

Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma Interacts With College Interns Under NEP Initiative

Shillong, Jul 15: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma engaged with college interns under the National Education Policy (NEP) initiative, highlighting the government's commitment to empowering youth through experiential learning and skill development. During the interactive session, the Chief Minister emphasized the importance of practical exposure in shaping future leaders. "The NEP provides a platform for students to gain hands-on experience in governance and administration. This initiative bridges the gap between academic learning and real-world challenges," Sangma said. The interns, drawn from various colleges across the state, shared their experiences of working within government departments. They noted that the program has enhanced their understanding of policy implementation, public service delivery, and administrative



processes. Officials explained that the internship program is designed to nurture critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills among students. By involving them in day-to-day governance, the initiative aims to build a

generation of professionals who are both academically strong and socially responsible. The Chief Minister assured continued support for expanding internship opportunities, encouraging students to actively contribute ideas

for improving governance. He also stressed that youth engagement is central to Meghalaya's vision of inclusive and participatory development. The NEP internship initiative reflects the state's broader commitment to edu-

cation reform, skill enhancement, and preparing students for diverse career paths. The government plans to scale up the program, ensuring that more young people benefit from direct exposure to public administration.

Guwahati restaurants to stay open till 3:30 AM FIFA

Guwahati, July 15: Restaurants and food establishments in Guwahati will remain open until 3:30 am on select FIFA World Cup match days, following a directive from the Assam government. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that the district administration has been authorized to extend operating hours on July 15, 16, 19, and 20, allowing fans to enjoy the matches in public spaces while supporting the hospitality sector. The decision comes as part of Assam's broader efforts to bring the excitement of the World Cup closer to its residents. FIFA Fan Parks have been set up in Guwahati and Dibrugarh, offering live screenings of matches and creating a festive atmosphere for football enthusiasts. Sarma previously highlighted that these initiatives were designed to strengthen community engagement and give fans a chance to experience the global sporting spectacle



together. The late-night relaxation complements these fan parks, providing additional venues for residents to gather during the high-profile knockout matches. Similar measures have been introduced in Bengaluru, where authorities extended operating hours for pubs, hotels, and restaurants during the semifinals and finals. The Assam government's decision places Guwahati among the select Indian cities embracing the global sporting spectacle with special arrangements.

With football fever gripping fans across India, cities like Guwahati are making special arrangements to ensure supporters can celebrate the tournament in full spirit. Similar measures have been introduced in Bengaluru, where authorities extended operating hours for pubs, hotels, and restaurants during the semifinals and finals. The Assam government's decision places Guwahati among the select Indian cities embracing the global sporting spectacle with special arrangements.

Assam's Dhubri Court began a two-day walkout over the delay in executing Supreme Court directions

Dhubri, July 15: Judicial personnel at the Dhubri District Court went on a two-day symbolic strike, halting legal and administrative activity in protest of the claimed delay in executing the Supreme Court's October 7, 2009 judgment based on the Shetty Commission recommendations. The cease-work movement hampered normal court operations, with administrative offices remaining closed and judicial officials refraining from performing official tasks. As a result, case filings, administrative processing, and other court-related functions were significantly impacted, causing annoyance for litigants, lawyers, and visitors. According to representatives of the protesting employees, the strike has been called over the state's failure to fully implement the Supreme Court's directives relating to the revision of pay scales, service conditions, promotional avenues and other benefits for subordinate judiciary staff. The employees are demanding immediate implementation of the commission's recommendations, including revised pay structures, graduate scale benefits and updated service rules. They also alleged that delays in framing promotion guidelines have adversely affected the career progression of typists, copyists, data entry operators and other court employees. The protesting staff warned that if the state government and the concerned judicial authorities fail to initiate concrete steps to address their demands, they may intensify the agitation with a longer strike in the coming days. Representatives of the protesting employees said the strike was called due to the state's failure to fully implement directives relating to pay scale revisions, service conditions, promotional avenues, and other benefits for subordinate judiciary staff. They demanded immediate implementation of revised pay structures, graduate scale benefits, and updated service rules. Employees also alleged that delays in framing promotion guidelines have hindered career progression for typists, copyists, data entry operators, and other court staff.

India's longest river bridge nears reality as the Dhubri-Phulbari mega project reaches 80% completion

Gangtok, July 15: The ambitious Dhubri-Phulbari Bridge, which is set to become India's longest river bridge and the world's longest extradosed cable-stayed bridge over water, has reached a significant construction milestone, with nearly 80% physical progress, bringing Northeast India closer to a transformative connectivity project. The 19.5-kilometer bridge across the Brahmaputra River is being built by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) for the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) and is scheduled to be completed in September 2028. The bridge, a vital component of National Highway 127B, would be the first permanent four-lane road link between Dhubri, Assam, and Phulbari, Megha-

laya, removing one of the Northeast's longest transportation bottlenecks. Designed as a state-of-the-art extradosed cable-stayed bridge, the structure combines the strength of a conventional box girder bridge with cable-stayed engineering. Its central span stretches nearly 12 kilometres, supported by 199 massive pillars anchored deep into the Brahmaputra riverbed. According to project officials, construction is progressing round the clock despite monsoon challenges, with more than 250 engineers and project managers supervising a workforce of 1,800 to 2,000 labourers. For decades, residents travelling between Dhubri and Phulbari have depended on ferry services vulnerable to weather disruptions or a 260-km road detour that often takes

over five hours. Once operational, the bridge will reduce the travel distance to around 20 kilometres, bringing down travel time to just 15 to 20 minutes. The project is expected to significantly improve connectivity across the Northeast by creating a seamless transport corridor linking Assam, Meghalaya, Bhutan and parts of West Bengal. Besides reducing travel time, it is expected to improve access to healthcare, education and markets, while strengthening trade, tourism and regional logistics. Officials say the bridge will play a crucial role in accelerating economic activity in the sub-Himalayan region by facilitating faster movement of goods and people, making it one of the most significant infrastructure projects undertaken in Northeast India.

AAPSU SIR Committee meets in Changlang, pushes transparent governance reforms

Changlang, July 15: The All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) SIR Committee convened its first meeting in Changlang district, underscoring its commitment to promoting transparent governance and accountability in public administration. The committee, formed to strengthen student participation in governance, discussed key issues affecting local communities, including education, infrastructure, and equitable resource distribution. Members emphasized the need for openness in decision-making processes and urged authorities to ensure that policies are implemented with fairness and clarity. Speaking at the meeting, AAPSU leaders highlighted that transparency is essential



to building trust between citizens and institutions. "Our objective is to ensure

that governance remains people-centric, accountable, and free from opac-

ity. Students must play a proactive role in shaping a better future," said a senior representative. The committee also resolved to monitor developmental projects in the region, ensuring that funds are utilized effectively and that benefits reach intended communities. Plans were outlined to engage with local stakeholders, conduct awareness campaigns, and encourage youth participation in governance initiatives. Civil society representatives welcomed the initiative, noting that student involvement can act as a catalyst for reform and strengthen democratic values. The committee pledged to continue its efforts across districts, making transparency and accountability a cornerstone of its agenda.

Manipur CM reviews land administration, stresses tech transparency

Imphal, July 15: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday reaffirmed the State Government's commitment to strengthening transparent, efficient, and technology-driven land administration to improve governance and public service delivery while chairing a comprehensive review meeting of the Land Resources Department at the Secretariat. The meeting was attended by the Secretary, Director, Joint Secretary and other senior officials of the department. It reviewed progress in land administration, management of land records and the implementation of key initiatives. Officials also discussed operational challenges in maintaining accurate

property records and streamlining the processing of land-use changes across the State, with emphasis on enhancing efficiency and transparency in land-related services. The Chief Minister stressed the importance of adopting modern technology such as GIS mapping, digital record management, and online service delivery to eliminate loopholes and ensure accountability. He noted that digitization of land records would not only reduce disputes but also provide citizens with easier access to information. Officials highlighted ongoing efforts to integrate land databases with other government systems, enabling faster verification and reducing delays in approvals.

Assam plans large Ejar plantation along Jalukbari-Khanapara NH stretch

Guwahati, July 15: The Government of Assam has announced plans for a large-scale Ejar plantation along the Jalukbari-Khanapara stretch of National Highway, a move aimed at enhancing greenery, improving air quality, and strengthening the state's environmental sustainability efforts. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated that the initiative reflects the government's commitment to ecological balance and urban beautification. "This plantation drive will not only add to the scenic value of the highway but also contribute significantly to reducing pollution and mitigating climate challenges," he said. Officials from the Forest Department con-



firmed that the plantation will be carried out in phases, with community participation and

support from local organizations. The project is expected to create a green corridor

along one of Guwahati's busiest routes, offering shade, reducing dust, and promoting biodiversity. Environmental experts have welcomed the announcement, noting that large-scale plantations can play a vital role in combating urban heat and improving the overall quality of life for residents. The government has assured that maintenance and monitoring mechanisms will be put in place to ensure the long-term survival of the saplings. The initiative underscores Assam's broader vision of sustainable development, combining infrastructure growth with ecological responsibility. Citizens are encouraged to join hands with the administration in supporting planta-

tion drives and contributing to a greener future. The initiative underscores Assam's broader vision of sustainable development, combining infrastructure growth with ecological responsibility. Citizens are encouraged to join hands with the administration in supporting plantation drives and contributing to a greener future. Beyond environmental benefits, the plantation project is expected to generate local employment opportunities, particularly for rural communities engaged in nursery management, planting, and maintenance. This will provide both economic support and a sense of ownership among residents, ensuring the initiative's sustainability.

Mizoram CM urges illegal pension beneficiaries surrender PPOs by Sept 30

Aizawl, July 15: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Wednesday urged individuals receiving family pension through fraudulent or invalid documents to voluntarily surrender their Pension Payment Orders (PPOs) before September 30, warning that those found ineligible after the deadline would

face legal action. The appeal came during the launch of the statewide "Sensitization of Voluntary Surrender of Pension Payment Order (PPO)" programme organised by the Finance Department at the Assembly Annex Conference Hall in Aizawl. Lalduhoma, who also holds the Finance portfolio, said

the initiative aims to ensure transparency and accountability in the State's pension system. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said the government is committed to ensuring that all eligible pensioners receive their pension and family pension benefits in a timely and transparent manner. He

said steps have already been taken to improve the pension system, adding that a dedicated training wing is being planned to strengthen the capacity of officials handling pension-related matters and reduce delays in processing pension cases. Referring to the misuse of the family pension system, Lalduho-

ma said some beneficiaries had allegedly secured family pension by submitting forged or invalid documents, while others may have done so unknowingly. He said the government is determined to stop the misuse of public funds. The State Government has opened a voluntary surrender window from July

1 to September 30, 2026, allowing ineligible family pension beneficiaries to surrender their PPOs without being required to refund the pension amounts already received. The government has decided to waive recovery of such payments for those who voluntarily surrender during the stipulated period. The

Chief Minister said that after the surrender window closes, a government task force will undertake comprehensive field verification of all family pension beneficiaries. Any person found to have obtained family pension fraudulently will have the pension discontinued and may face legal proceedings.

A significant landslide has obliterated two residences, a restaurant, and a store

Aizawl, July 15: 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 be-

came 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.

Assam CM Pays Tribute to Radhagobinda Baruah on His Death Anniversary



Guwahati, July 15: Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday paid heartfelt tribute to eminent Assamese personality Radhagobinda Baruah on his death anniversary, describing him as a visionary leader, an indefatigable worker and a dreamer who played a defining role in shaping modern Assam. Calling him the "architect of modern Assam," the Chief Minister said Baruah's contributions to sports, journalism, social life and the growth of national consciousness continue to inspire generations. He noted that Baruah's far-sighted vision was instrumental in establishing landmark institutions such as Nehru Stadium and the Tribune newspaper group, leaving an enduring legacy in the state's development. Dr. Sarma remembered the legendary personality with deep respect and paid homage to his invaluable contributions to Assam's progress.--

The debt of Assam has increased over the past decade, according

Guwahati, July 15: The overall debt of Assam has increased more than 4.5 times to Rs 1.62 lakh crore in the last 10 years, after the BJP came to power, the state assembly was informed on Tuesday.

Replying to a set of queries raised by a number of opposition MLAs, Finance Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah in written answers said that Assam had an outstanding debt of Rs 35,690 crore as on March 31, 2016. "As per the latest information from the Accountant General, the total debt of Assam stood at



1,61,761 crore as on March 31, 2025," he added.

Out of the total liabilities, Rs 18,582 crore are interest-free 50-year loans, the minister told the House.

"Therefore, Assam's to-

tal loans with interest is Rs 1,43,179 crore," he said.

Baruah added that the state has paid Rs 9,467.75 crore as interest to various lenders in the 2024-25 fiscal alone.

3 detained in connection AR personnel Ambush that killed 2

Imphal, July 15: Three persons were detained in connection with the ambush that killed two Assam Rifles personnel in Manipur's Ukhrul district last week, police said on Tuesday.

The detentions were made during search operations in TM Kasom, Litan and Sikibung areas, they said. "An intelligence-based operation has been launched by security forces in the areas of TM Kasom, Litan and Sikibung to arrest the perpetrators of the ambush on security forces in Ukhrul district on July 6. Three persons have been detained," they said in a statement. Police said normalcy prevailed in the area despite the on-going operations.



On July 6, Warrant Officer Balwant Singh and Havildar CM Singh were killed when suspected militants ambushed a convoy returning to the

40th Assam Rifles Battalion headquarters at Shangshak near Nungshang Khong, about 17 km from the Ukhrul district headquarters. Mean-

while, the Working Committee of the Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL), the apex body of the Tangkhul Naga tribe, alleged that four civilians had been picked up by security forces during the search operations and demanded their immediate release. The organisation said Wungphay Kasar (24), AS Ninglum (29), Yaoreingam Lungleng (24) and Vareiyio Lungleng (56), residents of Sharkaphung (Sikibung) village in Kamjong district, were "whisked away" during the combing operations. The TNL demanded their release within 24 hours, warning that failure to do so could trigger widespread protest against the state government.

Manipur minister vows arrests in Naga hostages murder Meitei arson cases

Imphal, July 15: 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.

Under mounting pressure, a joint team of Manipur Police, National Investigation Agency (NIA), and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) arrested a couple



for their alleged involvement in the killings. The arrests followed Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh's statement that five suspects were evading capture by hiding in dense forests. Konhoujam confirmed that two culprits have already been arrested and reiterated that more arrests are expected soon.

Addressing another query, the home minister said that operations are also in progress to nab those responsible for the burning of six abandoned Meitei houses at Kanto Sabal. On Saturday, nearly 600 people from Kangpokpi district descended from the hillside and torched the houses near a Meitei locality adjoining an Army cantonment. Security forces detained around 20 villagers in the aftermath, with three confirmed arrests. Konhoujam stressed that the government is treating the incident seriously given its proximity to

a high-security Army camp and has directed security forces to remain vigilant to prevent recurrence. A high-level security meeting chaired by the chief minister on Sunday evening reviewed the recent incidents. 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 — Kammang Lhouvum, chief of Hengjang village, and Pagin Hangshing of Khunkho village — in connection with the mob disturbance and attempted arson at Kanto Sabal.

Assam to Invest ₹2 Lakh Crore in Infrastructure, Medical College Planned: Himanta Biswa Sarma

Guwahati, July 15: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday announced a series of major infrastructure, healthcare and employment initiatives while replying to the discussion on the State Budget during the eighth day of the Assam Legislative Assembly.

Presenting the government's long-term development roadmap, Sarma said a medical college will be established in Mankachar within the next five years to strengthen healthcare infrastructure in western Assam and improve access to quality medical education and healthcare services. The Chief Minister also announced plans to generate employment opportunities for nearly one lakh youths through the development of satellite cities, which are expected to emerge as new centres of economic activity and urban growth. Highlighting the state's energy sector, Sarma said Assam has set a target of generating 8,457 MW of electricity, a sharp increase from the earlier generation capacity of around 450 MW. He said the enhanced power generation would meet rising energy



demand and support industrial expansion across the state

He further announced that the government would invest nearly ₹2 lakh crore over the next five years to strengthen Assam's transport infrastructure. The investment will focus on expanding road, railway and aviation networks to improve connectivity and accelerate economic development. During his address, the Chief Minister also spoke about the rapid economic progress of neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh through its ambitious hydro-

power programme. Sarma said Arunachal Pradesh has taken a decision to generate 30,000 MW of electricity, with work on nearly 10,000 MW already underway. He noted that the projects have progressed without major disruptions, allowing the frontier state to move ahead with large-scale infrastructure development. "If all the proposed hydropower projects are completed over the next 10 years, Arunachal Pradesh's GDP will be twice that of Assam," Sarma said. He added that the hydropower

programme would not only boost Arunachal Pradesh's economy but also strengthen India's strategic interests along the border with China. According to the Chief Minister, several villages have already been rehabilitated, with local residents voluntarily relocating for the projects. Sarma expressed confidence that Arunachal Pradesh would emerge as one of the most economically vibrant states in the Northeast over the next decade through its extensive hydropower development.

