

Over 40 Coffee Farmers Attend ODOP Workshop On Branding And Marketing In Mokokchung

Kohima, Aug 19: A one-day capacity-building workshop centered on the “One District One Product” (ODOP) initiative for coffee was conducted at the Sangtemla Community Hall in Mokokchung, drawing participation from over 40 local coffee growers, processors, and prospective entrepreneurs. Organized by the District Industries Centre (DIC), Mokokchung, under the theme “Branding,

Packaging, Marketing,” the programme aimed to equip district stakeholders with essential business skills to transform locally grown coffee into an economically viable global brand. Inaugurating the event as Special Guest, Deputy Commissioner of Mokokchung, Ajit Kumar Verma, IAS, underscored that the ODOP initiative by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry serves as an

integration engine to bring together line departments, financial tools, and local farmers. Highlighting that Mokokchung’s coffee cultivation currently spans nearly 820 hectares across 72 villages with an annual yield of around 40 metric tonnes, Verma noted that high production alone does not guarantee economic prosperity. He urged growers to prioritize post-harvest processing, quality



control, organic certification, and attractive packaging to command premium prices in national and international markets. Earlier in the inaugural session, B. Asangla, General Manager of DIC Mokokchung, delivered the welcome address, explaining that coffee was designated as Mokokchung’s flagship ODOP commodity due to its immense agro-climatic suitability and market

potential. The workshop included dedicated technical sessions delivered by resource persons: Er. T. Imlisunep Ao, Principal of GITI Mokokchung, spoke on exploring strategic marketing channels; Atipong Aier, CEO of Aier Bakery, detailed modern commercial branding; and Aliamoa S. Longkumer, Proprietor of Mascot Store & Café, focused on specialized coffee packaging and retail

presentation. An interactive question-and-answer session allowed participants to directly address processing challenges and supply chain logistics with the expert panel. The event concluded with a strong call for multi-stakeholder collaboration to build an end-to-end commercial ecosystem that directly connects Mokokchung’s coffee growers to larger market networks.

Mhathung Yanthan advocates for Nagaland’s agricultural needs in New Delhi

Kohima, Aug 19: Nagaland Advisor for Agriculture, Mhathung Yanthan, held high-level discussions with key Union Ministers and senior central officials in New Delhi to advocate for the state’s pressing agricultural requirements and secure expanded central assistance. The high-profile visit aimed at aligning Nagaland’s unique agrarian landscape with flagship Central Government schemes while addressing critical gaps in farm infrastructure, connectivity, and market access for indigenous farmers. During his meetings with



the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Yanthan emphasized the immense organic farming potential of Nagaland, urging

the Union Government to step up financial allocation under the Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region

(MOVCDNER). He underscored that while Naga farmers naturally practice organic cultivation, formal certification, supply chain infrastructure, and cold-storage facilities are urgently required to connect regional produce—such as Naga king chili, organic ginger, and specialty rice varieties—to lucrative domestic and international markets. The Advisor highlighted the challenges posed by changing climate patterns on traditional shifting (Jhum) cultivation, advocating for dedicated funding to

accelerate climate-resilient farming practices and soil conservation initiatives across hill districts. He requested streamlined sanctioning of pending projects under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and the Prime Minister Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PM-KSY) to improve minor irrigation coverage across remote rural clusters. Union officials lauded the state’s proactive stance and assured full support in expediting pending proposals, promising dedicated technical and financial intervention.

NDRF conducts two-week disaster preparedness exercise across Shi-Yomi

Itanagar, Aug 19: A comprehensive two-week familiarization exercise (FAMEX) aimed at strengthening community resilience and emergency response capabilities was conducted by the 12th Battalion of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Itanagar, across remote border subdivisions of Shi-Yomi district in Arunachal Pradesh. Covering Tato, Mechukha, and Monigong administrative headquarters, the initiative focused on equipping local populations and institutions with vital life-saving techniques to minimize response times during natural calamities.



Coordinated by Vijay Mitte, District Disaster Management Officer (DDMO), under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Manjunath R, the exercise targeted a diverse cross-section of society. Participants included Gaon Burahs, government officials, teachers, students, members of the Na-

tional Cadet Corps (NCC), Scouts and Guides, and local non-governmental organizations. By building grassroots disaster response capacity, the program aimed to empower citizens as efficient first responders in terrain where remote geography often hampers rapid external aid.

