of all age groups. According to the certification details, the approval was granted on July 15. The CBFC listing further reveals that two versions of the trailer have been certified, a standard cut with a runtime of 4 minutes and 15 seconds, and a slightly shorter theatrical version that runs for exactly 4 minutes.

Directed by Nitesh Tiwari, Ramayana features a star-studded cast with Ranbir portraying Lord Rama and Sai Pallavi essaying the role of Sita. Ravie Dubey takes on the role of Lakshman, while Yash plays Ravana and Sunny Deol appears as Lord Hanuman. The ensemble also includes Rakul Preet Singh as Surpanakha and Kunal Ka-



poor as Lord Indra. The ambitious mythological epic is produced by Namit Malhotra’s Prime Focus Studios in association with DNEG and Yash’s Monster Mind Creations. Adding to its global appeal, the film’s soundtrack has been composed by A.R. Rahman and Academy Award-winning composer Hans Zimmer. Ramayana is scheduled to hit theatres during Diwali 2026.

Mamata Banerjee’s ‘I Will Be Back’ Warning to the BJP “Korbo, Lorbo, Bachho”

Kolkata, July 16: “It’s not the about the age, it’s about the mileage”. Mamata Banerjee channeled her inner Indiana Jones. Telling her detractors that she is still fighting fit and would survive to “see the end of BJP rule”Even as many political experts are busy writing Mamata Banerjee’s political obituary, the mercurial leader has responded, claiming that she still has the firepower to rebuild her party, which has been plagued by defections since the Assembly election defeat. In response to the critics, 71-year-old Banerjee wrote on Facebook, “You don’t need to worry about my age. Did I ever inquire about the Prime Minister’s age? “Don’t dare to insult a human being over the age. BJP people wanted me to die of a heart attack on the day of the Assembly Election results, but I’ll live until I see your end.”While ignoring the age aspect in her comeback, Mamata Banerjee promised to re-

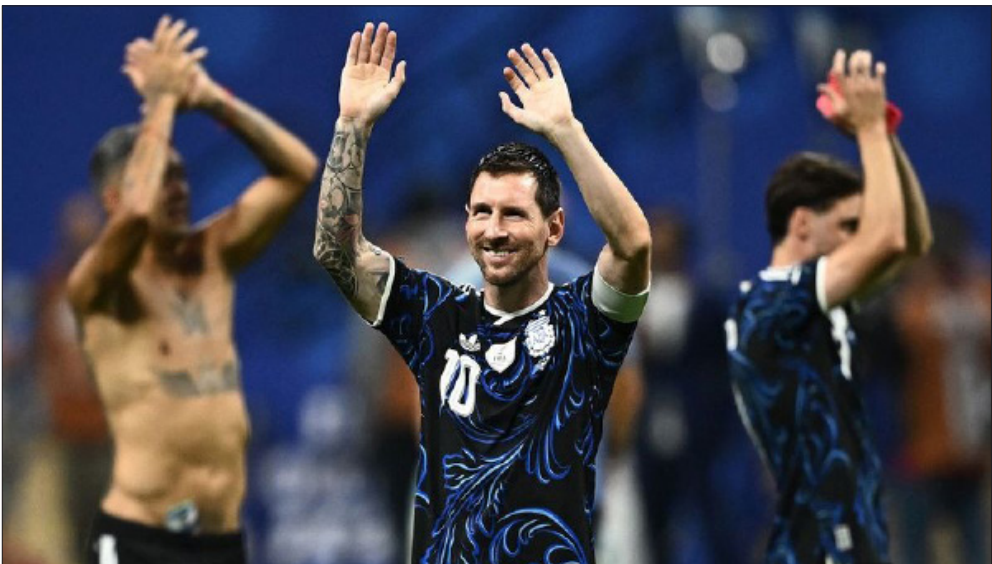


build her party like she had done twice before. “Whoever wants to leave, can go. Whatever remains is my goldmine. I still have the power to make a fresh start in 2026 like I did it alone in 2004 and 1997. I have this much guts. I have built not one but three generations of leaders and will act as an umbrella for those generations who are with me now.”“Korbo, Lorbo, Bachho” (I will fight and I will survive), the former chief minister declared