High Court of Meghalaya Announces Job Openings

Shillong, July 15: The High Court of Meghalaya is hunting for new staff. Officials opened recruitment for three distinct roles in 2026: Court Officer, Junior Administrative Assistant, and Computer Operator. Each position requires a different set of credentials and offers a specific pay scale. The court needs one Court Officer. This role pays Rs. 49,000 per month at Level 16. Candidates must hold a Bachelor degree in Law from a recognized university. One Junior Administrative Assistant post is also open. This position pays Rs. 35,100 at Level 10, requir-



ing a Bachelor degree and confirmed computer skills. Finally, the court is seeking one Computer Operator. This job pays Rs. 28,400 at Level 7. Applicants need a Bachelor degree along with a diploma or certificate in computer studies.

Prospective hires must use the official website at https://

meghalayahighcourt.nic.in/ to submit their applications. The deadline is fixed. "The last date for submission of applications shall be on 14th August 2026 by 1700 hours," the notice states. General applicants must pay a fee of Rs. 400. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates pay Rs. 200.

Probe Into Pynter Death Case

Shillong, July 15: The Meghalaya Human Rights Commission slammed the door on a petition involving the death of Trophimos Khongmawloh. Netnobiweit Khongsdoh filed the complaint on June 25, alleging his son died after a brutal beating by the Pynter village headman and members of the Village Defence Party.

The alleged attack occurred on April 7, 2026. The victim died the next day. Accused parties dropped the body at the victim's home. They claimed the young man died after eating glass while held at the village Dorbar Hall. A video later surfaced showing the victim being beat-

en. Khongsdoh lodged an FIR with the Sadar Police Station on May 5. The case moved to Pynursla Police Station for follow-up. Khongsdoh wanted action against nine specific people.

The Commission issued its order on June 29. It cited the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 and state regulations to nix the probe. The Commission stated, "The Commission held that it had no jurisdiction to take up the matter."

Because the suspects are private citizens and not public servants, the agency has no authority to intervene. They passed the file to the Superintendent of Police in East

Khasi Hills for legal action. East Khasi Hills SP Vivek Syiem confirmed investigators have the post-mortem report. It shows injury marks, but medical experts believe they were not fatal. Investigators found sharp objects in the stomach.

These findings back the village's version of events. Police now wait for histopathological and toxicological reports from the Forensic Science Laboratory in Shillong.

Officials expect these results within two weeks. Authorities exhumed the body on May 18, 40 days after the burial, to conduct a spot post-mortem with a magistrate and medical team on-site.

Satellite Mapping to Tackle Northeast Border Disputes

Shillong, July 15: Satellite technology will settle volatile border disputes across the Northeast. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh confirmed on July 14 that the North Eastern Space Applications Centre is now mapping the India-Myanmar frontier and sensitive state borders. The Umiyam-based centre currently manages 130 projects. Fifty initiatives are finished, and 78 others continue across eight states. Dr. Singh wants more precision in flood warnings for the Garo Hills and Ri-Bhoi. He demands better water harvesting to fight scarcity. The Minister also pushed for a stronger bamboo value chain. He ordered the centre to work with the North East Cane and Bamboo Development Council to grow local livelihoods. Strategic mapping also serves national security interests. "NESAC has evolved into a critical institution for national strategic priorities," Dr. Singh said during his visit. He also wants private companies to expand the ManziNe GeoTourism dashboard to make money from regional tourism. The Minister met with Ri-Bhoi district officials to check on Centrally Sponsored Schemes. Ri-Bhoi remains an Aspirational District. Deputy Commissioner Dr. Abhishek Saini reported on better rural roads and health cards for farmers. Dr. Singh told officials to stop relying on old administrative habits. He wants them to use new methods to reach the most neglected people.

Supriya Sule Hints to the Delimitation Bill and Rules Out Party Switch To NDA

New Delhi, July 15: Regarding the controversial delimitation measure that was rejected in Parliament in April due to the government’s inability to secure a two-thirds majority, is Sharad Pawar’s NCP getting closer to the Center?Supriya Sule, a party MP and the daughter of Sharad Pawar, hinted on Wednesday that the NCP (SP) would back the bill provided the government makes a major change to increase the number of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats by 50% in each state.At a news conference, Sule stated, “Give the 50 percent condition on paper, then we will discuss.”Sule further disclosed that she and Union Home Minister Amit Shah attended an all-party meeting on the bill that was organized by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju. According to her, the government has a plan to incorporate the 50% cap into the legislation. We still don’t have the bill. “Unless the bill is with us, I am unable to comment on it,” she stated.”When the measure is presented, we will review it and render a decision.

The bill pertaining to women’s reservations was unanimously approved. Asaduddin Owaisi, Arvind Sawant (Sena UBT), and Kiren Rijiju called me. Amit Shah was present as well. They informed us that they have also had conversations with the DMK, Congress, and SP. They have an idea in mind.According to Sule, delimitation based solely on population may be unfair to southern states. Amit Shah and Kiren Rijiju proposed a 50 percent formula for each state, she



continued. Sule’s explanation coincided with mounting rumors that the NCP (SP) would back the delimitation bill in Parliament and join the NDA.Sule stated that her party is still committed to the INDIA alliance, ruling out a move to the NDA. We are the subject of several rumors. Every piece of information comes from a source. People are disparaging our party. We are not going anywhere. We are in an alliance with India.” Sule emphasized. The delimitation bill was clarified on the same day that senior Congress leader P Chidambaram asserted that the BJP is courting the DMK and the NCP (SP) to get their support for the 131st Constitution Amendment Bill, which the government plans to introduce during the Monsoon Session of Parliament. He pleaded

with the two regional parties to oppose the legislation.He wrote on X, “The BJP is reportedly courting the NCP (SP) and the DMK to secure the necessary votes to support the new version of the failed Bill after splitting the TMC.” Since the last session, the ruling NDA has gained support due to splits in the Trinamool Congress and Shiv Sena but still lacks the two-thirds majority required for a Constitutional Amendment Bill. The DMK’s strained relationship with the INDIA alliance, following Congress’ partnership with TVK in Tamil Nadu, raises the Centre’s expectations for issue-based support. The government plans to introduce the delimitation bill in the upcoming Monsoon Session, contingent upon securing two-thirds support.

Pawar Camps Realignment Buzz Is Fueled by a Late-Night Meeting at D Fadnavis’ House

New Delhi, July 15: Ajit Pawar, the leader of the Nationalist Congress Party, passed away six months ago. While landing at an airstrip in Baramati, the family’s financial and political stronghold, his hired aircraft crashed.By elevating his wife, Suneeta Pawar, to the role of party leader and deputy chief minister, Pawar skillfully handled the immediate fallout from his passing and the ensuing power struggle.And the state’s political scene appeared to be tranquil. However, it hasn’t been behind the scenes. Now that the publicity surrounding her appointment has subsided, there are rumors of dissatisfaction inside the party, with at least one senior politician publicly contesting her leadership of the NCP. Sachchidanand Singh, the national secretary, has questioned how she was chosen to lead the party. “Illegal, non-existent, and void” is how others have described the procedure.Uncertainty exists on both sides as well.The future of the “original” NCP, which Sharad Pawar founded and led for 24 years, is becoming more and more uncertain, especially after sources told that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, which is allied with the Ajit Pawar faction, is eager to win over MPs from the Sharad Pawar camp in order to advance important bills in this parliamentary session. Naturally, this raises the possibility of a second uprising, similar to the one that occurred with the Shiv Sena last month, when six MPs switched sides.In light of this, it has drawn criticism because NCP leaders from both sides of the Pawar family split met late at night at the residence of Maharashtra Chief Min-



ister Devendra Fadnavis.The meeting went on for more than an hour.Praful Patel and Sunil Tatkare were the earliest members of the Ajit Pawar group. Jayant Patil, the camp leader of Sharad Pawar, then appeared. The timing of the gathering of factions amid uncertainty about the future of their respective organizations was noteworthy, in part because there was speculation of a family reunion and a realignment of the rival NCP groupings following Ajit Pawar’s passing. What that realignment could mean for Maharashtra politics is quite the question.

The Ajit Pawar group, which has so far played third fiddle in the ruling Mahayuti alliance, may be able to claim a larger share of power in the cabinet if it maintains control. However, if the Sharad Pawar camp wins, that coalition will be weakened, partially compensating for the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi’s loss of momentum and numbers due to the

Sena 2.0 split.The conference was titled “regarding the disqualification issue of the Islampur municipality president” on paper. At least that’s what reporters were told by Jayant Patil, whose party held that position. He said, “I was there for no more than fifteen minutes.”

Others have characterized the meeting between Fadnavis and Jayant Patil as “routine,” but speculation of a split arises from Patil’s one-on-one discussions with lawmakers from Sharad Pawar’s camp. Some within the Ajit Pawar group suggest the nighttime meeting of senior leaders from rival factions may indicate more than mere coincidence. Meanwhile, Supriya Sule of the Sharad Pawar camp dismissed the possibility of an alliance with the BJP, emphasizing that such rumors are unfounded and asserting their commitment to the INDIA bloc, an anti-BJP alliance. She also noted that meetings do not imply political alignment.

A BJP council member re-takes the oath in a Keralan prison

New Delhi, July 15: A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) councillor, R Sugathan, has made history by retaking his oath of office inside Vyyur Central Jail, following a directive from the Kerala High Court. This event marks the first instance in Kerala where a municipal councillor has taken the constitutional oath while incarcerated. Sugathan, who represents the Vazhottukonam ward in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, was sworn in by Mayor VV Rajesh at 11 am in the jail’s library hall, attended by officials, members of the media, and fellow councillors.The high court mandated Sugathan and 19 other councillors to retake their oaths after their previous oaths, taken in December, were deemed inconsistent with the proper format. The councillors had incorrectly sworn in the names of local Hindu deities

and social reformers, rather than in the name of God as stipulated. While Sugathan’s counterparts managed to retake their oaths last month, he was unable to do so due to his arrest under the Kerala Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act (KAAPA) related to an attempt to murder case.This situation poses a significant risk to the BJP’s control over the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, where they hold a fragile simple majority of 51 out of 100 seats. According to the Kerala Municipality Act, any councillor who misses three consecutive council meetings risks losing their membership. Should Sugathan be disqualified, the BJP would drop below the necessary majority threshold. Despite these challenges, Mayor VV Rajesh has expressed optimism about the BJP completing its five-year term in the corporation.

Students’ dissatisfaction with the CBSE’s digital grading system is highlighted by SC

New Delhi, July 15: Concerned about students’ “frustration” with the CBSE’s digital marking system, the Supreme Court on Wednesday asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta for help in hearing a PIL that asked the CBSE and the Center to create rules for administering exams using the on-screen marking (OSM) system.Instead of reviewing actual paper scripts, teachers use the CBSE’s OSM evaluation system, a digital grading method, to evaluate scanned copies of actual answer sheets on a computer.A bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said, “Look at the amount of frustration of young children,” and asked the solicitor general for help in handling the case. There seem to be systematic “creeping problems” in the

digital review process, according to the bench, which also includes Justices Joy-malya Bagchi and V Mohana.We are not asking for your help in an antagonistic manner. “There are some issues.” Justice Bagchi informed the solicitor general, requesting an update on the case.The government is taking the systemic problems seriously, the top law officer told the bench, even if the individual marksheet anomalies listed in the plea have mostly been fixed.He stated that a one-person commission headed by S Radha Chauhan has been established to examine the evaluation system and suggest any necessary systemic adjustments.

The SG stated, “We are not taking this negatively. The committee is already investigating the complaints, he said. The panel

has now scheduled a follow-up hearing for next week and requested that the solicitor general inform it of the CBSE’s actions. Rakesh Binjola filed the PIL via attorney Laxmikant Matadan Shukla.The petition asks the Center and the CBSE to establish rules for administering CBSE Board exams using the OSM evaluation method and to form a powerful committee to oversee and carry out these changes.

Additionally, the petitioner has asked for instructions to relax the minimum qualifying score requirements for students who have already obtained provisional admissions or passed entrance exams, as well as to exempt them from the 75% or other minimum Class 12 mark requirements required for admission to various courses.

Delhi High Court to consider a request for orders to hospitalize Sonam Wangchuk

New Delhi, July 15: A plea to hospitalize and force-feed activist Sonam Wangchuk, who has been on a 17-day hunger strike, was listed by the Delhi High Court on Wednesday for hearing on Thursday. It requested that law enforcement officials from the Delhi and Union governments attend the hearing.Wangchuk’s walkout is a component of the Cockroach Janta Party’s (CJP) demonstration calling for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmaendra Pradhan due to purported anomalies in the testing process.When the matter was scheduled for hearing, the court took note of its urgency. “Heard the petitioner who shows up in person. List/post tomorrow [Thursday] in consideration of the necessity. A bench consisting of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia declared, “Let a copy of this order be served upon the additional solicitor general (ASG) and

the standing counsel representing the Delhi government (civil).”The court was approached by attorney Rakesh Kumar Saini, who claimed that Wangchuk had lost 8.5 kg and that his health had seriously declined. He warned that if the fast continues for the following two days, his life might be in jeopardy. “It would be a matter of great shame for the country and the world if he passes away,” Saini pleaded. According to the petition, Wangchuk has been on a hunger strike since June 28 and no government representative has spoken to the demonstrators about their requests in the last 20 days. The plea said that the government showed no empathy and was treating him “like a hardcore criminal, terrorist, or traitor to the nation.”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 Drèze, Lalita Ramdas, and Kavita Srivastava, urged Wangchuk to put an end to his hunger strike. In a post on X, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav stated, “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.”Since June 20, the CJP has been demonstrating in Jantar Mantar in Delhi. It surfaced in the midst of controversy regarding statements purportedly made by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant at a hearing on giving attorneys the title of “senior.” “Youngsters” were purportedly called “cockroaches” and “parasites” by the CJI. Later on, he stated that he had been misquoted and that the comments were aimed at people who were pursuing legal careers with “fake and bogus degrees.”

Amid attacks in the Gulf, the center orders real-time monitoring of Indian seafarers

New Delhi, July 15:The Indian government has mandated the creation of a comprehensive dashboard by the shipping authority to monitor Indian seafarers aboard vessels operating in the Middle East, in response to escalating maritime security concerns. Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal emphasized the need for real-time data on Indian seafarers across the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and Gulf of Oman, irrespective of the vessels’ flags. The dashboard is intended to track various parameters including vessel position, ownership, cargo details, crew size, crew wellbeing, threat assessments, intended trips, next ports of call, and facility availability.

During a high-level inter-ministerial meeting,

Sonowal stressed the importance of ensuring every Indian seafarer’s safety and wellbeing, particularly in light of recent maritime attacks that resulted in casualties among Indian nationals aboard the vessels MT Al Bahiyah and MT Mombasa. The minister has mandated real-time monitoring and the appointment of liaison officers for affected seafarers, who will coordinate medical updates, travel documentation, and repatriation assistance for families.The meeting included key officials from the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Ministry of External Affairs, and the Indian Navy, focusing on evaluating security risks and reviewing emergency response actions. Sonowal condemned the attacks on civilian merchant

vessels and recognized the critical role of seafarers in global supply chains.

Additionally, the government will collaborate closely with Indian embassies in Iran, Oman, and other nations impacted by the maritime security crisis to ensure timely information sharing on navigational safety and medical evacuations. Efforts to address breaches of maritime safety regulations through international maritime organizations were also highlighted. Finally, Sonowal asserted the importance of conducting new threat assessments and insisted that ship owners ensure proper support and information for Indian seafarers before they set sail, reflecting India’s commitment to their safety amidst ongoing challenges in the region.

A dispute arises as Taslima Nasreen is scheduled to return to Kolkata after two decades



New Delhi, July 15: Nearly 20 years after being forced to leave the city due to violent protests over her works, Taslima Nasreen, a human rights activist and author from Bangladesh, is scheduled to return to Kolkata. Following protests over accusations of blasphemy in her autobiographical novel, Dwikhandito (Divided), the 63-year-old author was forced to leave Kolkata.

The book was outlawed by the CPM-led government at the time. The author

currently has a long-term residency permit in Delhi after living in Kolkata from 2004 to 2007. In 2026, on August 1, she is expected to participate in a demonstration against fundamentalism at Rabindra Sadan. Following a joint invitation from three organizations, this will be her first trip to the city since 2007. The author, who was previously accused by the Bangladeshi government of defaming Islam, will attend a civic reception in her honor before reciting some of her poetry and participating in a conversation, according to the organizers. Author Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, state finance minister Swapan Dasgupta, and chief minister Suvenudu Adhikari are also anticipated to attend. A political controversy has already been triggered by the impending visit.”I had instructed Taslima Nasreen to be sent to Bengal by the state government. Why should Taslima Nasreen’s voice be silenced?