Mushroom cultivation training held at Aalo promotes rural livelihoods

Itanagar, Aug 19: A one-day training program on “Mushroom Cultivation for Rural Food and Economic Security” was conducted at Aalo town in West Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh. The initiative aimed to promote mushroom farming as a low-cost, high-yielding, and eco-friendly livelihood alternative for rural communities, unemployed youth, and farm women across the region. Organized by the College of Horticulture and Forestry (CHF), Central Agricultural University (CAU), Pasighat, under the All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) on Mushroom, the workshop drew participation from nearly 100 farmers and local entrepreneurs. Local Zilla Parishad Member (ZPM) Tabi Lollen graced the occasion as Chief Guest, urging rural communities to adopt scientific farming techniques to bolster household income. Guided by Dr. P. Raja, the



technical sessions offered practical demonstrations on selecting substrates, bag preparation, spawning, substrate sterilization, and crop management using local crop residues. Additionally, Dr. S. Jayanthi from J.N. College delivered a lecture on post-harvest handling, highlighting solar-energy drying to extend product shelf life and reduce waste. The session concluded with an environmental drive promoting fast-growing agroforestry species like Moringa and Melia for biomass production and carbon sequestration.

The training session also featured the free distribution of high-quality mushroom spawn bags, poly-bags, and essential cultivation kits to participating farm women and local self-help group members to encourage immediate implementation. Technical experts held an interactive Q&A session addressing common field challenges, such as controlling pest infestations, managing optimal temperature and humidity levels during seasonal transitions, and establishing local direct-to-consumer supply chains.

Mokokchung Photography Club celebrates World Photography Day

Mokokchung, Aug 19: The Mokokchung Photography Club (MPC) celebrated World Photography Day with an inspiring gathering bringing together veteran visual artists, enthusiastic hobbyists, and emerging content creators. Organised to honor the power of visual storytelling, the event featured special interactive sessions, photo showcases, and reflective discussions on how photography continues to document and preserve the rich cultural landscape of Nagaland. Members of the club reflected on the evolution of MPC over the years, highlighting how the organization has transitioned into a collaborative platform for a new generation of creators. Senior members emphasized that photography is far more than a technical skill; it serves as a historical record, capturing candid human emotions, architectural transformations, and everyday moments that shape society. The club highlighted its ongoing ef-



forts to provide structured mentorship, technical workshops, and field exposures to young aspiring photographers across the district. The event also provided a platform for participants to show-

case their distinct photography styles, spanning wildlife, landscape, street, and documentary photography. Interactive feedback sessions allowed upcoming enthusiasts to gain valuable insights on composition, camera

settings, framing techniques, and digital editing workflows. Addressing the gathering, MPC office bearers highlighted the growing professional opportunities in visual media, encouraging the youth to pursue

photography with dedication and artistic integrity. They reiterated the club’s commitment to creating greater awareness about photography’s role in society while nurturing local talents capable of representing Nagaland on national and global platforms. The celebration concluded on a high note, with members committing to document the region’s vibrant heritage through their lenses. Highlighting the district’s creative talents, the event featured the declaration of results for a mobile phone photography competition held on the theme “Home,” which drew 66 local entries judged by industry experts, including representatives from Canon India. Odichuba Ozukum from Sungkomen Ward secured the top honor for his winning entry titled “A Quiet Home, A Faithful Soul,” while Akangkobka of Ungma Village and Tekatemjen Walling of Singratsi Village bagged the second and third prizes respectively.

Nagaland details ST Post Matric Scholarship guidelines and timelines

Kohima, Aug 19: The Department of Higher Education, Government of Nagaland, has released official instructions regarding the online application process for the Centrally Sponsored Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Tribe (ST) students. The state-wide initiative aims to extend essential financial assistance to eligible Naga tribal students pursuing post-secondary education ranging from Class 11, undergraduate, and postgraduate programs to research degrees like M.Phil and Ph.D. According to the official guidelines issued by the Directorate, all eligible candidates must apply online through the official Common Scholarship Portal of Nagaland. The department specified that applicants must be-



long to the Scheduled Tribe category of Nagaland, be enrolled in recognized institutions holding a valid AISHE or UDISE code, and have a combined family annual income from all sources not exceeding ₹2.50 lakh. Students

who are repeaters, currently employed in government or semi-government sectors, or receiving financial aid from alternative government scholarship schemes are explicitly declared ineligible. The department empha-

sized that Aadhaar authentication via DigiLocker is mandatory during account creation and verification. Applicants are strictly instructed to ensure that their registered personal details match their Aadhaar card exactly. Fur-

thermore, candidates must have an active bank account belonging exclusively to themselves, duly linked and seeded with Aadhaar through the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) mapper for Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Students studying within Nagaland are required to submit hard copies of their generated application forms alongside verified mark-sheets, ST certificates, and income documents directly to their respective educational institutions. The heads of institutions will verify submitted details before compiling and forwarding the consolidated data to the Directorate. The department advised students to complete their registrations well before the closing deadline to avoid technical delays.