making it clear that she is far from hanging her political boots.Mamata Banerjee has been battling unprecedented rebellion within her party that has seen control of Trinamool Congress slip from her hands. Both in the state Assembly and Parliament, majority of her elected MLAs and MPs have revolted. While majority of her MLAs have rallied behind rebel leader Ritabrata Banerjee, 20 of her Lok Sabha MPs have merged with a little-known

party and have declared support to the NDA.Mamata Banerjee’s emotional Wednesday message came days ahead of the Trinamool Congress’ July 21 Martyrs’ Day rally, an important date in the party’s political calendar. The day will see two rival factions observing the event just a kilometer apart from each other. The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday authorized the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) faction to stage its annual July 21 Martyrs’ Day demonstration near the Birla Planetarium rather than its regular location in front of Victoria House in central Kolkata.The Martyrs’ Day demonstration honors the 13 Congress workers who were slain during a protest in 1993, when Mamata Banerjee was president of the Youth Congress, the party’s youth wing. The ceremony has subsequently evolved into the TMC’s annual Martyrs’ Day programme.

Lionel Messi Ends Long Silence On FIFA Bias Allegations, Gives Fitting Response To Critics



Atlanta: “FIFA favours Argentina,” “World Cup is rigged,” and “FIFA wants Lionel Messi to go far” are typical expressions heard from many people since the 2026 World Cup began. It all started with Lionel Messi’s studs-up challenge against an Algerian player, and VAR rulings in games involving Egypt and Switzerland fueled the ‘fixing’ allegations against FIFA, with many claiming that Argentina is largely protected by the sport’s governing body. Breaking his silence on the claims, Messi has responded to critics, claim-

ing that reaching a second consecutive World Cup final demonstrates his team is among the greatest in the world and that their achievement is “not by chance.” Argentina seemed on the verge of elimination from the World Cup when they faced England in the semi-finals on Wednesday. However, as has been the case in other Argentina World Cup matches, the defending champions pulled off another spectacular comeback. Enzo Fernandez and Lautaro Martinez scored late goals in a remarkable comeback in Atlanta following Anthony Gordon’s

55th-minute goal, bringing Argentina closer to reclaiming their global title. Argentina’s journey to defend their title has been filled with controversies as referees made several debatable calls that seemed to favour them. But Messi completely dismissed the claims that the tournament was biased in their favour.“It hurts whoever it hurts... We’ve been the best for the last four years, whether people like it or not, no matter what they say. Once again, we’re among the two best in the world, and that shows that everything we’ve done isn’t by chance and nobody gave us anything. Reaching two consecutive World Cup finals is something few achieve, and this group did it,” the eight-time Ballon d’Or winner stated, taking a clear jab at the critics.“If we had lost to England, people would have come out and said some nonsense, and we didn’t give them the chance. We knew that we were better than them in terms of football , but a lot is at stake in a match of this magnitude, where historic events happen in these games,” he added. Messi also dedicated the win to the legendary Diego Maradona, who had famously headlined the clash between Argentina and the Three Lions in the World Cup quarter-final 40 years ago.“Without a doubt, Diego is enjoying this immensely from up there because today was a very special day for him; to be able to give him this joy and for him to experience it however he wants from up there. Let him enjoy it because it’s a gift for him too,” he concluded.

PM Modi’s Rs 25,000 Crore Bet: Ganga and Varuna Corridors Will Transform Kashi

New Delhi, July 16: On Wednesday, the Union Cabinet authorized two major elevated road projects, the Ganga Corridor and the Varuna Corridor, totaling approximately Rs 25,000 crore in expenditure. Together, the initiatives are intended to significantly boost transportation in Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s seat. The twin projects are also intended to help boost tourism and urban development in one of the world’s oldest towns.The 46-kilometer, six-lane Ganga Elevated Corridor would connect NH-19 and the Varanasi Ring Road along a riverside alignment along the Ganga River. The corridor, designed by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), intends to relieve strain on the city’s crowded highways while conserving existing residential areas. Once operational, the highway is estimated to increase average travel speeds to about 100 km/h -- roughly five times the existing rate. Travel time on the route is expected to decrease from about 60 minutes to 20 minutes, providing speedier access for both residents and visitors.However, the initiative is about much more than just reducing commute time. NHAI envisions it as a riverside infrastructure and tourist project. The route includes a cable-stayed bridge, which is projected to become a new icon in the city. Dedicated overlooks and visitor areas overlooking the Ganga and the renowned ghats are also proposed, resulting in additional public spaces and an improved tourist experience. The Cabi-