The previous Left administration prohibited her novel, Lajja, which she authored about the horrors experienced by a Hindu family in Bangladesh.Samik

Bhattacharya, the head of the state BJP, declared, “We welcome her visit to Kolkata.” Lajja, which is still prohibited in Bangladesh, depicts the violence and intolerance that Bangladeshi Hindus and other religious minorities endure.Akhruzzaman, a Trinamool MLA, asserted that the writer’s repeated criticism of Muslims is the only reason the “double-engine government” is embracing her.

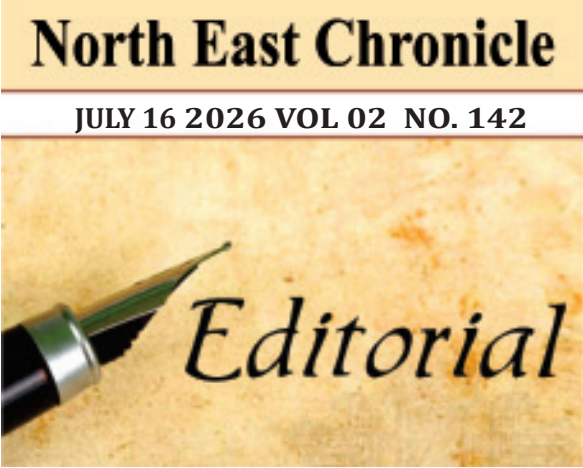
Taslima Nasreen, a Bangladeshi writer known for her critiques of the Muslim community and Islamic Shariat, is set to visit Bengal on August 1, a visit welcomed by minister Agnimitra Paul, who noted her previous exclusion under the prior government. He emphasized that the current administration under Chief Minister Suvenudu Adhikari celebrates this as a victory for secularism. In contrast, ISF MLA Naushad Siddiqui criticized the visit as a political maneuver by the BJP to distract from their unfulfilled promises regarding the Annapurna Scheme, electricity, and women’s safety, suggesting that it aims to provoke public sentiment against Muslims.

Maharashtra’s underreported borrowing and deficit exceeded the legal ceiling, according to the Center’s Auditor CAG

New Delhi, July 15: Contrary to what the state government stated in its Finance Accounts, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) discovered that Maharashtra’s actual fiscal deficit for 2024–2025 exceeded the 3% cap set by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act. The government reported to the legislature that its revenue deficit was Rs 29,994.76 crore (0.66% of GDP) and its fiscal deficit was Rs 1,24,208.74 crore (2.74% of GDP).However, the state’s actual fiscal deficit increased to Rs 1,44,926.46 crore (3.20% of GDP) after accounting for off-budget borrowings, incorrect expenditure classification, and unpaid liabilities, while the revenue deficit increased to Rs 36,342.29 crore (0.80% of GDP), according to the CAG’s post-audit assessment. The FRBM Act mandates that states maintain their fiscal deficit below 3% of GDP in order to ensure prudent borrowing, which makes the change noteworthy. After all obligations were recorded, Maharashtra exceeded that level, according to the audit. Over the last five years, the state’s financial situation has significantly deteriorated, according to the CAG. Due to ongoing income deficits, growing capital expenditures, and rising net loans and advances, the gross fiscal deficit nearly quadrupled from Rs 71,558 crore in 2020–2021 to Rs 1.24 lakh crore in 2024–2025. The audit also found that in order to close the growing gap between its revenue and expenses, the government has grown more reliant on borrowing and other forms of finance.

The Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) off-budget borrowing of Rs 18,440 crore during 2024–2025 was the largest adjustment made by the CAG. Despite the fact that the government is in charge of repaying the principle and interest through budgetary allocations, the state’s fiscal deficit estimates did not account for these borrowings, which were raised from HUDCO against a state government guarantee. The study states that MSRDC raised Rs 2,500 crore in 2022–2023, Rs 7,700 crore in 2023–2024, and Rs 18,440 crore in 2024–2025. As of March 31, 2025, the total amount of outstanding off-budget borrowing was Rs 28,325 crore. Maharashtra’s total outstanding public debt and other liabilities rose from Rs 8.59 lakh crore recorded in the Finance Accounts to Rs 8.87 lakh crore after accounting for these borrowings.After taking into consideration the off-budget debt, outstanding liabilities also increased to 19.58% of GDP. Besides off-budget borrowing, the CAG noted accounting irregularities that understated the deficit, including misclassification of Rs 4,069.91 crore in revenue and capital expenditure, non-adjustment of Rs 762.49 crore in interest, and Rs 1,515.23 crore from cess and fees not transferred. These issues raised the revenue deficit by Rs 6,347.63 crore and the fiscal deficit by Rs 20,717.72 crore.

Additionally, Rs 1,456.48 crore in interest payments and Rs 250 crore in loan repayments on MSRDC’s off-budget borrowings were improperly classified as capital expenditure, misleadingly inflating capital spending.



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Why Advanced AI Is Still Far from Being Truly Conscious

The article examines recent claims that advanced artificial intelligence systems may be showing signs of consciousness, arguing that such conclusions are premature. It discusses research on Anthropic’s AI model, Claude, which identified internal processing patterns resembling a “global workspace”—a concept from cognitive science suggesting that conscious experience involves information being broadly shared across different parts of different regions of the brain. While this similarity has generated excitement, the author emphasizes that consciousness and intelligence are not the same. A machine can perform highly sophisticated tasks, hold information temporarily, and produce convincing conversations without possessing subjective experiences or awareness. The article argues that people often mistake intelligent behavior for evidence of consciousness because humans naturally associate the two, even though they are conceptually distinct.

The discussion also explores the long-standing philosophical challenge of defining consciousness itself. Scientists and philosophers continue to debate what gives rise to subjective experience, and there is still no universally accepted explanation. While intelligence can be measured through problem-solving, learning, reasoning, or language use, consciousness refers to the inner, first-person experience of being aware. This distinction is crucial because an AI system may demonstrate remarkable competence in completing tasks without having any internal experience comparable to human feelings, emotions, or self-awareness. The ability to generate fluent language, answer complex questions, or even appear empathetic does not necessarily indicate that an AI possesses conscious thought.

Another important theme is the growing tendency to anthropomorphize AI systems. Humans naturally attribute emotions, intentions, and personalities to objects that display human-like behavior, whether they are virtual assistants, chatbots, or animated characters. As AI models become increasingly sophisticated in conversation, this psychological tendency becomes even stronger. The article cautions that convincing dialogue should not be mistaken for genuine understanding or conscious awareness. Language models are designed to identify patterns in enormous datasets and generate statistically likely responses rather than experiencing thoughts or emotions in the way humans do.

The article also highlights the importance of embodiment, noting that human consciousness emerges from living brains that are inseparable from the biological bodies and environments in which they exist.

Human experiences are shaped by sensations such as touch, pain, hunger, movement, and interaction with the physical world. These bodily experiences continuously influence perception, memory, decision-making, and emotion. Unlike biological brains, AI systems are computer programs running on silicon hardware, and there is currently no compelling evidence that computational processes alone can create subjective experience. Many researchers believe that consciousness may depend on biological processes that extend beyond information processing alone.

In addition, the article argues that similarities between AI architectures and theories of human cognition should be interpreted carefully. Discovering that an AI model organizes information in ways that resemble certain cognitive theories does not necessarily mean it has become conscious. Instead, similar information-processing strategies may simply represent efficient solutions to complex computational problems. Nature and engineering often arrive at comparable functional outcomes through entirely different mechanisms. Just as airplanes achieve flight without flapping wings like birds, artificial intelligence may solve reasoning and language tasks without reproducing the conscious experiences associated with the human mind.

The discussion further notes that ongoing AI research remains valuable because studying advanced systems can improve scientific understanding of both machine intelligence and human cognition. Investigating how language models process information may provide insights into reasoning, memory, and learning, even if these systems are not conscious. At the same time, the article argues that extraordinary claims about machine consciousness require extraordinary evidence. Researchers should distinguish between observable computational behavior and subjective experience, which remains inaccessible through current scientific methods.

The article concludes that although AI capabilities continue to advance rapidly and deserve careful study, current language models should not be regarded as conscious beings. Overestimating AI’s mental capacities risks misunderstanding both the technology and the unique nature of human consciousness, making it essential to distinguish impressive computational performance from genuine subjective awareness. Maintaining this distinction will help ensure that public discussions about artificial intelligence remain grounded in scientific evidence rather than speculation, allowing society to evaluate AI’s benefits, limitations, and ethical implications with greater clarity and realism.

Palantir’s Foothold in Britain: Innovation, Influence, and the Fight Over Public Data

The rapid expansion of Palantir Technologies across the United Kingdom has sparked one of the most significant debates about technology, public services, and national sovereignty in recent years. Originally founded in the United States with financial backing from the CIA’s investment arm, Palantir has grown into one of the world’s most influential data analytics companies, supplying software to governments, intelligence agencies, military organizations, and healthcare systems. While supporters argue that the company’s advanced data platforms can transform public services, critics question whether Britain has become overly dependent on a foreign technology provider whose business interests extend into military surveillance, immigration enforcement, and defense operations around the world.

At the center of this controversy lies the National Health Service’s £330 million Federated Data Platform (FDP), one of the largest technology contracts ever awarded by the NHS. The platform was introduced with ambitious promises of improving patient care, reducing waiting lists, streamlining hospital operations, and enabling healthcare professionals to make faster, data-driven decisions. Government ministers and NHS executives described the project as a revolutionary step toward modernizing Britain’s healthcare infrastructure. However, recent investigations, internal documents, Freedom of Information requests, and testimony from healthcare professionals have painted a far more complicated picture. Questions are now being asked not only about the platform’s effectiveness but also about the procurement process, lobbying activities, long-term financial costs, and Britain’s increasing reliance on proprietary technology

developed overseas.

The concept behind the Federated Data Platform is straightforward. The NHS generates enormous amounts of information every day through hospitals, GP surgeries, pharmacies, laboratories, and specialist clinics. Historically, much of this information has remained isolated within separate systems, making it difficult for healthcare providers to coordinate treatment efficiently. Palantir’s Foundry software was designed to connect these separate data sources into a unified platform capable of providing real-time insights, predicting healthcare demand, optimizing hospital resources, and improving patient outcomes. In theory, such a system could reduce waiting times, improve cancer diagnosis pathways, and help hospitals allocate staff and equipment more effectively.

Official statements from NHS England have highlighted encouraging adoption figures. Nearly two-thirds of NHS trusts have reportedly gone live with aspects of the Federated Data Platform, while government ministers have repeatedly cited the project as evidence of Britain’s commitment to digital transformation. Political leaders have promoted flagship applications such as Cancer 360, a tool intended to monitor cancer treatment pathways and reduce delays in diagnosis and care. Public announcements have described these initiatives as groundbreaking innovations capable of reshaping healthcare delivery across England.

Yet beneath these optimistic announcements, evidence gathered from NHS staff presents a more cautious assessment. Internal usage data obtained through Freedom of Information requests suggests that many trusts officially counted as participating have made minimal

practical use of the platform. Some hospitals reportedly have not logged into key FDP applications for extended periods despite being listed as active users. Healthcare professionals interviewed during independent investigations described software that often duplicated functions already available through existing systems while introducing additional complexity into everyday clinical workflows.

One of the most significant concerns involves performance. NHS analysts have reported that relatively simple database queries sometimes require several minutes to complete, slowing routine operational tasks. Clinicians responsible for managing patient waiting lists have expressed frustration over limitations within the software, including difficulties editing or updating information directly through the platform. Some trusts have concluded that their existing locally developed systems remain faster, more flexible, and better suited to their operational needs than Palantir’s centralized solution. Senior NHS officials have also privately acknowledged concerns regarding the platform’s user experience, suggesting that adoption challenges extend beyond political opposition into practical usability.

The debate surrounding Cancer 360 illustrates the broader issue of implementation versus expectation. Widely promoted as an innovative solution capable of accelerating cancer treatment, the application reportedly saw relatively limited adoption during its initial rollout. While Palantir maintains that it merely provides the underlying software and that individual NHS trusts determine how applications are deployed, critics argue that public claims about nationwide transformation have outpaced actual operational use. Technology alone

cannot improve healthcare unless clinicians find it practical, reliable, and sufficiently integrated into existing clinical workflows.

Financial considerations add another layer of controversy. Although the headline value of the Federated Data Platform contract stands at approximately £330 million, critics argue that the true cost is considerably higher. Individual NHS trusts have reportedly received millions of pounds in implementation funding to support adoption, while external consultancy firms have secured substantial contracts to assist with deployment, training, and change management. These additional expenditures raise questions about whether the total investment accurately reflects the project’s long-term financial commitment. Large-scale digital transformation projects frequently involve hidden costs associated with migration, customization, staff training, ongoing maintenance, and software licensing.

Perhaps the most strategically important concern is the issue of vendor lock-in. Palantir’s Foundry platform is proprietary software, meaning organizations that build operational processes, dashboards, analytical models, and reporting systems within the platform may find it difficult and expensive to migrate elsewhere in the future. NHS data analysts have reportedly warned that years of analytical work could become inaccessible or require extensive redevelopment if the health service later decided to replace Palantir with another supplier. Such dependency can significantly reduce negotiating power during future contract renewals while limiting technological flexibility for public institutions.

Vendor lock-in is a familiar challenge throughout the technology industry.

Businesses, governments, and public agencies often become increasingly dependent upon software providers whose products integrate deeply into everyday operations. Migrating away from such systems frequently requires major investments in infrastructure, retraining personnel, rebuilding applications, and transferring vast amounts of sensitive information. Critics argue that when essential public services rely upon proprietary foreign software, technological dependence may evolve into a broader issue affecting national resilience, procurement competition, and long-term strategic autonomy.

Palantir’s international client portfolio contributes to public unease. The company provides technology to American defense agencies, intelligence organizations, immigration authorities, and military partners. Supporters emphasize that Palantir supplies software rather than controlling government policy or operational decisions. Nevertheless, critics argue that Britain’s increasing reliance on a company closely associated with national security operations abroad raises legitimate questions about governance, accountability, and public trust. Concerns are often less about technical capability than about whether critical national infrastructure should depend heavily upon private companies headquartered overseas.

The political dimensions of Palantir’s expansion have attracted equally intense scrutiny. Investigations have revealed that the company invested heavily in building relationships within Westminster and Whitehall through lobbying firms and political advisers. Reports suggest that prominent consultancy organizations organized meetings, dinners, and policy discussions aimed at introducing Palantir execu-

tives to senior decision-makers across government. Although many such activities complied with existing regulations, transparency campaigners argue that Britain’s lobbying rules remain insufficiently robust, allowing significant influence to be exercised without comprehensive public disclosure.

These concerns extend beyond healthcare. Over recent years, Palantir has secured contracts across numerous British government departments and public institutions, including financial regulators, defense organizations, local authorities, and agencies responsible for national infrastructure. The Ministry of Defence has entered into long-term strategic agreements involving potentially hundreds of millions of pounds in future spending on defense technology. As Palantir’s presence expands throughout government, debates increasingly focus on whether sufficient safeguards exist to ensure competition, transparency, and effective oversight.

Supporters of Palantir strongly reject many of these criticisms. They argue that modern governments require sophisticated data integration platforms capable of processing enormous volumes of information securely and efficiently. According to advocates, healthcare systems around the world face growing pressures arising from aging populations, workforce shortages, rising costs, and increasing demand for complex treatment. Advanced analytics, artificial intelligence, and integrated data systems represent essential tools for improving productivity and patient outcomes. From this perspective, criticism based primarily upon Palantir’s American origins or defense-related clientele risks overlooking the practical benefits of advanced digital infrastructure.

Beyond Screen Time: Why Children Need More Freedom This Summer

Every summer, parents face the same challenge: how to keep children active, happy, and engaged while school is out. For many families, the conversation quickly turns to screen time. Smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles, and social media often dominate children’s free hours, leading parents to worry about excessive digital consumption and its impact on physical and mental well-being. While reducing screen time is a worthwhile goal, it is only part of the solution. Equally important is creating opportunities for children to experience real-world independence, outdoor play, and meaningful social interaction. A fulfilling childhood is shaped not only by what children avoid but also by what they are encouraged to do.

Modern childhood has changed dramatically over the past few decades. Children today generally spend less time outdoors, have fewer opportunities for unstructured play, and are more likely to participate in adult-organized activities than previous generations. Many families rely on carefully planned schedules that include sports practices, music lessons, tutoring sessions, and supervised events. While these activities offer valuable learning experiences, they often leave little room for children to explore, solve problems independently, or simply enjoy free time with friends. As a result, spontaneous adventures that once defined childhood have become increasingly rare.

Technology has undoubtedly contributed to these changes, but it is not the only factor. Urban development, heavier traffic, busy family schedules, concerns about safety, and changing parenting expectations have all influenced how children spend their time. Many parents understandably worry about accidents, crime, or other risks, lead-

ing them to supervise nearly every activity. Although these concerns come from a place of care, constant supervision may unintentionally limit children’s opportunities to develop confidence, resilience, and decision-making skills.