Wrong to claim China entered 60 km inside: Kiren Rijiju on Arunachal

Itanagar, Aug 19: Union Minister Kiren Rijiju has strongly dismissed reports alleging that Chinese troops have made a 60-kilometer incursion into Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh, calling such claims completely false and misleading. Addressing recent speculation and viral social media posts, the minister cautioned against spreading unverified videos and photographs—some of which he noted were unrelated imagery from outside India—that serve to demoralize security forces stationed along the frontier. While acknowledging that concerns expressed by residents of border villages in Arunachal Pradesh are valid, Rijiju clarified that the core issue stems from the fact that the Line of Actual Control (LAC)



remains physically undefined. He explained that overlapping perceptions of the border mean locals on both sides claim land extending beyond current positions, but emphasized this should not be misrepresented as Chinese forces capturing any Indian village or penetrating deep into Indian territory. Rijiju specifically addressed reports regarding Chinese construction near the Longju area, pointing

out that structures built in that sector sit on land occupied by China since 1959. Reassuring the public, he confirmed that the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) have significantly stepped up patrolling along high ridges to secure border points. Reaffirming India’s firm stance, the government reiterated that Arunachal Pradesh remains an integral and inalienable part of the nation.

State Minister Biswajit Daimary Hands Over Sports Stadiums to BTC

Guwahati, Aug 19: A joint meeting between the Government of Assam and the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was held in Guwahati on Tuesday, during which several important decisions concerning sports infrastructure and its management were discussed. As part of the meeting, Assam Minister for Sports and Youth Welfare Biswajit Daimary formally handed over the responsibility for the management, maintenance and operation of two major district-level sports complexes to the BTC authority. The facilities include the District Sports Complex at Bathoupuri in Mushalpur, Baksa district, which was constructed with an investment of Rs 50 crore from the state government fund, and the Kajalgaon Sports Complex in Chirang district, built at a cost of Rs 35.45 crore.

The handover is expected to facilitate more effective management, maintenance and utilisation of the sports facilities, allowing the BTC authority to take a more active role in ensuring that the complexes remain accessible, functional and beneficial to athletes and the wider community. With improved management of these major sports infrastructure projects, the facilities could provide better training opportunities for emerging players, local ath-



letes and young people across the BTC region. The development is also expected to strengthen the overall sports ecosystem by encouraging greater participation in various sporting disciplines and creating a more supportive environment for athletes to develop their skills. At the same time, the transfer reflects the continued efforts of the Assam government and the BTC administration to work in coordination to expand and improve sports infrastructure at the grassroots level.

By ensuring better access to modern sporting facilities, the authorities aim to encourage young people to take up sports, nurture local talent and provide athletes with improved platforms to compete and progress at district, state and national levels.

Minister Biswajit Daimary handed over the NOC for management, maintenance, and operation to the BTC authority. The No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the district sports stadiums was formally received by BTC Executive Member (EM) of Sports, Lwmsrao Daimary, and Secretary of Sports and Youth Welfare, BTC, Bhaskar Jyoti Manta. Their presence marked an important step in the formal handover process, with the officials accepting the NOC on behalf of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).

The development is expected to further strengthen the management and utilisation of sports infrastructure across the districts, while supporting the promotion of sports and youth activities in the region.