net also cleared the Varuna Corridor, a 43.2-km elevated link connecting NH-31 with the Varanasi Ring Road along the Varuna river. Estimated to cost around Rs 11,000 crore, the project will feature flyovers, ramps, loops and link roads to streamline movement across the city. An important component of the plan is a 21-km elevated stretch running from near Harahua to the confluence of the Varuna and Ganga near Namoo Ghat. The four-lane corridor will allow travellers arriving from Lucknow, Jaunpur and Prayagraj to reach Namoo Ghat directly without entering the city’s crowded streets. From there, pilgrims can take boats to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, easing pressure on central Varanasi.Part of the alignment will pass through around 2.56 acres of land under the Cantonment Board, for which the Ministry of Defence’s approval was required. The projects come at a time when Varanasi is witnessing an unprecedented surge in visitors. The city now attracts

nearly 15 crore tourists and pilgrims every year, making efficient transport infrastructure essential for managing growing travel demand.’New Model Of Urban Development’Industry experts believe the impact could extend well beyond smoother traffic.Aman Gupta, Director of RPS Group, said the Ganga and Varuna Corridor projects represent a new model of integrated urban development rather than conventional transport projects.“The Ganga and Varuna Corridor Projects are going to be excellent examples of integrated urban development. Unlike other religious infrastructure projects, these will create a synergy of connectivity, tourism, public infrastructure, and other sectors of economic activity,” Gupta said. He noted that improved accessibility typically acts as a catalyst for investment, employment and real estate growth. According to Gupta, the government’s continued focus on large-scale infrastructure sends

a strong signal that connectivity is becoming the foundation for future urban expansion. Drawing a parallel with the National Capital Region, Gupta said cities such as Faridabad could witness similar benefits as connectivity improves through projects like the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, Metro expansion, Jewar International Airport and the proposed Faridabad-Noida-Ghaziabad Expressway. Better infrastructure, he said, tends to attract residential demand, commercial investments and higher land values.Speaking on the impact of the two projects on the economy, Manoj Kumar Garg, Chairman, NorthWind Estates, said, “The proposed Ganga and Varuna Corridors signify an important move towards the story of infrastructure-led growth in Uttar Pradesh and would further consolidate the global spiritual, cultural, and tourism destination of Varanasi. Urban infrastructure projects such as these generate a multiplier effect on the economy through tourism, hospitality, retail, commercial real estate development and job creation.”He added, “The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Uttar Pradesh currently stands at more than Rs 30 lakh crore, and the state has set itself a target of having a \$1 trillion economy. Infrastructure development projects such as these, along with expressways, airports, and urban renewal schemes, would attract more private investment and improve ease of doing business.”

Ravichandran Ashwin: ICC Format Changes “Make Sense From A Competitiveness Standpoint”



New Delhi: Former India cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin supported the International Cricket Council’s (ICC) revisions to the fixture formats for the 2027 ODI World Cup and 2028 T20 World Cup, but emphasized the need of providing more opportunities for growing cricket nations to help grow the sport internationally. In a post on X, Ashwin stated that the altered formats might boost competition, but that more emphasis should be placed on providing a stronger pipeline for young teams. “The ICC’s changes to the fixture format for the 2027 ODI World Cup and 2028 T20 World Cup make sense from a competitiveness standpoint,” Ashwin said. “But if the final goal is to grow the game, there needs to be a stronger pathway for emerging nations. Teams like the Netherlands, Scotland, Nepal, USA and Ireland need more meaningful matches