Independent play offers unique developmental benefits that structured activities cannot fully replace. When children organize their own games, settle disagreements, invent rules, and solve unexpected problems, they learn important social and emotional skills. They discover how to negotiate, cooperate, promise, and adapt. These experiences help build self-confidence because children begin to trust their own judgment rather than relying on adults to guide every decision. Even small moments of independence, such as walking to a nearby friend’s house, riding a bicycle through the neighborhood, or playing at a local park with peers, contribute to a child’s growing sense of responsibility.

Outdoor play also supports physical health in ways that screens cannot. Running, climbing, cycling, playing ball games, or simply exploring natural surroundings encourages movement that strengthens muscles, improves coordination, and promotes cardiovascular fitness. Exposure to fresh air and sunlight can support healthy sleep patterns and overall well-being. In an era when childhood obesity and sedentary lifestyles are growing public health concerns, regular outdoor activity has become increasingly valuable.

Mental health is another important consideration. Childhood and adolescence are periods of rapid emotional development, and children need opportunities to experience manageable challenges. Independent play allows them to encounter minor setbacks, resolve conflicts,

and build coping skills without immediate adult intervention. These experiences foster resilience, teaching children that they are capable of overcoming difficulties on their own. Research has consistently suggested that regular physical activity, social interaction, and time spent outdoors are associated with lower levels of stress and improved emotional well-being.

Friendships often flourish during unstructured play. Unlike organized activities with fixed schedules and adult supervision, free play encourages children to communicate, collaborate, and create their own entertainment. Whether building forts, inventing games, riding bikes, or simply talking with friends, these moments strengthen relationships and develop communication skills. They also provide opportunities for creativity, imagination, and teamwork that cannot easily be replicated in digital environments.

This does not mean technology should be viewed as the enemy. Digital devices provide educational resources, creative tools, entertainment, and opportunities to stay connected with friends and family. Many children use technology responsibly and benefit from online learning, coding, digital art, and collaborative projects. The goal is not to eliminate technology but to achieve a healthier balance between digital experiences and real-world activities.

Parents can encourage this balance by creating environments where outdoor play becomes the easier and more appealing option. Instead of focusing solely on rules about limiting screen time, families can actively plan activities that encourage exploration and independence. Visiting local parks, organizing neighborhood games, encouraging bicycle rides, gardening together, or allowing children to spend time

with friends outdoors can gradually shift daily routines toward more active lifestyles.

Building independence should always be appropriate for a child’s age, maturity, and local environment. Younger children may begin with supervised outdoor play that gradually becomes less restrictive as they demonstrate responsibility. Older children can learn practical skills such as safely crossing streets, understanding neighborhood boundaries, recognizing emergencies, and communicating with parents when plans change. These lessons prepare children to make sensible decisions while giving parents greater confidence in allowing increasing levels of freedom.

Communities also have an important role to play. Safe parks, playgrounds, walking paths, and recreational spaces encourage children to spend more time outside. Neighborhood events, community sports, and local clubs help families connect with one another, making parents feel more comfortable allowing children to play together. Strong community relationships create informal networks of support that benefit both children and adults.

Schools can contribute by recognizing the importance of recess, outdoor education, and opportunities for independent problem-solving. While academic achievement remains important, children also benefit from time spent interacting freely with classmates, participating in physical activities, and developing interpersonal skills beyond the classroom. Educational environments that balance academic learning with opportunities for creativity and play help support healthy development.

Parents themselves often discover unexpected benefits when children become more independent. As children spend time playing safely with

friends or exploring familiar environments, adults may find opportunities to connect with neighbors, enjoy conversations, or simply experience moments of relaxation. Communities become stronger when families know one another and children feel comfortable playing together in shared spaces.

Creating healthier childhoods does not require dramatic changes overnight. Small steps can make a meaningful difference. Families might begin by scheduling daily outdoor time, encouraging neighborhood friendships, reducing unnecessary car trips in favor of walking where appropriate, or allowing children to take on age-appropriate responsibilities. Over time, these experiences build confidence for both children and parents.

Of course, every family’s circumstances are different. Urban neighborhoods, rural communities, and suburban areas present different opportunities and challenges. Safety considerations vary from place to place, and parents should always make decisions based on their local environment and their child’s individual maturity. Independence is not about removing guidance or ignoring risks; it is about gradually expanding children’s opportunities to learn, explore, and grow within appropriate boundaries.

As another summer begins, families have an opportunity to rethink what makes childhood memorable. The moments children often cherish most are rarely the hours spent looking at screens. Instead, they remember riding bicycles with friends, discovering new places, inventing games, climbing trees, playing sports in local parks, and enjoying simple adventures that encouraged curiosity and imagination. These experiences foster not only happier summers but also lifelong confidence, resilience, and social skills.

Tech Mahindra Q1 PAT can rise over 40% YoY on firm revenue growth

New Delhi: Tech Mahindra Q1 Preview:IT major Tech Mahindra is likely to report strong double-digit profit growth when it releases numbers for the April-June quarter (Q1) of the financial year 2026-27 (FY27) later this week, brokerage estimates suggest. The company’s board will consider and declare the audited financial results on Thursday, July 16.Along with Tech Mahindra, Wipro will also announce its Q1 earnings tomorrow. Execution focus under the incumbent CEO Mohit Joshi, coupled with the telecom moat (~33 per cent of revenues) driving mega deal wins in Orange and Telefonica, to drive operating leverage, said Anand Rathi. The margins are also expected to grow, with the company expected to post deal TCV in the range of \$900-1000 million.Led by a ramp-up of strong large deals TCV won in FY26, partly offset by seasonal weakness in the Comviva business, ICICI Securities expects a 16.3 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) and 3 per cent quarter-on-quarter (Q-o-Q) growth in revenue for the quarter under review to ₹15,530 crore. In constant currency (CC) terms, the revenue could rise 1.1 per cent and 0.7 per cent in

dollar terms.

While H1 is typically the strongest period for IT companies, analysts largely expect a tepid show from IT companies as demand remains weak due to macro uncertainty and AI disruption, resulting in delayed deal closure and revenue conversion. Domestic brokerage Anand Rathi said that the results will be a modest “near-term negative” for Indian IT services. “The quarter points to stabilising demand rather than a meaningful recovery, and argues against expectations of a sharp near-term discretionary spending rebound. However, the continued strength in Consulting bookings, large AI transformation programs and Accenture’s confidence in the structural AI opportunity reinforce our view that scaled IT services vendors remain best positioned to capture AI-led spending as enterprise 8 deployments move from experimentation to production,” the brokerage added. As for Tech Mahindra, a top pick among several brokerages in the Indian IT space, expectations remain strong. On average, large deals could push revenue by 15 per cent.

Johnson’s® Baby aligns with evolving consumer trends through Milk & Rice range launch

Kohima: Johnson’s® Baby has announced the launch of its new Milk & Rice Range, introducing a skincare portfolio inspired by the nourishing benefits of milk proteins and rice bran protein for a baby’s delicate skin. Alongside the launch, the brand has rolled out its new ‘Poshan Ka Pe-hla Sparsh’ campaign, inspired by India’s traditional Annaprashan, or Mukhe Bhaat, ceremony, reimagining the milestone as a ‘Food for Skin Ritual’ that extends nourishment from a baby’s first foods to everyday skin-care.

The Johnson’s® Baby Milk & Rice Range includes Soap, Wash & Shampoo, Lotion, and Face & Body Cream enriched with milk proteins, rice bran protein, Vitamin E, glycerin and a multivitamin complex. According to the company, the products are clinically proven mild, pH balanced



and hypoallergenic, while the Nourishing Milk & Rice Lotion and Face & Body Cream provide up to 24-hour moisturisation through lightweight, fast-absorbing formulations that help strengthen the skin’s natural moisture barrier.Commenting on the launch, Peeyush Unnikat, Group Product Manager – Johnson’s® Baby, said the campaign celebrates the long-standing tradition of introducing milk and rice as a baby’s

first foods while extending the concept of nourishment to skincare from Day 1, reinforcing the brand’s commitment to trusted baby care.The campaign will be promoted across digital platforms and social media, supported by influencer collaborations nationwide to engage parents and amplify awareness of the new Johnson’s® Baby Milk & Rice Range and its message of care, nourishment and gentle skin protection.

Nomura flashes ‘Buy’ call On Nuvoco Vistas, sees 17% for this cement stock

Kohima: Cement stocks are in focus on the back of improving prices and easing cost pressures. But while the sector still faces seasonal challenges from the monsoon, Nomura believes one company is quietly strengthening its position

That company is Nuvoco Vistas. Nomura has maintained its ‘Buy’ rating on the stock with a target price of Rs 400, implying an upside of around 17% from its current market price

According to the brokerage house, the key factors driving the upside potential include stronger pricing, better cost management and a steady capacity expansion plan.Nomura on Nuvoco Vistas: ‘Buy’ rating stays in place One of the biggest positives, according to Nomura, came from cement prices

While the brokerage’s channel checks had suggested only a modest improvement in pricing, Nuvoco reported stronger realisations during the June quarter.The report stated, “Nuvoco’s reported cement realizations came in 7% higher q-q.”Furthermore, Nomura in its report noted that a major part of this improvement came from the non-trade segment, where prices improved much more sharply than anticipated, particularly in eastern India.Nomura believes this could have wider implications.Nomura has retained its target price of Rs 400 while raising its earnings expectations for the current financial year.It said, years unchanged and continues to expect earnings to remain ahead of broader market expectations. The brokerage also noted that the stock is currently trading at 8.6 times one-year forward Enterprise Value to Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation (EV/EBITDA).

Tata Elxsi falls 6% post Q1, brokerages bearish, see up to 16% downside

New Delhi:Tata Elxsi Q1 results review: Tata Elxsi reported its Q1FY27 results after market hours on Tuesday, delivering in-line performance for the April-June quarter (Q1FY27). The tech giant’s earnings were led by the company’s Media and Communication which recorded a growth of 2.9 per cent quarter-on-quarter (QoQ).

However, the tech giant’s counter came under pressure on Wednesday. At 10:25 AM, Tata Elxsi share price was trading 4.69 per cent lower at ₹3,524 per share on NSE. In comparison, Nifty 50 was up 0.67 per cent at 24,214.25. In intraday trade, the stock declined 6.16 per cent to touch the day’s low at ₹3,469.70 per share. Motilal Oswal noted that the first quarter does little to change the broader growth picture. The brokerage highlighted that revenue grew 1.3 per cent QoQ CC, broadly in line with expectations, but the improvement was largely driven by Media & Communications, while Transportation and Healthcare remained weak. “We believe meaningful growth will require a recovery in the larger Transportation business (55 per cent of revenue), where spending remains cautious, particularly across Europe,” the brokerage noted.

It further added that valuation continues to discount a stronger recovery than what is visible. MOFSL believes that revenue recovery remains concentrated in a few pockets, while Transportation demand has yet to turn and margins remain below historical levels.

The brokerage believes Tata Elxsi’s current valuation already reflects much of its expected growth. The stock is trading at 28 times its estimated earnings per share for FY27 and 24



times its estimated EPS for FY28, based on consensus estimates. At these valuation levels, the brokerage believes there is limited room for any earnings miss or operational disappointment, as expectations are already high. In the same light the brokerage has reduced its target price up to 16 per cent to ₹3,100 for the counter. P L Capital noted that Tata Elxsi delivered a mixed Q1FY27 performance. Revenue grew by 1.3 per cent Q-o-Q CC, while EBIT margin declined sharply by 330 bps Q-o-Q to 19.0 per cent, “below our and consensus estimates. Revenue growth was driven by the ramp-up of earlier wins in the M&C vertical.”

The brokerage noted that large deal ramps require higher upfront investments through in-

creased onsite presence, elevated subcon costs and transition expenses, which impacted margins by 150 bps Q-o-Q in Q1 and are expected to recover by Q4FY27.

Margins were further impacted by 220–230 basis points Q-o-Q owing to structural investments in Onsite sales and delivery personnel, AI infra and tools, higher provisioning related to a client bankruptcy, and elevated visa-related costs, which should recoup gradually over the medium to long-term.

However, factoring in the weak margin performance and continued investments, the brokerage reduced its FY27E and FY28E EBIT margin estimates by 130 bps and 110 bps to 20.0 per cent and 21.3 per cent, respectively.

HPCL, BPCL, IOC: \$10/bbl oil rise may cut Ebitda by ₹77000 cr, says Nomura

New Delhi: OMC stocks:Oil prices have reversed their course, threatening to once again dent oil marketing companies’ (OMCs) margins. According to estimates by Nomura, OMCs - namely Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) - may demonstrate immediate margin impact owing to higher crude oil costs amid stable retail prices.

Oil prices have spiked 10 per cent within the last two days, reversing the slide from ~\$100 per barrel (bbl) to \$70 per barrel post-ceasefire announcement.

In early Wednesday’s trade, Brent crude oil prices were up nearly 2 per cent at \$86/bbl as West Asia tensions rekindled. While Iran has announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz (SoH) and the US reinstated a naval blockade, commercial shipping per cent of Russian crude oil imports into India and 85-90 per cent of Saudi oil exports.

LTTS gains 9% on Q1 beat; analysts see limited upside despite margin gains

New Delhi: LTTS shares jump 9% after Q1 beat; brokerages stay cautious despite margin-led surprise

Shares of L&T Technology Services (LTTS) surged over 9 per cent in intra-day trade on Wednesday, July 15, after the engineering services company reported a better-than-expected performance for the June quarter, aided by robust margin expansion and healthy growth in its sustainability business.The stock climbed as much as 9.04 per cent to an intra-day high of ₹3,591 on the NSE. It later pared some gains and was trading at ₹3,583 apiece at 10:57 AM, up 8.80 per cent from its previous close.LTTS Q1 results

L&T Technology Services reported a 17.4 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) rise in net profit to ₹352 crore for the first quarter, while revenue increased 11.5 per cent to ₹2,940 crore, driven by growth in its mobility and sustainability businesses. The mobility business, which has remained under pressure due to tariffs and lower discretionary spending, returned to growth with a 0.8 per cent increase, while the sustainability business grew 11.3 per cent. The technology segment continued to lag, reporting a decline of around 11 per cent.Geographically, North America remained the key growth driver, supported by the auto, trucks and off-highway segments. However, this was partly offset by continued weakness in Europe amid an uncertain business environment and pressure from Chinese automakers. The company’s earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and

amortisation (Ebitda) margin expanded 200 basis points to 18.7 per cent. Chief Financial Officer Rajeev Gupta said around 80 basis points of the improvement came from cost optimisation, while the balance was driven by the two business segments. The brokerage expects EBIT margins to improve to around 15.8 per cent by FY27E, supported by a better business mix and improved execution.

Nomura: Neutral Analysts Abhishek Bhandari and Karan Nain of Nomura retained their ‘Neutral’ rating on LTTS. They marginally revised their FY27-FY28 earnings estimates by around 1-2 per cent and raised the target price to ₹3,180 from ₹3,150, valuing the stock at 20x FY28F EPS.

“Management expects sequential growth in both revenues and margins in the coming quarters. LTTS remains committed to delivering a 13-15 per cent revenue CAGR over the next five years while maintaining EBIT margins of 16-17 per cent. The company is on track to achieve a mid-16 per cent EBIT margin on or before 4QFY27E, driven by continued growth in the higher-margin Sustainability and Mobility businesses, improving Hi-Tech margins, and enhanced productivity through Engineering Intelligence solutions,” Nomura said.

Management commentary “Our diversified portfolio continues to demonstrate resilience, with the Sustainability segment maintaining double-digit annual growth and the

Mobility segment returning to growth during the quarter despite a dynamic market environment. Our Engineering Intelligence solutions are driving larger deal opportunities and deeper client engagements by embedding AI across products, workflows, systems and manufacturing processes,” Amit Chadha, chief executive officer and managing director, said in a statement. Brokerages largely remained cautious on LTTS despite the better-than-expected June quarter performance. While they acknowledged healthy margin expansion and improving management commentary, they said sustained deal wins, stronger execution and better revenue visibility over the coming quarters would be key triggers for a meaningful re-rating. Most retained their ‘Neutral’ ratings, with only marginal changes to earnings estimates and target prices.Motilal Oswal Financial Services: NeutralMotilal Oswal Financial Services maintained its ‘Neutral’ rating on the stock with a target price of ₹3,400, based on 20x FY28E EPS.“We model a USD revenue CAGR of around 7 per cent over FY26-28E, with around 5 per cent Y-o-Y USD growth in FY27E, as Sustainability remains the key growth driver, Mobility improves gradually and Hi-Tech recovers as delayed deals ramp up. While management commentary has turned more constructive, we believe a few more quarters of consistent deal conversion and execution will be needed before building in a stronger growth trajectory,” the brokerage said.