Sonitpur Tea Garden Workers Benefit from Wage Scheme Focused on Maternal Health and Financial Stability Scheme Aids Postnatal Care

Guwahati, Aug 19: Pregnancy is a crucial phase in a woman's life, requiring adequate nutrition, regular health check-ups, timely medical attention and continuous access to essential maternal healthcare services. For women working in tea garden areas, meeting these requirements can often be challenging due to financial constraints and the loss of wages during pregnancy. In this context, the wage compensation scheme for pregnant women in tea garden areas has emerged as an important source of financial support, helping thousands of beneficiaries meet their nutritional, medical and other essential needs during pregnancy and the postnatal period. Launched on October 1, 2018, the scheme was introduced with the objective of compensating pregnant women workers for the loss of wages during pregnancy while ensuring that they are able to maintain adequate nutrition and access necessary maternal healthcare services. By providing financial assistance during this important period, the initiative seeks to reduce the economic burden on women and their families and encourage them to prioritise their health and well-being. The scheme



also aims to support healthier pregnancies by enabling beneficiaries to seek regular medical check-ups, access timely healthcare and meet additional nutritional requirements before and after childbirth.

Over the years, the initiative has become an important welfare measure for women in tea garden communities, providing them with financial security and supporting maternal health during pregnancy and the postnatal period. Under the scheme, each eligible beneficiary receives Rs 15,000 in four instalments through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). The first instalment of Rs 3,000 is provided during the first trimester, followed by Rs 4,000 during the sixth month of pregnancy.

Another Rs 4,000 is released following institutional delivery, while the final instalment of Rs 4,000 is provided six weeks after delivery. Beyond financial assistance, the scheme also encourages pregnant women to undergo regular antenatal check-ups, maintain proper nutrition, opt for institutional delivery, and receive appropriate postnatal care.

In Sonitpur district, the scheme currently covers 41 tea gardens, including their branches. The Health Department has been conducting extensive awareness activities in tea garden communities through interpersonal communication, community meetings, hoardings, banners, posters, and public-address announcements.

The wage compensation scheme has made a significant impact in Sonitpur by providing much-needed financial assistance to pregnant women in tea garden areas and helping them meet essential nutritional and healthcare requirements during pregnancy and the postnatal period. During the 2025-26 financial year, a total of 5,871 pregnant women benefited from the scheme, with Rs 2,90,70,200 disbursed among eligible beneficiaries. The support has continued to reach women during the current financial year as well. From April 2026 to date, 2,416 pregnant women have already benefited under the scheme, with Rs 1,00,65,400 disbursed so far. The continued financial assistance is expected to provide greater economic security to beneficiaries while enabling them to access proper nutrition, medical check-ups and essential maternal healthcare services. The initiative therefore represents an important support mechanism for pregnant women in tea garden communities, particularly during a period when additional healthcare and nutritional needs can place financial pressure on families.

Manipur Govt Pushes for NRC Updation



Imphal, Aug 19: The Manipur government on Tuesday reiterated its demand for updation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state, citing concerns over demographic changes, demographic imbalance and illegal migration. A team of MLAs from Manipur is expected to visit New Delhi soon to seek guidance from the Central government and once again urge it to initiate the process of NRC updation in the state. Manipur government spokesperson Nityai-pat Chuthek and sitting BJP MLA Sapam Ranjan Singh stated that the state government remains serious about the issues concerning the NRC and Census and stands with the people of Manipur in addressing their concerns. Sapam Ranjan Singh, also a former Minister, said that the Manipur Legislative Assembly had passed a resolution on August 5, 2022, urging that the NRC be taken up in the state. The resolution was subsequently reaffirmed by the Assembly on March 1, 2024, he and Nityai-pat Chuthek told the media. Singh stated that the issue has remained a longstanding concern of the state government and that efforts have been continuously pursued through correspondence with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. He also informed that a team of MLAs would visit New Delhi to seek guidance and urge the Central Government to take up the NRC updation. The former minister stressed that the issue should be addressed collectively, irrespective of political party, community or other differences, as it concerns the future of the state and its people. Singh reiterated that the government acknowledges the demand of civil

society organisations and the people of Manipur that the NRC should be updated before the Census 2027. He said the government would continue to pursue the matter with the Central government and make every effort to ensure that the demand is considered. On the ongoing bandh and protests in different districts, Sapam Ranjan Singh acknowledged that peaceful protest is a democratic right. However, he appealed to the protesters to express their grievances peacefully and democratically without resorting to violence or causing inconvenience to the general public, students and people whose livelihoods may be affected by the disruptions. Regarding the NRC process, he stated that the matter requires discussion and consideration at various levels and that several aspects may need to be addressed before the NRC can be taken up. The legislator expressed hope that positive developments would emerge through continued efforts and dialogue. Sapam Ranjan Singh further stated that the efforts should remain a collective endeavour and not be viewed through the lens of political parties, communities or religions. He expressed confidence that continued engagement with the Central leadership would yield a positive outcome. During the media briefing at the Auditorium of the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), another government Spokesperson and MLA Thokchom Radheshyam, MLAs Th. Shyamkumar, P. Brojen, T. Robindro, S. Premchand, Sapam Kunjakshwor Singh, Th. Shanti and Ashab Uddin were also present.