(FOR EXAMPLE: getting added as the third team into every bilateral series), not just qualification tournaments,” Ashwin added. The former spinner further highlighted that the collective growth of cricket would play an important role in making the sport more attractive at the Olympics.“Let’s not forget, that collective growth will make this sport a spectacle at the Olympics,” he concluded. Earlier, the International Cricket Council (ICC) Board concluded its annual meetings on Wednesday in Edinburgh with decisions to evolve and enhance the marquee stature of its global events. The Board, comprising three representatives from associate nations approved the recommendations it received from the Chief Executives’ Committee (comprising Chief Executives & representatives from full and associate members) related to the formats of the ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup and the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup, to create more meaningful contests, elevating competitive standards, strengthening the competitive structure of both events, and enhancing the tournament experience for athletes and fans, according to a media release from ICC.The Board also approved the qualification structure for the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2028, providing a clear pathway to qualification through regional events and the potential institu-

tion of a marquee global competition for associate member nations. The Board approved an evolved competition format for the ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup that continues to feature 14 participating teams while delivering a more compelling tournament for athletes and fans.The ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup will see the participation of 14 eligible teams, but the revised format will entail a three-stage competition leading to the Finals, which creates greater context, competitiveness and consequence during the event, ensuring meaningful competition from the opening match through to the Finals.The structure has been designed to strengthen the competitive narrative across every stage of the event, with matches from Round 1 and Round 2 carrying higher consequence, with a highly competitive Super 7 stage witnessing 7 qualifying teams going through a round-robin stage to qualify for the semi-finals. The increased consequence and enhanced competitive intensity promise to enhance the overall experience for fans while continuing to provide emerging teams with the opportunity to compete on cricket’s biggest stage.The ICC Men’s T20 World Cup continues to be the platform for growing the broader universe of cricket’s participating nations to compete in the ICC’s pinnacle events.

Why Are Madhya Pradesh’s Children Still Hungry Despite a Rs 1,200-Crore Nutrition System and Empty Plates

Bhopal, July 16: In Madhya Pradesh, the administrative structure in charge of delivering supplemental nourishment to roughly 8.5 million children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers is being modified once more. The state administration has opted to delegate responsibility for creating and distributing Take-Home Ration, or THR, from the State Rural Livelihood Mission to the Department of Women and Child Development. This marks the fifth update to the nutrition distribution methodology since 2018. However, while responsibility is being transferred from one department to another, food is not reaching some Anganwadi centers. An NDTV ground investigation across Bhopal, Sagor, Vidisha and Agar-Malwa found that Take-Home Ration supplies had remained disrupted for periods ranging from one to three months at several centres.Anganwadi workers said children, pregnant women

and lactating mothers had been registered, their names were visible on government applications and their records were being regularly updated, but the ration meant for them had not arrived. The nutrition system is estimated to be worth nearly Rs 1,200 crore. Government documents show that schemes are operational, budgets are sanctioned and beneficiaries are registered. Yet, at the last mile, workers are being forced to tell mothers that the packets have not come “from above”. The contradiction is stark: the system can count the child, weigh the child and record the child on an app, but it cannot always ensure that food reaches the child. Bhopal’s Link Road is among the capital’s most powerful neighbourhoods. Ministers, senior officials and former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan have residences in the area. Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Devda also

lives there.In a lane behind his bungalow, Anganwadi Centre Number 729 operates from a small room. Nearly 50 children attend the centre. Fourteen pregnant women and eight lactating mothers are also registered there.According to Anganwadi worker Rama Kushwaha, the centre received Take-Home Ration in April, but no fresh supply came in May and June. “We received the stock in April and distributed it during April and May. It did not arrive in May and June. It has arrived again in July,” she said. The supply may have resumed, but the two-month gap raises a fundamental question. The nutritional needs of a child do not pause when a government supply chain breaks down. A pregnant woman cannot postpone her requirement for protein and calories until the next consignment arrives.For a malnourished child, every missed packet may mean lost growth that cannot easily be recovered.