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Ather Energy surges 9%, market cap crosses ₹50,000 crore

New Delhi: Shares of Ather Energy hit a record high of ₹1,309.95, soaring 9 per cent on the BSE in Wednesday’s intra-day deals ahead of the board meeting for fund raising. The stock price of the electric two-wheeler (E2W) company surpassed its previous high of ₹1,254 touched on July 13, 2026.In the past three weeks, the stock rallied 32 per cent. It more than doubled or zoomed 101 per cent from its March 2026 low of ₹650.35 on the BSE. At 10:14 AM on Wednesday, Ather Energy quoted 7 per cent higher at ₹1,285, as compared to 0.7 per cent rise in the BSE Sensex. The average trading volume at the counter nearly doubled with a combined 6.6 million equity shares changing hands on the NSE and BSE sharp up move in the stock



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price helped Ather Energy’s market capitalisation cross the ₹50,000 crore-mark for the first time-ever. Today, Ather Energy’s market cap hit a high of ₹50,249 crore in intra-day deal The CoD approved the subscription of equity shares Its current E2W portfolio consists of two distinct product lines: the Ather 450 series, focused on performance-oriented customers, and the Ather Rizta, a convenience-first family scooter line launched in 2024.On June 12, 2026, the company intimated the stock exchanges that the Board of Directors approved raising of funds by way of issuance of securities of up to ₹2,500 crore in aggregate including a Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP) of up to ₹1,500 crore.

Trump threatens to bomb bridges and power plants unless Iran resumes talks

Washington: US President Donald Trump has threatened to strike Iran’s bridges and power plants next week if the country does not return to talks.

The comments, made in a Fox News interview, aired as the two countries exchanged fire for the fourth day in a row.

Trump earlier reversed a threat of a 20% fee on all Strait of Hormuz cargo shipping but resumed blockading Iranian ports.”Next week it gets really bad for them,” Trump said. “We’re going to knock out all their power plants. We’re going to knock out all their bridges unless they get to the table and negotiate.”Back in April, Trump threatened to bomb civilian infrastructure in Iran, including bridges and power plants.

UN human rights chief Volker Türk responded at the time by saying: “Under international law, deliberately attacking civilians and civilian infrastructure is a war crime.”

The 1949 Geneva Conventions on humanitarian conduct in war prohibit attacks on sites considered essential for civilians.”I’ll save the energy targets for last, but ultimately we’ll hit energy

targets,” Trump said in an interview on Special Report with Bret Baier that aired on Tuesday night.

He said US negotiators had conveyed to their Iranian counterparts on Tuesday evening that they “‘better make a deal, or you’re not going to have anything left’”.

The escalation in rhetoric comes after Trump said a 20% toll he had threatened to impose in the Strait of Hormuz would be replaced by “massive” trade and investment deals with Gulf states.

His announcement came hours before the US resumed its blockade of Iranian ports.

Renewed strikes between the US and Iran triggered a sharp rise in oil prices as tanker traffic through the Strait has virtually stalled.

US Central Command (Centcom) said late on Tuesday that its “forces began launching an additional round of strikes against Iran to continue degrading Iranian capabilities used to attack commercial shipping” in the key waterway.

In a statement late on Tuesday, US Admiral Brad Cooper said Iran had “intentionally targeted civilians” in the region by attacking seven commercial ships, which had resulted in



“nearly a dozen civilian crew members killed, missing, or injured”.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) said on Monday night that Iranian cruise missiles had targeted two national tankers, killing an Indian crew member and wounding eight others, four seriously.

Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) later confirmed the strikes via a statement to Telegram, where it said two tankers had ignored warnings, turned off navigation systems and attempted to pass through a mined route. It was unclear which other attacks the Centcom statement was referring to. The IRGC did not immediately comment.

In the early hours of Wednesday, Kuwait’s military said it was intercepting Iranian attack drones, while Bahrain activated air raid sirens.

“Kuwaiti air defences are currently engaging hostile drone attacks following the nefarious Iranian aggression,” the Kuwaiti army said. Bahrain’s interior ministry urged citizens and residents to remain calm and head to the nearest safe place.

Tehran said on Tuesday it had targeted US military facilities in Bahrain and Jordan after earlier hitting two United Arab Emirates tankers.

The ongoing strikes have underscored the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran accuses the US of interfering in its management of Hormuz - but controlling it means Tehran can also threaten the global economy.

On Monday, Trump declared that the US was now the “guardian” of the Strait of Hormuz, and vowed to impose a 20% charge on all cargo shipped through the

waterway to pay for protecting it.

Raising the stakes further, Trump said the US would also reimpose its naval blockade on Iran in a bid to further squeeze the country’s struggling economy.

In his latest post on Truth Social, Trump wrote: “I have decided to replace the 20% United States Reimbursement Fee with Trade and Investment Deals that the various Gulf States will be making into the United States.Those Investments will be MASSIVE but, at the same time, extraordinarily good for them, and their future.”

He also said the strait “is open to ALL Ship traffic except for Iran” and that “oil is flowing like never before, thanks to the awesome Power of the United States Military”.

Speaking later, after talks in Washington with the new Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi, Trump said: “I don’t like the concept of a fee, but at the same time, it’s not fair that we’re protecting this Strait for the entire world.”

He said he had changed his initial fee plan after receiving numerous calls from Gulf leaders.

In response to Trump’s announcement, Iran said it would remain in control of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Trump’s blockade decision “has, in a way, dismantled” an earlier agreed truce deal, the AFP news agency reported.

Gharibabadi also told state television, as quoted by Reuters news agency: “If the US thinks that by tightening its measures against us, its military actions and its economic blockade, we will return to negotiations, it is making a mistake.”The US first imposed a naval blockade of all Iranian ports in April to put pressure on Tehran. Roughly five weeks later, the US military said it had redirected 100 commercial vessels and disabled four under the blockade.

The US lifted the blockade in June as part of a deal - known as a memorandum of understanding - between the two countries that aimed to end the conflict, but a dispute over the strait has become a key point of contention. Meanwhile, shipping data shows traffic through the strait has slowed to a two-month low. The benchmark Brent Crude oil price has also risen sharply.

Five Killed, 25 Injured in Head-On Bus Collision



Islamabad: At least five people were killed and 25 others injured after two buses collided head-on on Tuesday night in Narang Mandi town of Sheikhupura district in Pakistan’s Punjab province. The accident occurred on Kala Khatai Road near Sidhanwali Stop.According to a report by Dunya News, a bus travelling from Lahore to Shakargarh collided with an oncoming bus while attempting to avoid a motorcycle. Following the impact, both buses

overturned and veered off the road into nearby fields. Five passengers died on the spot, while 25 others sustained injuries. Police and rescue teams rushed to the scene after receiving information about the accident.

The deceased and injured were shifted to a nearby hospital. Rescue officials said that three of the injured passengers were later referred to Lahore for advanced medical treatment as their condition was critical.

Labour must stop just writing a cheque for benefit claimants, says McFadden

London: Labour must stop “simply writing a cheque” for health and disability benefit claimants and will provide more job support instead, the work and pensions secretary has said.

Pat McFadden said the government was preparing to launch a renewed effort at welfare reform with a focus on encouraging more people with health conditions to get into work and off benefits.

“I don’t believe government fulfils its responsibilities simply by writing a cheque. I think we owe people more than that,” he told the Guardian.

Burnham has a chance to overhaul Pip. Here’s what a truly progressive system could look like

“Of course, for people who can never work, the system must always be there for them, and it always should be. But for those who could work, or could change their situation, then we’ve got to help them do that.”

On a visit to a jobcentre in south London, McFadden signalled that welfare reform could form the backbone of Labour’s response to two landmark government-backed reports.

Ministers are awaiting the final recommendations from Alan Milburn’s report into youth worklessness and Stephen Timms’s review of disability benefits. However, both have already highlighted deep-rooted problems with the welfare system and urged the government to take action.

In its interim report published



last week, the Timms review concluded that the personal independence payment (Pip), claimed by nearly 4 million people in England and Wales, was “not working” and suggested bold and radical proposals were needed to overhaul it.

In late May the first phase of the Milburn review urged a “whole system reset” involving welfare, schools, and employers to tackle a big increase in the number of young people out of work or education to more than a million.

McFadden, who commissioned both reviews, said work was under way on the government response in anticipation of the final reports this autumn. “Even before they’ve

reported, I’m already speaking to the Department for Education [and] the Department for Health. We’re going to have to respond to this as a government.

“It’s my job to put together a plan, a proposal, [that] changes the question of the welfare state from simply asking, ‘what benefits are you entitled to?’, to asking, ‘how can we help you live the fullest life?’”

McFadden has previously hinted that Labour could stage a fresh attempt at overhauling the welfare system after the government was forced into a humiliating partial U-turn to avoid a backbench rebellion over a £5bn package of cuts.

Ministers are grappling with tight constraints on the public finances, including a rising welfare bill amid spiralling health-related benefit caseloads, as well as growing pressures to spend on defence.

Questions are mounting about how Labour plans to respond before the expected arrival of Andy Burnham as prime minister next week, including about the makeup of the Makerfield MP’s cabinet.

McFadden has been floated by some Labour MPs as a candidate to be chancellor, who suggest that he should be picked over Ed Miliband as a safe pair of hands amid jitters in the financial markets.

Others are calling for a more radical

ical shift to help Labour overturn dismal opinion poll ratings, with time running out before the next general election.

Suggesting that he was focused on his current job, the work and pensions secretary said welfare reform would still be a priority for Burnham. The prime minister-in-waiting has also signalled a desire to tackle the issue.

“This is an agenda for all seasons,” McFadden said. “Because the Labour party should always believe in opportunity and work.”

The news comes as the government announced that it was now supporting 100,000 people on the highest level of health-related benefits – limited capability for work and work-related activity – through its Pathways to Work scheme, which provides no-strings attached support for claimants to help them gain more confidence to engage in the jobs market.

Meeting work coaches and people with health conditions who had been supported by the scheme at Kennington jobcentre, McFadden said the programme showed that Labour needed to approach welfare reform by offering people more employment support.

“You have to invest in the support,” he said. “In the past, people have been signed off [on benefits] and written off. That has – as we’ve heard from this morning’s group – often led to people feeling isolated, depressed, their condition becoming worse, not better.”

‘We are dying little by little here’: asylum seekers at mercy

UK: Huda and her two children aged 10 and 12 had been living in two rooms in a London hotel for six months when they were told with just a few days’ notice they would be moved. The 41-year-old engineering graduate from Tunisia fled death threats from extended family and is waiting for an asylum application to be processed.

The Home Office had

decided that Staycity, the hotel the family was staying in, would be closed as part of a government pledge that asylum seekers would be moved out of hotels and into military barracks or other forms of shared housing. The move followed protests by anti-migrant activists, with many arguing hotels were too luxurious to accommodate asylum seekers.

On 25 June, the Home

Office announced the closure of 20 hotels, following a previous announcement that closed 11 earlier this year. When asylum hotels are closed, people are either moved to other hotels where there is space, sent to military barracks or granted asylum.

Now legal challenges have been launched on behalf of some at the hotel due to concerns about the government’s failure to

assess individual vulnerabilities before the mass evictions.

A court order from John Halford, sitting as a deputy high court judge, states that it is “arguable” the home secretary failed to consider the “adequacy” of the accommodation asylum seekers were being moved to from Staycity.

Huda’s 12-year-old daughter uses a wheelchair and has epilepsy and a heart

condition. “I have so many different medical supplies just to keep my daughter alive that they take up almost one room on their own,” said Huda. The family sat in reception waiting for transport to their new hotel from 10am until 7pm. “The new hotel is much worse,” said Huda. “My children and I are dying little by little here. My daughter is sleeping on the floor because she is scared of the

bunk bed. The new place is so cramped and there is nowhere to cook for my children.”Ralitsa Peykova, a solicitor at Deighton Pierce Glynn, the firm mounting challenges against the expedited evictions, said the government’s hotel closures had been complete chaos and a waste of taxpayers’ money. “We have had to issue urgent legal proceedings because our clients are being moved from one hotel

to another without any evaluative assessment of their needs,” she said.

Chloe White, the executive director of Action for Refugees in Lewisham, south-east London, which is supporting families moved out of Staycity, said that, while the Home Office repeatedly talked about the success of increased hotel closures, “the reality on the ground is very different and the human cost is

high”.

The Home Office just don’t care what happens to us,” he said. “I know one person at the hotel [who] was in the middle of chemotherapy treatment for cancer who has been moved far away from the hospital they were receiving treatment at.”Farhad says he is a victim of trafficking, torture and labour exploitation, and has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and depression.

Retro running shoes are currently trending, and ASICS has just reintroduced one of its finest models



ASICS reintroduces the GEL CUMULUS 16, featuring its renowned cushioning technology in a retro-inspired sneaker

designed for both comfort and style. Chunky running shoes remain at the forefront of sneaker trends, and now a classic sole is returning to the spotlight. ASICS has brought back the GEL CUMULUS 16, revitalizing one of its most recognized performance designs with a contemporary lifestyle twist in partnership with EARLS Collection. Originally designed as a running shoe, the GEL CUMULUS 16 is now finding a place in everyday wardrobes thanks to its mix of comfort, cushioning and retro style.

Why sneaker fans are talking

about the GEL CUMULUS 16 The biggest talking point is the return of ASICS’ signature GEL cushioning system, created to absorb impact during movement. The technology helps soften landings, reduce shock on joints and deliver a smoother feeling underfoot. While it was first developed for runners, it has become just as popular among people who spend long hours walking, travelling or standing throughout the day. The shoe also combines lightweight cushioning with a breathable mesh upper, making it suitable for all-day wear without feeling

bulky. What makes this release worth a closer look? Signature GEL cushioning is designed for better shock absorption and lasting comfort. Soft, responsive midsole that supports long hours on your feet. Breathable mesh construction for improved airflow. Layered retro running design that fits current sneaker trends. Metallic silver detailing that stays true to the original GEL CUMULUS look. Why are retro running shoes everywhere? Performance running shoes

from the early 2000s have become some of the most sought-after sneakers today. Their combination of visible cushioning, layered panels and technical design has made them favourites for everyday styling. The GEL CUMULUS 16 fits naturally into this trend, offering a silhouette that pairs easily with denim, cargos, relaxed tailoring and athleisure. While this edition has been created with the Australian label EARLS Collection, the biggest takeaway for sneaker fans is the return of a sole that helped define comfort-focused footwear

and continues to feel relevant years after its original launch. Price and availability The limited edition ASICS GEL CUMULUS 16 is priced at ₹18,999. It is available on the official ASICS India website, the ASICS store at DLF Mall of India (might be available at other stores too), VegNonVeg, Limited Edt and Superkicks. For anyone looking for a sneaker that blends proven cushioning technology with today’s retro aesthetic, the return of the GEL CUMULUS 16 brings back a familiar favourite with a fresh perspective.

Monsoon-Proof Makeup Begins Here: The Beauty Regimen That Will Not Disappear



The monsoon possesses an unmistakable charm, characterized by the aroma of rain-drenched soil, vibrant green scenery, and leisurely afternoons in quaint cafés. However, your makeup may not be as enthusiastic about this season. With rising humidity, sudden downpours, and increased oiliness, it is easy for a once flawless complexion to become uneven. The secret isn’t piling on more product. It’s choosing smarter formulas and layering them strategically. This season, makeup is less about masking and more about working with your skin.

A Great Makeup Look Starts Long Before Foundation

Monsoon-proof makeup begins with skincare. Rather than reaching for heavier products, focus on hydration that feels weightless. According to Snigdha Suman, GM – Marketing & Business Development, Avon, prepping the skin correctly makes all the difference. “The secret to a long-lasting look is choosing lightweight, skin-friendly formulas that stay put without feeling heavy,” she says. “Start with a well-hydrated base using products enriched with Hyaluronic Acid, followed by a lightweight primer to create a smooth canvas and help control excess shine.” Hydrated skin also helps complexion products apply more evenly, making them less likely to separate throughout the day. Less Foundation, More Skin

When temperatures rise and humidity peaks, heavy coverage often works against you. Instead of full-coverage formulas, both experts advocate a lighter approach that allows skin to breathe. Suman recommends opting for breathable foundations or skin tints and using concealer only where necessary for a natural, skin-like finish. Echoing this philosophy, Monika Khullar, DGM Training & Artistry, Anastasia Beverly Hills, suggests choosing complexion products specifically designed to withstand humid conditions. “Begin your routine with a suitable primer to create an even base followed by breathable complexion products like matte foundations,” she says, adding that humidity-proof formulations help maintain an even finish throughout the day. Waterproof Is Non-Negotiable

If there’s one category worth investing in during the rainy season, it’s eye makeup. Whether you’re caught in a sudden drizzle or navigating a particularly humid commute, waterproof formulas can make the difference between polished and panda eyes. Suman recommends waterproof kajal, eyeliner and mascara to prevent smudging, while Khullar also emphasises the importance of long-lasting mascaras and waterproof liners that stay intact despite moisture in the air. Together, they form the foundation of a monsoon beauty kit. Bring Back the Glow-Strategically

Humidity already gives skin a natural sheen, so the goal isn’t to fight it completely but to keep it looking intentional. Khullar recommends cream blushes for a fresh, luminous flush that melts naturally into the skin rather than sitting on top of it. Meanwhile, Suman suggests finishing the complexion with a soft blush before reaching for transfer-resistant lip colours infused with nourishing ingredients like Vitamin E, Jojoba Oil and Avocado Oil, allowing lips to stay comfortable even through changing weather. The result is makeup that looks fresh rather than overly matte. The Final Step That Makes Everything Last

Perhaps the biggest mistake people make is skipping the final step. A light dusting of setting powder on the T-zone can help minimise excess shine without flattening the complexion. More importantly, a quality setting spray helps fuse every layer together. “Setting spray is the final step that helps makeup last longer,” says Khullar. “It blends different makeup layers together and provides extra protection against humidity, helping the look stay fresh for extended hours.” Suman agrees, recommending either a lightweight setting powder or setting spray to lock everything in place while maintaining a natural glow instead of a heavy, powdered finish. The New Monsoon Makeup Philosophy

The beauty mood this season is refreshingly uncomplicated. Instead of trying to outsmart the weather with layers of product, the focus has shifted towards intelligent formulations, breathable textures and skincare-first makeup. As Suman puts it, “At Avon, we believe beauty should be effortless in every season. By combining high-performance formulas with skin-loving ingredients, you can enjoy makeup that stays fresh, comfortable and radiant no matter what the weather brings.” And perhaps that’s the real monsoon beauty lesson: when your makeup works with the weather, not against it, you spend less time in front of the mirror and more time enjoying the rain.