Arunachal Seeks Greater ICAR Support to Strengthen Agriculture Sector

Itanagar, Aug 19: Arunachal Pradesh Agriculture and Horticulture Minister Gabriel D Wangsu sought stronger support from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) for preparing a time-bound agriculture roadmap, establishing a Central Kiwi Research Institute and opening 10 additional Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in uncovered districts. Addressing ICAR's 97th annual general meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday, Wangsu highlighted the need for mountain-specific scientific solutions to strengthen agriculture and allied sectors in the state. He urged ICAR to expedite the preparation of the agriculture roadmap and make it practical, time-bound and focused on measurable outcomes for farmers. Wangsu also reiterated Arunachal Pradesh's demand for a Central Kiwi Research Institute, noting that the state contributed nearly 60 per cent of the country's kiwi production. He said the institute would help improve production, technology, processing and market opportunities for growers. The minister further sought approval for 10 ad-



ditional Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in districts that currently do not have dedicated agricultural extension centres, with the aim of strengthening the reach of agricultural services across Arunachal Pradesh. The state currently has 17 KVKs, while proposals for establishing 10 more centres have already been submitted to the ICAR-Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute (ICAR-ATARI), Guwahati, for consideration. Wangsu highlighted the importance of expanding the KVK network, particularly in remote and geographically challenging areas where farmers often have limited access to modern agricultural knowledge, technical guidance and institutional support. He said the proposed centres would help bridge the

gap between agricultural research institutions and farming communities by taking scientific practices, modern technologies, improved farming techniques and research-based solutions directly to farmers at the grassroots level. The expansion is expected to strengthen agricultural extension services, encourage the adoption of innovative and sustainable farming practices and help farmers improve productivity, income and resilience. By increasing the presence of KVKs across more districts, the government aims to ensure that farmers in even the most remote parts of the state can benefit from the latest developments in agriculture and receive timely technical assistance suited to local conditions.

East Khasi Hills Police Felicitates Traffic Officers for Road Safety Work

Shillong, Aug 19: East Khasi Hills Police honoured traffic personnel and Home Guards on Tuesday in recognition of their dedicated service towards maintaining traffic management, road discipline and public safety across the district. The recognition programme was held at the Police Reserve on Jail Road, bringing attention to the important role played by frontline traffic personnel who work continuously under challenging circumstances. Traffic officers and Home Guards often have to remain deployed on roads for extended periods, carrying out their duties despite heavy rainfall, intense sunshine and difficult working conditions. Their responsibilities require them to manage traffic flow, assist commuters, regulate congestion and respond to various road-related situations while maintaining public order. Superintendent of Police Vivek Syiem commended the personnel for their commitment, endurance and professionalism, acknowledging the demanding nature of their daily responsibilities. He also pointed out that traffic officers are frequently exposed to public frustration, particularly during periods of heavy congestion, when commuters



can become impatient or distressed. Despite these challenges, the personnel continue to perform their duties and work towards ensuring safer and smoother movement on the roads. These personnel manage dangerous situations daily to keep both pedestrians and vehicles moving safely. Syiem emphasized that traffic staff remain vital during medical emergencies. They clear paths for ambulances caught in jams. "Traffic duty is among the most challenging responsibilities of the police force," Syiem stated. He also honored Samborlang Diengdoh and Anthony Nongkhlaw for their ongoing service and contributions to the department. Their regular presence on the streets allows them to respond to traffic-related

challenges, assist commuters and enforce road safety regulations while maintaining smooth movement of vehicles. Highlighting the importance of their work, Syiem urged citizens to extend greater cooperation and work closely with the police to help reduce road accidents, traffic violations and congestion across the region. He stressed that road safety is a shared responsibility and requires active participation from both law enforcement agencies and the public. Better cooperation from citizens, including adherence to traffic rules and following the guidance of traffic personnel, can help the department perform its duties more effectively and contribute to safer and more orderly roads.