Entire Argentina Team Likely To Be Sanctioned For Display Of ‘Political Banner’



Atlanta: Argentina’s players allowed their emotions to take over their sports sense following their thrilling victory over England in the FIFA World Cup 2026 quarterfinal on Wednesday. Midfielder Giovanni Lo Celso was seen celebrating the team’s qualification to the final with a Falkland Islands banner, prompting outrage from the football community and perhaps a FIFA fine. Following Argentina’s 2-1 comeback victory in Atlanta, Lo Celso raised a banner stating “Las Malvinas son Argentinas,” alluding to Argentina’s claim to the Falklands. The phrase translates as “The Malvinas are Argentine.” It was Lo Celso, who has played for English Premier League club Tottenham Hotspur in the past, along with defender Nicolas Otamendi, a former Manchester City player in England, who held the ban-

ner that appeared to have been brought out by fans in the stands. The International Football Association Board (IFAB), which sets football’s laws, along with FIFA, has strict guidelines prohibiting the display of political flags, slogans, and symbols during matches.“Equipment must not have any political, religious or personal slogans, statements or images. Players must not reveal undergarments that show political, religious, personal slogans, statements or images, or advertising other than the manufacturer’s logo. For any offence, the player and/or the team will be sanctioned by the competition organiser, national football association or by FIFA.” IFAB’s rulebook states.Argentina Vice-President Victoria Villarruel, in a post on X, further fuelled the controversy as she wrote, “The Falklands are Argentine! They banned

bringing them to the stadium and forgot that we carry them in our blood and our hearts.” ‘Las Malvinas’ is the name Argentina uses for the Falkland Islands, a British overseas territory located about 480 kms off Argentina’s eastern coast.The sovereignty dispute over the islands is deeply rooted in history, tracing its origins back to the 19th-century Napoleonic Wars. Britain initially claimed the territory in 1774, subsequently re-establishing its control in 1832. Tensions peaked in 1982 when Argentina’s military regime launched an invasion to seize the islands, igniting the Falklands War. The conflict spanned from 2 April to 14 June, concluding with the surrender of the Argentine forces. The hostilities resulted in the tragic loss of 649 Argentine troops, 255 British servicemen, and three civilians.

Steve Smith powers record MLC chase, breaking Punjab mark



New Delhi: Australian superstar Steve Smith powered Washington Freedom in a record-breaking T20 run-chase as they overcame defending champions MI New York in the Major League Cricket (MLC) 2026 Eliminator match in Oakland on Wednesday night. Set a record 267-run chase on the back of Nicholas Pooran's 31-ball century, the fastest in MLC history, Washington skipper Smith and wicket-keeper Andries Gous combined to produce a stunning six-wicket win. Down 10 for two inside three overs,

Smith and Gous produced a record third-wicket stand that yielded 241 runs in only 89 balls. Gous was adjudged as the Player Of The Match as he scored 132 off just 52 balls, hitting 10 fours and 12 sixes along the way. In a match that was a repeat of last year's final where MI had emerged victorious, Smith remained unbeaten on 110 off 48 balls as Washington stormed to the target in only 18.4 overs. Washington broke the all-time T20 record held by the Indian Premier League (IPL) side Punjab Kings for the highest successful chase

in the format. PBKS had gunned down a 265-run target against the Delhi Capitals in Delhi in April this year during the IPL 2026 season, bettering their own record of a 262-run chase against Kolkata Knight Riders in 2024. During the match in Delhi, DC posted 264 runs on the back of KL Rahul's unbeaten 152 off 67 balls. PBKS were able to chase down the total as Prabhsimran Singh and Priyansh Arya scored 116 runs in the powerplay. The match was finished up as Shreyas Iyer scored 71 off 36 balls and

Punjab won with seven balls to spare. In the 2026 Major League Cricket Eliminator, Washington Freedom, led by Steve Smith's unbeaten 110 and Andries Gous's explosive 132, chased a record-breaking 267 runs to defeat defending champions MI New York. Overcoming an early 10 for two, Smith and Gous forged a 241-run partnership, securing a six-wicket win in 18.4 overs. This chase set a new T20 record, surpassing the Punjab Kings' previous highest successful run-chase of 265, emphasizing the evolving high-scoring nature of modern T20 cricket. Steve Smith produced a masterclass as he led his team to the highest successful run chase in Major League Cricket (MLC) history, eclipsing the previous world-record benchmark set by Punjab Kings in franchise T20 cricket. Chasing a mammoth target, Smith anchored the innings with a composed yet aggressive knock, timing his acceleration perfectly and guiding his side home with remarkable confidence.