Proven and Reliable: I received a face serum valued at ₹20000

What is more painful than ineffective expensive skincare? Effective expensive skincare. I am now irrevocably linked to that ₹20,000 face essence and that ₹8000 night repair hair serum. I will continue to add them to my cart for the entirety of my life, even if it necessitates having stale bread for dinner for an entire month. Something similar unfolded over the last month when I received my first bottle of the newly-launched in India, SK-II Facial Treatment Essence. Like many of you even I believed that no pizza over ₹500 and no serum over ₹1000 can ever be worth the money. But I was wrong. So wrong.

For the first time, I realised that an essence can do more than just hydrate your skin for that night. It can actually work deep into the layer to give you skin that looks and feels better than it has ever been. Before we get to a detailed review and the changes I noticed, let’s know more about SK-II Facial Treatment Essence and the science behind it. SK-II is a popular skincare brand that originated in Japan in the early 1980s and has spread to the vanities of millions of women across the globe. It was launched in India a couple months ago and is available on platforms like Nykaa.

The brand also manufactures products like SKIN-POWER Re-New Cream and GenOptics Infinitaur Essence using its signature ingredient, PITERA™.

In the 1970s, a team of Japanese scientists began searching for naturally derived ingredients that could help combat signs of ageing. During a visit to a sake brew-

ery, they noticed that while the elderly workers had deeply lined faces, their hands remained remarkably smooth and youthful. This observation led them to believe that prolonged contact with sake fermentation held the secret to healthier skin. After years of research, the scientists isolated a unique strain of yeast with skin-enhancing properties, giving rise to SK-II’s signature ingredient, Pitera. PITERA™ is produced exclusively at SK-II’s dedicated manufacturing facility in Japan’s Shiga Prefecture. Situated near the pristine waters of Lake Biwa—the country’s largest freshwater lake and one of the oldest in the world—the Shiga Plant has been the home of SK-II for more than four decades. It is here that the brand continues to craft its signature PITERA™ formula, maintaining the highest standards of quality and consistency.

Every drop of PITERA™ is crafted from a proprietary yeast fermentation process that SK-II owns. And that ₹20,499, 230 ml bottle of SK-II Facial Essence contains about 90% of PITERA™.

As per the brand, “PITERA™ contains natural moisturizing factors (NMF) which are similar to that found in our skin. This allows PITERA™ to be absorbed 10 layers deep into your skin. PITERA™ is rich in vitamins, amino acids, minerals & organic acids, making it a powerhouse for achieving your best bare skin.” Medical studies on the product

As per a report published by National Library of Medicine in 2023, explored the effects of the product on real women. The study involving 86 women found



that facial skin showed significant signs of ageing over an 11-year period, including increased wrinkles, pigmentation, roughness, reduced hydration, and higher water loss. After using three SK-II products twice daily for 12 months, participants experienced improved skin hydration, reduced water loss, and noticeable reductions in wrinkles, dark spots, and roughness. The findings suggest that appropriate skincare can help reverse some visible signs of skin ageing. Good news because I have been using the Facial Treatment Essence for just over a month now. I still have 11 months of progress to look forward to. My review of SK-II Facial Treatment Essence

I began using the product on June 15, applying it twice daily after washing my face in the morning and before bed. By day 20, I realised I did not break into a single pimple episode this month, not even on my period days. While washing my face I also can feel how non-bumpy my skin has become. Immediately after pat-drying the face after a wash, it is noticeable, the sheen and the significantly

better glow. The couple of old acne spots are duller than before though in all honesty, it would have shown even better progress had I been more diligent with the sunscreen application during my recent Morocco trip. Sun exposure usually makes my dark spots show up even more. How do I use the essence?

Step one: Wash my face with a light cleanser. I use the Acelak facial cleanser on recommendation of my dermatologist. Step two: Shake the essence bottle on my palm 2-3 times to get sufficient product and dab my face with it, pressing the essence in. Step 3: Use a small amount of moisturiser on top of it as the essence by itself can leave a dry feeling. I use the Bioderma Atoderm moisturiser on the recommendation of my dermatologist.

Step 4: In the morning, I also apply sunscreen before putting on my makeup.

Despite regular use of twice a day, the 230 ml bottle is just 10 percent depleted. I hope it lasts me at least a year, so I can be the 87th woman on that study to record life-changing results.

Experts recommend that brides begin their preparations 3 to 6 months prior to the wedding date

The radiance of a bride is not something that can be achieved at the last moment. Dr. Srishti Mohapatra elaborates on the importance of starting a wellness and skincare regimen three to six months prior to the wedding. Instead, the journey should ideally begin months before the wedding, with a focus on overall health and sustainable habits.

“A personalised bridal wellness programme should ideally begin three to six months before the wedding, allowing ample time to optimise both skin health and overall well-being through a gradual, evidence-based approach,” says Dr Srishti Mohapatra, Internal Medicine Consultant and Aesthetic Physician, and Head of the Research and Development Wing, The Wellness Co. The Bridal Glow Should Begin With the Basics

Rather than relying on quick

fixes in the weeks before the wedding, Dr Mohapatra recommends building habits that support long-term skin health.

“Adequate sleep, balanced nutrition, proper hydration, regular physical activity, effective stress management and a consistent medical-grade skincare routine form the foundation of bridal wellness,” she explains.

Stress management, in particular, deserves more attention during the wedding planning process. Between guest lists, fittings, work commitments and endless decision-making, stress can quickly become part of a bride’s daily routine.

“Chronically elevated cortisol levels can impair the skin barrier, delay healing and accelerate inflammation,” says Dr. Mohapatra. “It may also contribute to concerns such as acne, dullness and premature ageing.”

In other words, getting enough sleep and learning to manage stress may be just as important as booking another facial.

Wellness Therapies Can Support the Skin, But Personalisation Matters

Once a strong lifestyle foundation is in place, evidence-based wellness therapies may be introduced following a comprehensive medical assessment.

According to Dr. Mohapatra, personalised intravenous (IV) nutrient therapy may help optimise hydration and address nutritional deficiencies where clinically indicated. “Restorative therapies such as Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, or HBOT, and Red Light Therapy, also known as photobiomodulation, may further support tissue repair, reduce inflammation and promote healthier skin,” she explains. However, the key word remains

personalised. Wellness therapies should not be selected simply because they are trending on social media or have become popular additions to pre-wedding routines. From Cryotherapy to Infrared Saunas, Recovery Is Part of Bridal Wellness

Wedding preparation can be physically and emotionally demanding, making recovery an important part of a holistic wellness programme. “Therapies including Far Infrared Sauna, Whole Body Cryotherapy and Cryo Facials can be incorporated to encourage relaxation, aid recovery, temporarily reduce puffiness and promote an overall sense of rejuvenation,” says Dr Mohapatra. While such treatments may support overall wellness and recovery, she cautions against viewing them as standalone solutions. “These therapies are most effective when inte-

grated into a personalised, evidence-based programme rather than being viewed as standalone treatments,” she adds. The takeaway? A single sauna session or cryo facial is unlikely to transform the skin overnight. Instead, wellness therapies should complement a broader plan built around an individual’s health, lifestyle and goals.

Planning Aesthetic Treatments? Start Early

For brides considering aesthetic treatments, timing is everything. “Early planning and a personalised approach are essential,” says Dr. Mohapatra.

Medical-grade hydrating facials, serum infusion treatments, skin boosters and regenerative procedures may be considered depending on an individual’s skin concerns and medical assessment. “Regenerative procedures such as exosome therapy

combined with microneedling can help improve hydration, elasticity and skin texture while supporting collagen production,” Dr. Mohapatra explains. “The aim is to enhance overall skin quality while maintaining a natural, healthy-looking glow.”

When appropriately timed, these treatments may also be supported by personalised wellness therapies. “IV nutrient therapy, where clinically indicated, may be considered before and after certain procedures to support hydration, recovery and patient comfort,” she adds. This is precisely why trying a new or intensive treatment days before the wedding is rarely advisable. Giving the skin adequate time to respond and recover should be part of the bridal beauty calendar. There Is No Universal Bridal Skincare Protocol

Perhaps the biggest myth sur-

rounding bridal beauty is the idea that there is one perfect pre-wedding skincare routine.

“There is no universal bridal skincare protocol because every individual’s skin, lifestyle and goals are unique,” says Dr Mohapatra. The objective, she stresses, should never be an overnight transformation. Instead, bridal wellness should focus on enhancing long-term skin health through personalised, evidence-based care. “By combining healthy lifestyle practices, scientifically guided aesthetic treatments and carefully selected wellness therapies, brides can approach their wedding day feeling confident, refreshed and naturally radiant,” she says. Because ultimately, as Dr Mohapatra puts it, “the most beautiful glow is one that reflects both healthy skin and overall well-being.”

Govinda's Mumbai Home Blends Luxury with Traditional Design



Mumbai: Veteran Bollywood actor Govinda and his wife Sunita Ahuja have transformed their Mumbai residence into a home that reflects both luxury and tradition, combining modern interiors with design principles inspired by Vastu Shastra.

Estimated to be worth around Rs 16 crore, the multi-storey bungalow is located in one of Mumbai's prime residential neighbourhoods. According to reports, the couple paid close attention to every aspect of the home's planning, ensuring that the layout followed

Vastu principles while incorporating elegant contemporary décor and personal touches accumulated over Govinda's decades-long film career.

The spacious living room serves as the centrepiece of the residence, featuring imported Italian furniture, a large crystal chandelier sourced from Europe and carefully selected artwork. The interiors are enhanced with gold-toned accents, brass decorative pieces and handcrafted furnishings, creating a blend of traditional Indian aesthetics and modern luxury. Family

photographs and memorabilia from Govinda's illustrious career are displayed throughout the home, giving visitors a glimpse into his journey in the film industry.

One of the bungalow's standout features is a dedicated display area housing the actor's trophies, awards and mementoes collected over the years. The residence also includes a private home theatre, a fully equipped gymnasium, spacious lounge areas and an expansive terrace garden offering panoramic views of the Mumbai skyline.

The upper floor accommodates the master bedroom, a walk-in wardrobe, meditation space and separate rooms for the couple's children, Tina Ahuja and Yashvardhan Ahuja.

Reports suggest the family spent more than two years renovating and redesigning the property, personally overseeing much of the work. Special emphasis was placed on maximising natural light, ventilation and open spaces while ensuring that every section of the house aligned with Vastu recommendations. The interiors also incorporate customised furniture and décor pieces sourced from India and abroad.

Govinda, one of Hindi cinema's most popular stars during the 1990s, has appeared in blockbuster films including Hero No. 1, Coolie No. 1, Saajan Chale Sasural, Dulhe Raja and Partner. Sunita Ahuja has frequently shared glimpses of the family home during interviews and television appearances, with its elegant décor and spacious interiors drawing admiration from fans on social media.

Anurag Kashyap Calls for Overhaul of Film Certification System

Mumbai: Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap has called for sweeping reforms to India's film certification system while criticising the handling of the Diljit Dosanjh-starrer Satluj, arguing that the controversy exposes deep flaws in the country's censorship framework.

Kashyap alleged that former Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) chairperson Prasoon Joshi opposed the film's release without watching it in its entirety. Referring to the removal of the biographical drama from streaming platforms, the director said the issue reflected a larger systemic problem in which a handful of officials wield excessive authority over creative expression. He argued that filmmakers often face uncertainty because decisions can be influenced by administrative discretion rather than a transparent and consistent certification process.

Calling for comprehensive reforms, Kashyap said the existing censorship model should either be fundamentally restructured or replaced with a modern age-based classification system



similar to those followed in several other countries. He maintained that the role of the certification board should be limited to assigning age ratings instead of deciding whether films should be released. According to the filmmaker, audiences should be allowed to make informed viewing choices without unnecessary restrictions on artistic works.

The controversy centres on Satluj, a biographical drama based on the life of

human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalsa, who investigated alleged illegal cremations and custodial disappearances in Punjab during the militancy era. Starring Diljit Dosanjh, the film briefly premiered on an OTT platform before being taken down after the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting stated that the producers had not completed the mandatory certification process. The ministry also alleged that the project, previously known as Punjab

95 and Ghallughara, had been retitled to bypass regulatory scrutiny.

Kashyap questioned whether historical and politically sensitive subjects were being subjected to a different standard from other mainstream films. He argued that suppressing stories based on documented events limited public discourse and discouraged filmmakers from exploring important chapters of India's history. He also said that repeated interventions of this nature created uncertainty for producers, distributors and streaming platforms investing in socially relevant cinema.

Expressing concern over the future of independent filmmaking, Kashyap said the industry could not flourish under a system where creative decisions were influenced by political sensitivities and bureaucratic intervention. He maintained that mature audiences were capable of engaging with complex historical narratives responsibly and reiterated that the role of regulators should be to classify films rather than censor them.

Saiyami Kher Praises First Cut of Haiwaan Ahead of Teaser Launch

Mumbai: Actress Saiyami Kher has expressed excitement after watching the first cut of the upcoming thriller Haiwaan, describing the film as a unique cinematic experience and praising director Priyadarshan's vision ahead of its promotional campaign.

Speaking about the project during a recent interaction, Saiyami said she watched the initial cut while dubbing for the film and was impressed by the way the story had come together during post-production. Calling the experience a significant milestone in her career, she said working with Priyadarshan had been both inspiring and educational. The actress added that the film's final shape during editing had further heightened her anticipation for its release.

Haiwaan marks the 99th directorial venture of Priyadarshan and represents a departure from the comedy genre that has long defined many of his collaborations with Akshay Kumar. Instead, the filmmaker has returned to the thriller space with a Hindi adaptation inspired by his ac-



claimed 2016 Malayalam film Oppam, while incorporating several changes to suit a new audience and narrative style.

The film stars Saif Ali Khan as a visually impaired music teacher who becomes the protector of a young girl pursued by a dangerous criminal, played by Akshay Kumar. Saiyami Kher plays a pivotal role in the story, while the supporting cast includes Boman Irani, Shriya Pilgaonkar and a special appearance by Malayalam superstar Mohanlal. The project is backed by KVN Productions and Thespian Films, with Venkat K. Narayana and Shailaja Desai Fenn serving as producers.

The makers recently began the film's promotional cam-

paign after Akshay Kumar shared a cryptic social media post hinting at a darker and more intense role than audiences have seen from him in recent years. The first official teaser is scheduled to be unveiled on Wednesday, offering viewers their first glimpse of the psychological thriller.

The film has generated considerable buzz as it reunites Priyadarshan and Akshay Kumar after several successful collaborations while also bringing Saif Ali Khan and Akshay together in a face-off on screen. Scheduled for a nationwide theatrical release on September 11, 2026, Haiwaan is expected to be one of the major Hindi releases of the year.

Anne Hathaway Recalls Fearing She Had Upset Christopher Nolan

Mumbai: Oscar-winning actress Anne Hathaway has revealed that she once worried she had somehow offended filmmaker Christopher Nolan after not receiving another casting call from him for several years following their collaboration on Interstellar.

Appearing on Late Night with Seth Meyers, Hathaway recalled jokingly questioning whether she had done something wrong during the making of the 2014 science-fiction epic after a long gap separated their second and third projects together. Laughing about the situation, she said she even wondered if she had "messed something up in space," referring to the film's setting, because she did not hear from Nolan for another role for years.

Host Seth Meyers noted that being cast in multiple Christopher Nolan films is a rare achievement, considering the director's selective approach to choosing actors. Hathaway agreed, say-



ing she felt fortunate to reunite with the filmmaker for The Odyssey, which marks their third collaboration after The Dark Knight Rises (2012) and Interstellar (2014). She described the opportunity as both exciting and deeply rewarding, adding that working with Nolan had been one of the highlights of her career.