UP T20 League starts August 14 in Lucknow; Kanpur hosts playoffs and grand finale later

Lucknow: The fourth season of the UP T20 League is set to begin on August 14, with Kashi Rudras taking on defending champions Meerut Mavericks in the tournament opener at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow. The competition will run for 24 days, concluding with the final on September 6 in Kanpur. Fans can look forward to an action-packed schedule featuring 34 matches, including 13 double-header days (weekend) and 8 single-header days. For the first time in the league's history, the tournament will be played across two venues, according to a release. The opening phase will take place in Lucknow, where 22 matches will be played over 13 matchdays at the Ekana Cricket Stadium. The second half of the competition will then move to Green Park Stadium in Kanpur, which will host the remaining 12 matches. Speaking on the announcement of the schedule, Dr. Sanjay Kapoor, Chairman, Governing Council, UP T20 League, said, "The UP T20 League continues to grow with every season, and this



year marks a major milestone as the tournament will be played across two venues for the very first time. The opening phase will be hosted in Lucknow before the action moves to Kanpur for the second phase and the playoffs." "The standard of cricket has improved tremendously over the years, and we are confident that this season will once again provide a great platform for talented young players to showcase their skills alongside experienced campaigners. We wish all the teams

the very best for the season and hope the fans enjoy another thrilling edition of the UP T20 League." The opening ceremony and the first match of the season will be held in Lucknow, while Kanpur will host the closing ceremony and the final, bringing the tournament to a grand finish. The knockout stage will also be played in Kanpur. Qualifier 1 and the Eliminator are scheduled for September 3, followed by Qualifier 2 on September 4. The UP T20 League Sea-

son 4 final will be played on September 6. While the opening phase of the UP T20 League 2026 promises an exciting start, the first weekend features a packed schedule, including Noida Kings facing Kanpur Superstars and Lucknow Falcons taking on Gaur Gorakhpur Lions on August 15. Kashi Rudras will be back in action the very next day against Kanpur Superstars, while Meerut Mavericks will lock horns with Gaur Gorakhpur Lions in the evening fixture. The action continues on August 17 as Noida Kings meet Lucknow Falcons, followed by Kashi Rudras taking on Gaur Gorakhpur Lions on August 18. Fans can look forward to another exciting clash on August 19, when Lucknow Falcons face Mavericks. August 20 features a double-header, with Gaur Gorakhpur Lions playing Noida Kings in the afternoon before Kanpur Superstars take on Kashi Rudras in the evening. The momentum continues on August 21 as Meerut Mavericks meet Noida Kings, while Lucknow Falcons square off against Kanpur Superstars later in the day.

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia to lead ICC Governance Review Committee

New Delhi: BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia was on Wednesday appointed as the head of the Governance Review Committee, a new sub-committee formed by the ICC, which also approved a USD 12.82 million loan to Cricket West Indies. Apart from Saikia, the other members of the committee are: Dr Mohammed Moosajee of Cricket South Africa and Dr Ros Rivaz, the newly-appointed Independent Director of the ICC. Saikia is also a member of another freshly-constituted committee -- the Franchise Leagues Committee which will be headed by former Bangladesh skipper Tamim Iqbal. Other members are: Dr Rudie van Vuuren (Cricket Namibia), Richard Gould (England and Wales Cricket Board) and Todd Greenberg (Cricket Australia). The loan that

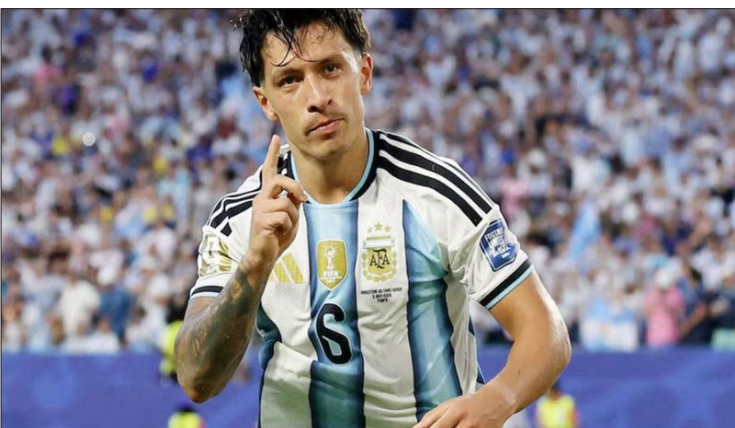


ICC sanctioned to CWI is to support the board, which has been struggling for regular cash inflow. The ICC also reviewed the progress made by Sri Lanka Cricket towards a revised Constitution. "Reiterated the need for elections to be held as soon as possible and agreed that SLC would continue to be unable to be represented at ICC Board meetings for the time being," the ICC said in a statement at the conclusion of its Annual

Meetings here. The global governing body also ratified the appointment of Bangladesh Cricket Board president Tamim Iqbal as the Member's Full Member Director. While the ICC approved the admission of Mauritius as its 111th Member, Cricket Canada remained suspended until stipulated requirements were met. The ICC also placed France Cricket on notice for breaches of its Membership Criteria.

FIFA World Cup: Lisandro Martinez calls England semifinal victory a gift to every Argentine fan

Atlanta: Argentina's Lisandro Martinez said the team's dramatic victory over England in the FIFA World Cup semifinal was a gift to every Argentine, praising his teammates' determination as the reigning world champions booked their place in a second consecutive World Cup final. Argentina came from behind to defeat England 2-1, with Enzo Fernandez equalising late in the match before Lautaro Martinez scored the winner in stoppage time to seal a place in Sunday's final against Spain. Speaking after the match, Lisandro Martinez said the players were driven by the support of the Argentine people and their desire to create history. "We are all Argentinians right now, what they go through, what they live, it's felt here too. We knew the magnitude of this match and from minute zero we went after it. Those who want to win always get the result. What we did today was history and a gift



to every Argentine," Martinez said, as quoted by the Argentine Football Association's X handle. The Manchester United defender added that the team had given everything on the pitch and wanted supporters to identify with their fighting spirit. "Let the people feel identified. We leave everything in every contested ball and that's the most important thing. We're one step away, but now we're going to enjoy what we've achieved,"

he said. Coming to the match, the first half was a tightly contested battle, with both teams fighting for midfield control and creating limited clear chances. England eventually broke the deadlock in the 55th minute when Anthony Gordon finished Morgan Rogers' cross to put the Three Lions ahead. After taking the lead, England dropped deeper defensively, allowing Argentina to build pressure. The defending champions

responded strongly, with Jordan Pickford making key saves and Alexis Mac Allister hitting the post before Argentina found the equaliser. In the 85th minute, Enzo Fernandez struck after receiving a pass from Lionel Messi to level the match. Argentina completed their comeback in stoppage time when Messi delivered a cross for Lautaro Martinez, who headed home the winner. Despite England's late efforts, Argentina held on to reach the final. England will now face France for third place, while Argentina will meet Spain for the title. Argentina came from behind to defeat England 2-1, with Enzo Fernandez equalising in the 85th minute before Lautaro Martinez headed home a stoppage-time winner to seal a meeting with Spain in Sunday's final. Reacting to the victory in a post on X, Lisandro Martinez praised the team's fighting spirit and urged fans to continue backing the squad in the title clash.