Despite her humorous concerns, Hathaway clarified that there was never

any tension between her and the acclaimed director. She said they always shared a warm and friendly relationship whenever they met at industry events, and the long gap between projects was simply a matter of timing rather than any personal disagreement.

Speaking about the filming of The Odyssey, Hathaway praised Nolan's distinctive filmmaking style, saying he arrives on set with every aspect of the film carefully planned but still allows actors the freedom to explore the emotional depth of their characters.

She described him as a filmmaker who balances meticulous preparation with a collaborative atmosphere that encourages authentic performances.

The Odyssey is Nolan's latest directorial venture following the Academy Award-winning Oppenheimer. Based on Homer's ancient Greek epic poem, the film stars Matt Damon in the lead role of Odysseus and features an ensemble cast including Tom Holland, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong'o, Zendaya, Charlize Theron, Jon Bernthal, Mia Goth and Hathaway. Shot using advanced IMAX technology across multiple international locations, the film is scheduled for a worldwide theatrical release on July 17, 2026 and is among the most anticipated Hollywood releases of the year.

Deepika, Ranveer Spotted on Lunch Date

Mumbai: Actors Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh were spotted enjoying a quiet lunch outing in Mumbai on Tuesday, making one of their rare public appearances together as they prepare to welcome their second child. The couple visited a popular eatery in the city, where they were seen enjoying traditional South Indian favourites, including benne dosa. Their casual outing quickly drew the attention of fans and paparazzi, though the pair kept a low profile throughout the visit. Deepika opted for a relaxed co-ord outfit, while Ranveer chose a casual shirt and dark trousers. Both actors wore face masks as they entered and exited the restaurant. Their security team requested photographers and bystanders to maintain distance and avoid recording videos as the couple made their way back to their vehicle. The restaurant holds special significance for the family, as Deepika and Ranveer had earlier visited the same venue with Ranveer's father, Jagjit Singh Bhavnani, to celebrate the success of the actor's film Dhurandhar 2. The outing comes a few months after the couple announced they were expecting their second child. In April, they shared the news through a social media post featuring their daughter, Dua Padukone Singh, who was born in September 2024, holding a positive pregnancy test. Deepika and Ranveer married in Italy in 2018 after dating for several years. Despite being in the final phase of her pregnancy, Deepika recently completed major portions of King, co-starring Shah Rukh Khan, which is scheduled for release on December 24, 2026. She is also set to feature alongside Allu Arjun in the multilingual film Raaka. Ranveer, meanwhile, is expected to begin shooting for the thriller Pralay in August and has reportedly planned an extended paternity break around the birth of their second child.

Aamir Khan Rejects Conversion Claims, Defends Interfaith Marriages



Mumbai: Veteran actor Aamir Khan has defended his personal life amid criticism over his recent marriage, saying religion has never influenced his relationships and rejecting allegations of religious conversion.

The actor said all three of his marriages were solemnised under the Special Marriage Act, allowing each partner to retain their own faith. He maintained that religion had never been a deciding factor in his personal life and dismissed claims suggesting otherwise.

Highlighting his family's diversity, Aamir said both his sisters are married to Hindu men, his daughter has a Hindu

spouse, and one of his filmmaker cousins is married to a Christian. He also clarified that his wife, Gauri Spratt, is of Christian heritage and does not actively practise any religion.

His remarks come after the couple registered their marriage on July 5, with the wedding later drawing criticism from some quarters, including a religious objection from a cleric in Uttar Pradesh.

Aamir also addressed reports about the redevelopment of his Pali Hill residence, clarifying that the project is a joint decision taken by all 24 members of the housing society rather than an individual initiative.

Prominent Figures Form Financial Foothold as Sacred Destination Emerges as Premier Real Estate Hub

Mumbai: A massive wave of high-profile investment and aggressive public development has transformed a primary spiritual center in Uttar Pradesh into one of the fastest-growing premium property markets in the country.

Anchored by the landmark consecration of the local temple, the historic town is experiencing a substantial infrastructure overhaul valued at roughly Rs 85,000 crore. This state-backed modernization has drawn immense interest from corporate entities and elite private buyers, including prominent leading figures from the Hindi motion picture industry who have recently closed high-value acquisitions to secure long-term stakes in the area's luxury real estate sector.

A highly celebrated veteran actor stands as the largest single celebrity investor in

the town, building an extensive property portfolio estimated to exceed a total valuation of Rs 90 crore to Rs 100 crore. The mega-star initiated his local real estate footprint with an initial purchase of a 10,000-square-foot plot valued at approximately Rs 14.5 crore inside a high-end township enclave located near the banks of the river. He subsequently expanded his holdings by securing an additional 5,372-square-foot parcel for Rs 4.54 crore, followed by a sprawling 25,000-square-foot luxury location near the waterfront development for close to Rs 40 crore. Furthermore, the performer utilized his family-owned corporate entity, AB Corp Limited, to purchase a separate 67-acre land tract for Rs 35 crore. A massive 54,454-square-foot plot has also been legally registered under a family memorial trust, which is des-



ignated for a future public project honoring the actor's late father.

The market has drawn further star power following a separate premium transaction by actor Ranbir Kapoor. The performer acquired a 2,134-square-foot residential plot within the premium riverfront township for a confirmed sum of Rs 3.31 crore. In a public statement detailing the acquisition, the actor characterized the opportunity as a profound spiritual calling and emphasized

that he views the property as a permanent generational legacy for his household. The transaction coincides with his upcoming professional commitment to portray a central mythological deity in a highly anticipated multi-part cinematic epic.

The rapid influx of high-profile capital mirrors the exponential growth of local tourism and structural connectivity. Total annual visitor numbers have escalated dramatically from roughly 5.75 crore prior

to the temple construction phase to an estimated 23 crore over a single six-month stretch. To manage the unprecedented footfall, regional authorities have completed the construction of an international airport and a heavily upgraded primary railway terminus.

Long-term development strategies include a newly approved, 187-kilometer high-speed rapid rail transit corridor connecting the town to major neighboring manufacturing centers in roughly 90 minutes, alongside preliminary designs for a high-speed bullet train connection to the national capital. To ensure the long-term viability of the expansion, the regional state government allocated an additional Rs 150 crore in its latest fiscal budget dedicated exclusively to public infrastructure maintenance and the enhancement of pilgrim facilities.

With an election on the horizon, why Punjab matters more than ever to PM Modi



Chandigarh, July 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s expected visit to Punjab on July 17 is highly crucial. With the Assembly elections coming, the BJP is making a concerted attempt to broaden its outreach to the Sikh community and position itself as a genuine political force in a state where it has always operated on the sidelines. The visit will most certainly include more than just inaugurations and development projects. It is part of a larger political plan aimed at helping the BJP achieve a significant breakthrough in Punjab. Since the BJP severed ties with its long-time ally, the Shiromani Akali Dal, following the agricultural laws agitation, the party has been seeking to establish an own political identity in Punjab. Unlike in the past, when it depended heavily on urban Hindu voters while the Akali Dal rallied Sikh support, the BJP is now directly contacting Sikh people, religious organizations, and the Punjabi diaspora.Prime Minister Narendra Modi has personally overseen much of this effort. Over the last few years, his administration has consistently highlighted programs directed at the Sikh community. These include the Kartarpur Corridor opening, the nationwide celebration of Guru Nanak Dev’s 550th Prakash Purab, Veer Bal Diwas, efforts to preserve Sikh heritage, facilitating the return of Sri Guru Granth Sahib saroops from Afghanistan, easing

visa restrictions for many Sikhs abroad, and engaging more actively with the global Sikh diaspora. The repeal of the three farm laws, though politically compelled after prolonged protests, also remains a significant chapter in the BJP’s attempt to rebuild trust in Punjab. The outreach has not remained confined to India. During his recent visit to New Zealand, he devoted a substantial portion of his address to the Indian diaspora to Sikh heritage and the contributions of the Sikh community.He spoke about the government’s efforts to honour Sikh Gurus, preserve Sikh traditions and facilitate religious pilgrimages. While delivered on foreign soil, the speech was widely interpreted as carrying a political message for Sikhs both overseas and in Punjab.At a time when the government continues to maintain a tough position against separatist elements abroad, the emphasis on Sikh identity appeared intended to reinforce the distinction between opposing extremism and engaging positively with the wider Sikh community.The timing of the Punjab visit is therefore significant. It comes as the BJP seeks to consolidate this sustained outreach into electoral gains. Punjab remains one of the few major states where the BJP has never emerged as the principal political force. Even during its alliance with the Akali Dal, the party’s influence remained largely confined to urban con-

stituencies. After the alliance ended, the BJP faced the daunting task of expanding into rural Punjab and winning the confidence of Sikh voters without the support of its traditional ally.To address this challenge, the party has inducted several influential Sikh leaders, increased its engagement with religious organisations, highlighted Sikh icons in its political messaging and consistently projected the PM’s personal respect for Sikh traditions. Senior BJP leaders have also repeatedly stressed that the party seeks direct engagement with Punjab rather than depending on regional allies.Yet the political challenge remains formidable.Punjab’s electoral politics continues to be shaped by questions of identity, agriculture, federalism, history and regional aspirations. While development remains an important issue, political loyalties often run much deeper. The BJP has undoubtedly expanded its organisational footprint, but translating visibility into votes has proved far more difficult.This is precisely why the July 17 visit carries significance beyond governance. It is another opportunity for the Prime Minister to personally reinforce the BJP’s narrative that it respects Sikh history, understands Punjab’s aspirations and seeks a larger role in the state’s politics. It is unclear if this approach would ultimately enable the BJP to achieve a decisive breakthrough in Punjab. Despite previous efforts, the state has generally opposed the party’s expansion. However, there is little question that the BJP is conducting its most continuous political campaign in Punjab since the dissolution of its partnership with the Akali Dal.The visit is thus about far more than projects or speeches. It will be another sign of whether the BJP’s long-term investment in Sikh outreach, cultural symbolism, and organizational growth is beginning to change Punjab’s political scene. While the poll results will be announced later, the visit represents another significant step in the party’s efforts to shift Punjab from its most difficult frontier into its next political chance.

Kylian Mbappe throws teammates under the bus after World Cup exit, calling France “not worthy”

Arlington: France captain Kylian Mbappe did not mince words after Les Bleus were eliminated from the World Cup final race with a 0-2 defeat to Spain at the penultimate hurdle. Spain looked the better team from the outset, playing technical football that neutralized France’s strongest talents on the field and revealed their fundamental flaws. Mbappe, addressing to the media after the game, said that his teammates were not up to the job of facing the defending European champions that day. “I don’t think we played the match we wanted to play whether tactically, technically, or in terms of our overall performance level,” Mbappe said. “And when you don’t do what you are supposed to do in a World Cup semi-final, you don’t win.”“Our goal was to press them high up the pitch to prevent them from settling into that slow, controlled rhythm -- because when it comes to controlling the game, they are better than us. We failed to do that.”Getting into the tactical details of the game, Mbappe said that France’s initial plan was to press high up the pitch, but Spain turned the tables by turning their press into a 3-on-2 situation in midfield. With the way France



played, Mbappe had no qualms about admitting that the performance was not worthy of taking the team into the final. “We kept finding ourselves outnumbered 3-on-2 in midfield,” Mbappe said. “And against Spain, that’s a real problem. When you put it all together, the result is a defeat. Our touches and movement were not worthy of a World Cup semi-final.”“It was a dream for us to reach the final, to give our country the chance to keep dreaming and to make history,” he added. The 27-year-old, who has scored 8 goals in this tournament, said that he now plans to go on holiday with his head held high

before the club season with Real Madrid begins.“Now, it is something we have to face with our heads held high. I believe that when you win, you win with your head held high; so when you lose, you have to lose with your head held high, too.”“But right now, there is immense disappointment. I find it hard to put into words just how disappointed the squad and I are.”“Yet even if it might seem a bit robotic at times, we have to pick ourselves up, go on holiday, and move on to the next chapter. Because football waits for no one. We have to start over, put this failure behind us, and learn from it.”

NATIONAL & SPORTS

How Spain’s incredible team goal, finished by Pedro Porro, left frail France red-faced

Arlington: Spain provided the football world the same vibrations as the Carles Puyol-led team did between 2008 and 2012, when they won two European Championships and a FIFA World Cup to solidify their status at the sport’s apex. With Manchester City’s Rodri guiding the squad into the World Cup 2026 semi-final against France, Spain knew they needed to do something even more remarkable than they have in the tournament thus far. When Spain’s right-back, Pedro Porro, executed a superbly choreographed play to put his team ahead 2-0 in the 58th minute, the goal highlighted France’s technical fragility in comparison to their opponents. Spain began the move by establishing comfortable possession and exploiting France’s passive defensive mid-block. Porro initiated a vertical run from deep on the right wing, but the French midfield failed to assess the area or track his movement. Neither the left winger nor the retreating center midfielders conveyed the structural adjustment essential to keep the Tottenham Hotspur player from entering into a dangerous situation. As a result, Porro entered France’s penalty area completely unmarked.With Spain’s excellent passing



combinations, the French players were caught fully ball-watching. France’s technical flaws resulted in a complete collapse during a quick one-two with Porro and Dani Olmo on the edge of the penalty box. First, Porro fired a crisp pass into Olmo and continued his overlapping burst. Lacking the technical coordination to handle quick, one-touch combinations in central areas, Dayot Upamecano rushed out frantically to challenge Olmo. The Bayern Munich centre-back committed completely to the man rather than covering the passing lane.With Upamecano dragged out of position, the remain-

ing French defenders were caught flat-footed, unable to cover for their teammate or block Porro’s path. A distinct lack of agility and late scanning meant Porro had ample time to take the return ball in his stride and execute a strike that Mike Maignan had absolutely no answer for. After the game, France captain Kylian Mbappe had no hesitation in admitting that his team lacked the technical and tactical depth to counter a team of the quality of Spain, who were exceptionally in sync with each other.“It was difficult for us. Tactically, we had a plan to go for them with pressure, to go one for one, to not let

them lead the tempo and play the way they want to play. They want to have control of the game and the ball,” Mbappe told the media after the match.“That’s what we let them do. We let the midfield too much time to play and they have the quality to play. It’s difficult when you don’t change the plan of Spain. The penalty helped (them) also to come in the game and then they scored the second goal and we didn’t have the quality to get to the final,” he added.France still have a game to play in this World Cup. They will next face the loser of the England vs Argentina semifinal in the third-place playoff.

NCP reunion or desertion in Sharad Pawar’s camp

Mumbai, July 15: On Tuesday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis met with senior leaders from both factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), sparking fresh political buzz in the state, with speculation ranging from a possible party reunion to signs of a potential defection.NCP leader Praful Patel and state unit president Sunil Tatkar, both from the Ajit Pawar-led group, met Fadnavis at Varsha, his official house in Mumbai. Jayant Patil of the Sharad Pawar-led NCP group then came to the Chief Minister’s house. The back-to-back meetings in Varsha have fueled conjecture in Maharashtra’s political circles, especially as politicians from different NCP groups were observed visiting the Chief Minister on the same occasion. The discussions have raised doubts about whether a political realignment is taking place, as there is no clear agenda. Some perceive it as an attempt to heal divisions within the NCP, while others see it as a sign of shifting allegiance.

After a fight, a man was attacked with an axe and had his hands chopped off at the UP petrol pump



Uttar Pradesh, July 15: According to authorities, a 28-year-old man had both of his hands severed with an axe at a gas pump in Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh, following an argument. The incident occurred at 11 p.m. on Tuesday, in front of the Chandel Petrol Pump on the Kanpur-Sagar Highway.The victim’s family has claimed that a local politician was responsible for the attack. Police have opened an inquiry based on the family’s allegation and are reviewing CCTV video from the gas pump. According to the family, the victim, Jaivendra Singh alias Vikki, went to the gas pump late at night to obtain some fuel. They said there

was no preexisting animosity against the perpetrators. An disagreement came out after refilling, and the accused reportedly struck him with an axe before fleeing the scene. Vikki had both of her hands amputated at the wrists during the attack. He also had major leg injuries as well as many deep cuts to his head from the sharp instrument. As soon as the family reached the spot after getting information, they were shocked to see Vikki’s condition. His mother broke down and tied his severed hands with a piece of cloth. She also wrapped a cloth around his head in an attempt to stop the bleeding. Passersby saw the youth

lying in a pool of blood on the road and alerted police. A critically injured Vikki was rushed to the district hospital. After initial treatment, doctors referred him to a higher medical center. Dr. Shishupal at the district hospital said the youth’s condition was extremely critical.“The patient’s both hands were almost completely cut off and had to be supported and bandaged. He also has serious injuries to his leg and deep wounds on his head from a sharp weapon. After primary treatment, he has been referred to a higher center,” he said.Police said one accused has been detained so far and further investigation is underway.