Thomas Tuchel has no regrets after England's World Cup heartbreak against Argentina

Atlanta: Thomas Tuchel refused to second-guess either his tactics or substitutions after England's World Cup dream was shattered by Argentina's stunning late comeback, insisting he had "no regrets" despite the painful 2-1 semi-final defeat. England were within minutes of reaching their first World Cup final since 1966 before Enzo Fernandez and Lautaro Martinez struck in the closing stages to send Lionel Messi's Argentina into Sunday's final against Spain. While criticism quickly followed Tuchel's tactical changes, the England boss maintained he would make the same decisions again. Speaking to the BBC after the match, Tuchel accepted responsibility for the result but believed England had delivered one of their finest performances of the tournament. "You can discuss this with a million coaches, but I have to make a decision on the pitch," Tuchel said. "I analysed the match and I did it a certain way, so that's my responsibility. In the moment, no regrets. The team gave everything and we were very, very close. We deserved to be up 1-0." The German also felt England's display deserved more than a heartbreaking exit. "We played one of our better matches, maybe our best match in the circumstances. The team was top, we couldn't get over the line but no regrets." Anthony Gordon's well-taken goal midway through the second half had put England on course for a famous



victory. But instead of pushing for a second, the Three Lions gradually retreated, allowing Argentina to dominate possession before finally finding the breakthrough through Fernandez in the 85th minute. Martinez then completed the turnaround in stoppage time with a header from Messi's cross. The German manager's substitutions and switch to a back five immediately became a major talking point after the final whistle, but Tuchel insisted the changes were a reaction to Argentina's growing control rather than an attempt to simply defend the lead. "We're disappointed, we were so close but we got too passive after we scored and conceded a lot of chances," he said. "We could not turn the ball possession around and then conceded so many crosses, chances and shots. We were close but couldn't keep the level up after we scored." Ex-

plaining the tactical reshuffle, Tuchel said England were struggling to cope with Argentina's aerial threat. "We decided to go to a back five because the gaps were far too open. They won every header, they kept crossing and crossing, so we went to a back five to close the gaps inside and be strong in the air." He also dismissed suggestions that introducing more attacking players would have changed the outcome. "Of course we wanted to go for the second goal but it doesn't help if you can't get the ball. We couldn't get out." "Of course, the responsibility is on the coach and if it doesn't go well, it is easy to say it was wrong." Despite the disappointment, Tuchel urged people not to judge England's campaign solely by one difficult evening. "I think we saw the mentality throughout the match and the strong group," he said.

Spotlight on Gukesh as Chennai GM begins Thursday amid excitement

Chennai: Chess enthusiasts in India will be treated to the rare opportunity of watching reigning Classical world champion, D Gukesh, play at home during the fourth edition of the Chennai GM, beginning in the city from Thursday. The 20-year-old, who has struggled for form with just a few months to go for the World Championship, has fond memories of this event at home. When the inaugural event was commissioned at short notice, the then teen, who was battling form even then, finished top of the field to advance to the 2024 edition of the Candidates thanks to the points he had picked up in the meet. The stakes this time are lower but do not discount the importance of this event from his perspective. As a man searching for confidence, one good event can do wonders for him. Coming on the back of another below-par run at Norway chess, he's also in danger of falling outside the world's top-25. One Indian who has been on an upward curve has been Nihal Sarin. The 22-year-old,



who recently won the Speed Chess Championship, is more noted for his blitz skills. Over the last year, he has made a conscious decision to play more Classical and it has paid dividends. Currently tied with Gukesh in terms of rating (2717), he's a good event from breaching into the top-20 for the first time. The top-ranked Indian and the second seed, Arjun Erigaisi, finished joint first with Magnus

Carlsen at the TePe Sigeman in Malmo before he lost out on tiebreaks. He also finished 0.5 points behind the leaders at UzChess in Tashkent in May so he's in good form. A win here could potentially boost his confidence before the Olympiad in September. The other Indian in the field is M Pranesh, who won the Challengers event last year. The first itself is stacked with Uzbek No. 1 Nodirbek Ab-

busattorov the top-seed. Abusattorov, who is very close with World Championship challenger Javokhir Sindarov, could very well use this entire event as a sort of prep to help his compatriot at the Championships. Not to mention the fact that there's no love lost between the pair. One should also keep an eye out for Hans Niemann, the US player who continues to divide the chess world.