Supreme Court Overturns Patna High Court’s ‘Grabbing Breast, Not Rape Attempt’ Order

New Delhi, July 15: The Supreme Court has instructed the National Judicial Academy Committee’s report on judicial sensitivity in sexual crime cases be made available on the Supreme Court and other high court websites.The report was created in the suo motu case resulting from the Allahabad High Court’s March 17, 2025 verdict ruling that yanking a girl’s pajama string and grasping her breasts did not constitute an attempt to rape.Senior lawyer Shobha Gupta told the Supreme Court that this has been happening on a regular basis, including a decision issued by the Patna High Court on July 9 that removing a woman’s salwar and pushing her chest did not constitute an attempt to rape. Justice V Mohana inquired whether the Supreme Court’s decision in the Allahabad High Court case, which instructed judges to be sensitized to the issue, was referenced in the Patna High Court.Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India, referred to the Patna High Court ruling and stated that judges have a duty to do research. “The staff is doing nothing,” he claimed.It is directed that all courts adhere to the wording provided in the manual. States

will give directives to all police stations to use handbooks for filing FIRs and chargesheets. The Supreme Court also stated that it will upload a reasoned ruling. The Patna High Court recently held that removing a woman’s salwar and pressing her chest is not sufficient to prove an attempt to rape. Justice Purnendu Singh held that if a person removed the woman’s salwar and pressed her chest, the acts would amount to the offence of outraging a woman’s modesty and not attempt to rape, which carries a significantly higher punishment.

The Patna High Court made the observation while setting aside a man’s conviction for attempt to rape. The case arose from a 2008 incident in which a woman alleged that she had accompanied her father to a photography studio in Amarpur. According to the prosecution, after taking her photograph, the studio owner asked her father to wait outside on the pretext of viewing the photograph on a computer, bolted the studio door from inside and tried to sexually assault her. Her father rushed to the door after hearing her cries, after which the accused fled. After an FIR

was filed and investigation, a trial court convicted the accused under sections for attempt to rape and wrongful confinement of the Indian Penal Code. He challenged the conviction before the high court.After re-appreciating the evidence, the high court found there was no medical evidence on record to support the allegation of attempt to rape. It also noted the investigating officer was not examined during trial and that the prosecution substantially rested on the testimonies of the survivor and her parents.On the facts of the case, the high court held that the prosecution had failed to establish the offence of attempt to rape. “In the absence of any evidence of penetration, even to the slightest extent, or any overt act unequivocally constituting an attempt to commit rape, the ingredients of Section 375 IPC, and consequently Section 376 read with Section 511 IPC, are not attracted in absence of any medical corroboration,” the high court said. The court ruled that outraging a woman’s modesty under Section 354 of the IPC was clearly established, even if the prosecution’s argument was accepted in its entirety.

Virat Kohli achieves a big feat, joining Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid in the elite ODI list



England: Virat Kohli, the Indian cricket team’s standout batter, added another astounding milestone to his already illustrious career during the first One-Day International against England on Tuesday. He became the fifth Indian cricketer to play 300 ODI innings, joining Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Mohammad Azharuddin, and Sourav Ganguly. Overall, Sachin leads the record with 452 innings, followed by Sri Lanka’s Sanath Jayasuriya (433) and Mahela Jayawardene (418). This was Kohli’s 312th ODI match, with 14797 runs scored at an average of 58.71 and a great strike rate of 93.82. Coming into the contest, seasoned Joe Root and plucky Liam Dawson hit half-centuries in a gritty seventh-wicket stand

of 121 runs as England registered a solid 258 in the first ODI despite an Indian pace attack wrecking havoc.England fell from a steady 61 for no loss at the start of the 13th over to 107 for 6 by the conclusion of the 22nd over, with no hope of recovering.Root, on the other hand, fought valiantly alongside Dawson, whose career-best 68 off 83 balls propelled them to a position where bowlers faced a reasonable score to defend. Root played the field, waited patiently for Bumrah to complete his first two spells and attacked Axar Patel (4/62), Prasidh Krishna once the pitch showed signs of easing out. The best shot was a ramp off a Jasprit Bumrah bouncer. He hit six fours and a six in all.While the peerless Bumrah (1/31 in 9 overs) was the best Indian bowler in terms of skills and quality on display, young Gurnoor Brar (2/61 in 9 overs) and the usually profligate Prasidh (2/50 in 10 overs) also chipped in with wickets despite going for runs. Axar ran through the tail after the Dawson-Root stand recording his best figures in ODI cricket. England opted to bat on a pitch that had bounce and carry with good value for shots.

Watch: MS Dhoni's heartwarming gesture delights young fan at Edgbaston stands



New Delhi: MS Dhoni once again showed why he remains one of the most beloved figures in world cricket as the former India captain attended the opening ODI between India and England at Edgbaston in Birmingham on Tuesday, July 14. Nearly six years after bringing the curtain down on his international career, Dhoni continues to command immense attention, with his latest appearance quickly becoming one of the biggest talking points of the match. The 45-year-old, who has been following India's tour of England closely, was spotted in the stands as television cam-

eras turned towards him. The Edgbaston crowd erupted in applause at the sight of the legendary wicketkeeper-batter, but it was his interaction with a young fan that truly stole the show. In a heartwarming moment that soon went viral on social media, a child seated close to Dhoni offered him some popcorn. The former skipper, known for his humility and down-to-earth nature, gladly accepted the gesture and shared a smile with the youngster. Moments later, the boy offered him popcorn once again, only for Dhoni to politely decline, gesturing that

he had already had enough. Dhoni has been a regular presence at India matches this year. Earlier in March, he attended India's T20 World Cup semi-final against England at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, where he was seen enjoying the contest from the stands. He later travelled to Ahmedabad for the final, in which India defeated New Zealand to become the first team to successfully defend the T20 World Cup title and lift the trophy for a record third time. The former India captain also celebrated his 45th birthday earlier this month at Trent Bridge while watching the third T20I between India and England. His appearances across venues in England have drawn huge crowds, underlining the affection fans continue to have for one of Indian cricket's greatest icons. Even as Dhoni's popularity remains as strong as ever, uncertainty continues to surround his future in the Indian Premier League. The Chennai Super Kings stalwart did not feature in IPL 2026, bringing an end to an extraordinary run that had seen him represent the franchise for nearly two decades. Dhoni has often avoided giving definitive answers about his future, preferring to make retirement decisions on his own terms. With IPL 2027 still some time away, neither Dhoni nor the Super Kings have provided any clarity over a possible return. For now, fans can only wait. Yet, whether he is behind the stumps or simply sharing popcorn with a young supporter in the stands, Dhoni continues to create moments that transcend the game itself.

Ryan ten Doeschate wants to quit India coaching job over promises



New Delhi: Unhappy with the lack of clarity surrounding his role, India assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate wants to step away from the national team setup after the ongoing white-ball tour of England. Sources told PTI that the former Netherlands captain is not satisfied with the responsibilities he has held over the past two years. While the Indian Cricket Board is under-

stood to be keen on retaining ten Doeschate beyond his current contract, the 45-year-old has expressed a desire to return to franchise cricket and has already held positive discussions with at least one Indian Premier League franchise. The development comes at a time when the contracts of Gautam Gambhir's support staff are due for review following the England tour.

While fielding coach T Dilip is unlikely to receive another extension after a difficult year, the BCCI had hoped to continue with both bowling coach Morne Morkel and assistant coach ten Doeschate. According to the report, ten Doeschate accepted the India job after receiving assurances that he would eventually take charge as the team's specialist fielding coach, a role that never materialised. "You have (Sitanshu) Kotak as the batting coach and there's Gauti (Gambhir) himself to look after the batters. Morne (Morkel) is in charge of pacers and Sairaj (Bahutule) looks after the spinners. When Tendo was brought on board, he was promised the fielding coach's job," a senior BCCI source told PTI on the condition of anonymity. Instead, T Dilip continued in the role after receiving a one-year extension, leaving ten Doeschate without a clearly defined area of responsibility.

Shine CC crowned champions in Kanyakumari Police's anti-drug cricket tournament finale

Kanyakumari: Shine CC emerged champions of the inaugural Kanyakumari Police-Public Relationship Champions Trophy after defeating Packer Sunny CC by three wickets in the final of the tournament organised by the Kanyakumari District Police under the theme, "Say No to Drugs, Say Yes to Sports." Held at the Government Polytechnic College in Nagercoil, the tournament was aimed at strengthening the relationship between the police and the public while promoting sports as a positive alternative to substance abuse among youngsters. Chasing 144 for victory in the summit clash, Shine CC reached the target with eight balls to spare, finishing at 144/7 in 18.4 overs. M. Ranjith top-scored with 38 runs to guide his side to the title after a composed chase. Earlier, Packer Sun-



ny CC posted 143/7 in their allotted 20 overs, with S.R. Ajin remaining unbeaten on 38. Despite the competitive total, the side could not defend it as Shine CC held their nerve in the chase. P. Girish was the standout performer with the ball, claiming impressive figures of 4/26. The road to the final saw Shine CC defeat Kings CC in the first semi-final. Kings CC were bowled out for 129 in 17.2 overs despite

S. Loganathan's fighting 61, while Paramesh (4/16) and R. Ajay (3/37) starred with the ball. Shine CC successfully chased the target, finishing on 130/8 in 18.2 overs, led by R.S. Jerin Jackson's 41. In the second semi-final, Packer Sunny CC overcame DPM Super Kings in a closely contested encounter. DPM Super Kings were dismissed for 138 in 18.3 overs, with M. Anand scoring 51, while M. Viju Arul (3/22) and

Y. Aashif Ahmed (3/12) shared six wickets. Packer Sunny CC reached 142/8 in their 20 overs thanks to contributions from S. Immanuel (40) and an unbeaten 41 from S.A. Steven. At the conclusion of the tournament, Shine CC were crowned champions, with Packer Sunny CC finishing runners-up. DPM Super Kings secured third place, while Kings CC ended fourth. Kanyakumari District Superintendent of Police Dr R Stalin, IPS, attended the prize distribution ceremony as the chief guest. He congratulated the winning teams and participants for their performances and distributed the trophies and awards, appreciating their hard work, dedication and commitment while reiterating the importance of sports in promoting a healthy, disciplined and drug-free society.

Mbappe accepts responsibility after France's FIFA World Cup semifinal exit

Texas: France captain Kylian Mbappe admitted his side failed to execute their game plan after a 2-0 defeat to Spain in the FIFA World Cup semifinal, saying Les Bleus allowed their opponents to dictate the tempo of the match. Speaking to Fox, as quoted by The Athletic, after France's exit from the tournament, Mbappe said the team's tactical approach was to press Spain aggressively and deny them control in midfield, but acknowledged they fell short of that objective. "It was difficult for us. Tactically, we had a plan to go for them with pressure, to go one for one, to not let them lead the tempo and play the way they want to play. They want to have control of the game and the ball," Mbappe told FOX, as quoted by The Athletic.



The French skipper said Spain's midfield was given too much freedom, allowing La Roja to dominate possession and take control of the contest. "That's what we let them do. We let the midfield too much time to play and they have the quality to play. It's difficult when you don't change the plan of Spain. The penalty helped (them) also to come in the game and then they

scored the second goal and we didn't have the quality to get to the final," he added. Mbappe also accepted responsibility for the defeat, saying criticism comes with the role of captain. "You take all the glory when you win, when you don't win but you have to take the blame. It's part of my game, my life, and as captain I have to take all the responsi-

bility. We wanted to go to the final, we didn't and we have to take what people say to us," he said. Saturday's (local time) third-place play-off will be Didier Deschamps' last game as France manager. Mbappe was asked about that game's significance in his post-match interview with Fox, as quoted by The Athletic, the French skipper said, "Nothing changed about what Didier means to us as the French people, as a manager." "There is one game left for him and we have to play the best game for him because he deserves it and the fans deserve it, to finish third in this World Cup," he added. Spain secured a 2-0 victory over France at Dallas Stadium through goals from Mikel Oyarzabal and Pedro Porro to advance to the FIFA World Cup final.

Commonwealth Games tougher than Asian Games, says India's 400m runner Jay Kumar

New Delhi: India's top 400m athletes, bound for the Commonwealth Games starting July 23 and Asian Games later this year, feel competition at the Glasgow Games will be higher than what is expected in Aichi-Nagoya in September-October. The presence of athletes from Australia and England will make races more competitive, and that will be good preparation ahead of the Asian Games, say runners to SAI Media. India will field a 32-member track and field squad at the truncated 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, according to a press release from SAI. Vishal Thennarasu Kayalvizhi, who will be competing in the men's 400m and mixed 4x400m relay at the Commonwealth Games, said competition in Glasgow is going to be tough and it is like "an ocean out there". "Commonwealth Games is hard; it's tough if we don't work hard. I will not say it is impossible; I will say it is possible (to win a medal) if we work out well. Nothing is easy, whether it is the Asian Games or the Commonwealth Games, since these are big competitions. It is an



ocean out there, and I need a chance to prove myself, so I will take it as an opportunity and then try to push hard there," Vishal told SAI Media before leaving for a government-sponsored international training camp in Spala, Poland. The 22-year-old is part of a 60-member contingent, including 41 athletes and 19 coaches plus support staff, travelling to Poland. The Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)-backed athlete created a national record of 44.98 seconds in 400m during the Federation Cup in Ranchi last month and clocked a personal best of 03:00.32 in 4x400m men's relay at the

World Relays in Gaborone, Botswana, this May. His personal best in 4x400m mixed relay is 03:14.81, clocked at the World Relays in China last year. Vishal said that he will target a personal best in both his races at the Commonwealth Games. A look at the statistics explains why the Commonwealth Games are more challenging than the Asian Games. In the 400m, Yousef Asrafi of Saudi Arabia emerged the winner in the 2023 Asian Games with a time of 45.55 seconds. Muzala Samukonga of Zambia broke his country's national record en route to clinching 400m gold at the 2022

Birmingham CWG with a time of 44.66 seconds. Jay Kumar, who competes in 400m, echoed Vishal's sentiments, saying that peaking at both CWG and the Asian Games is challenging as there is a short gap between the two events. The 20-year-old clocked his personal best of 45.47 seconds in the 400m during the Federation Cup last month. "My target for this year is the Asian Games. So, the Inter-State and the Federation Cup were significant and I did well there. I am going for a 45-day training camp in Spala, Poland and will see how I fare after that. Earning a medal

at both the CWG and Asian Games is a bit tough. If we see overall, CWG is tougher as the timings in 400m races go around 43-45 seconds, but in Asian Games it is above 45 seconds in recent years," Jay told SAI Media. Dharmveer Choudhary, a 2025 Asian Championships silver medallist in the 4x400m men's relay, said that training under Jamaican coach Jason Dawson at SAI NCOE Thiruvananthapuram has helped him improve his timings. He also expressed his gratitude for the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) and SAI for their continued support. Last year when I went to the camp, I failed to post good timings. My best timing was 46.6 last year. I had to secure my place in the national squad for both CWG and Asian Games and also improve my timings. So, I would like to thank the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) and my coach for keeping their faith in me, despite poor timings. My personal best now is 45.6, full one second better than last season. Hopefully I will make everyone proud this time at the Asian Games in Japan," said Dharmveer.

Dhoni's heartwarming popcorn moment goes viral instantly

Chandigarh: Guess who was in the house at Edgbaston in Birmingham during the first ODI between India and England on Tuesday? It was everyone's beloved and former India captain MS Dhoni. However, it wasn't just his presence that thrilled cricket fans, instead it was his heartwarming interaction with a young fan seated beside him that quickly grabbed attention. Broadcast cameras captured Dhoni sharing a light-hearted moment with the child, who was enjoying the match with a box of popcorn. The former skipper was seen asking the youngster to share some with him. Many joked about how fortunate the young fan was to be sitting next to one of cricket's greatest icons. One fan wrote, "MS Dhoni just turned this seat into a lifetime flex." Another quipped, "Kohli ne London rehne ko convince kar liya kya?" as the video continued to circulate online. Former India captain MS Dhoni once again proved why he remains one of the most beloved figures in world cricket, even years after stepping away from international action. A heartwarming interaction with a young fan during India's visit to Edgbaston has gone viral on so-



cial media, with fans hailing the legendary wicketkeeper-batter for his humility and kindness. The touching incident took place during India's stay at Edgbaston, where Dhoni was spotted interacting with spectators in the stands. While cricket enthusiasts were eager to catch a glimpse of the World Cup-winning captain, it was one young fan who experienced a moment that quickly became the talk of social media. As captured in a widely shared video, Dhoni noticed a young child sitting in the stands with family members. Holding a tub of popcorn, the former skip-

per walked over and offered some to the youngster with a warm smile. The child, initially surprised, happily accepted the gesture as those nearby burst into smiles and applause. What lasted only a few seconds became one of the most cherished moments of the day. The youngster's reaction, combined with Dhoni's trademark calm demeanour, resonated with fans across the world. Within minutes, clips of the interaction spread across X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook, with thousands praising Dhoni for making the child's day unforgettable.