Nagaland Joins National Gas Grid

Nagaland Connected to National Gas Grid for First Time as ONGC and IGGL Commission Key Gas Infrastructure

Kohima, Aug 19: State-owned ONGC and IGGL on Tuesday reached major milestones in strengthening the Northeast's natural gas infrastructure by commissioning gas evacuation facilities at Khoraghat GGS-1 in Assam. The development was accompanied by the successful injection of natural gas into the Dergaon-Dimapur Pipeline, connecting NEGG and the National Gas Grid for the first time. A spokesman said the gas evacuation facility at Khoraghat GGS-1 in Golaghat district of Assam will enable surplus associated natural gas produced from the Upper Assam Shelf to be efficiently processed and evacuated through NEGG de-

veloped by IGGL. The facility is expected to improve the utilisation of available natural gas resources in the region while strengthening the network for transporting indigenous gas to consumers and industries. The commissioning of the Dergaon-Dimapur Pipeline marks a significant step towards integrating the Northeast more closely with India's expanding gas-based economy and enhancing the region's energy connectivity. The development is also expected to strengthen the natural gas infrastructure of the Northeast, improve resource utilisation and create a more robust framework for meeting the region's growing energy requirements. With the pipe-



line's commissioning, Nagaland has been connected to the National Gas Grid for the first time, opening opportunities for greater availability of clean, reliable natural gas for industrial, commercial, and other consumers in the state,

the spokesman said. A key significance of the development is the first-time integration of a regional gas source from the Northeast with the National Gas Grid, marking an important milestone in strengthening the region's

energy connectivity and utilisation of its natural resources. The newly commissioned pipeline is expected to facilitate the evacuation and monetisation of natural gas produced from ONGC's Jorhat Asset in Assam, providing

a more efficient mechanism for transporting the region's indigenous gas to the wider national network. By connecting locally produced natural gas with the National Gas Grid, the project is likely to improve the utilisation of available gas resources and support more efficient energy distribution across the Northeast and beyond. The development also represents a step towards integrating the region's energy infrastructure with the broader national framework, creating greater opportunities for the commercial utilisation of natural gas and strengthening the role of Northeast India in the country's overall energy landscape.

The Finance Minister of Tripura Notices Financial Stress



Agartala, Aug 19: Since the Center has stopped providing states with Revenue Gap financing, Tripura’s finance minister, Pranajit Singha Roy, has intimated that the state’s resources are severely constrained. Speaking at an event at Pragna Bhawan here, he said that the state used to receive an annual gap grant of Rs 4,000 crore and that the state’s economy was seriously threatened by its termination. He claimed that this was also one of the causes of the government employees’ Dearness Allowance (DA) being delayed. He claimed that all states were having issues as a result of the termination of Revenue Gap financing. The state administration is attempting to find solutions to the situation, he said, and the 16th Finance Commission has recommended states to raise their own revenue to cover non-plan expenditures. As calls for the release of pending DAs for state government employees grow, the financial limitations are turning into a political issue for the state government. The issue is also being used by opposition political parties in advance of two significant elections that are planned for the later half of the year: the civic elections and the Village Committee elections in the TTAADC districts. Employees of the Central Government currently receive 60% DA, compared to 41% for state government employees, a difference of 19 percentage points. The Finance Minister did, however, reassure state government workers that efforts were being made to close the disparity. He claimed that while DA had been released in a methodical manner, the BJP-led government had not levied any new taxes on citizens in the last eight years, bearing in mind their financial burden. He gave workers the assurance that Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha had been talking about strategies to get money to close the shortfall and release the DA. “We have already taken up the issue with the authorities concerned,” he stated.

A man is detained by Andhra CID for deceiving jobless teenagers with fictitious government job offers

New Delhi, Aug 19: Amravati: A guy has been detained by the Andhra Pradesh CID’s Cyber Crimes Police for allegedly deceiving jobless youth by disseminating fictitious government employment notices and job offers. The accused had been operating a fraudulent government job recruitment scheme for financial benefit, according to the CID. He is accused of publishing a newspaper ad in 2021 claiming to be hiring within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and offering a fictitious email address for submissions. Gopal was detained by the Andhra Pradesh CID’s Cyber Crimes Police for deceiving jobless youngsters by disseminating fictitious official employment notices and offering government positions under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare’s name, according to a press release from CID on Tuesday. Gopal allegedly contacted candidates using information obtained from the phony email and persuaded them to pay mon-

A Gujarati gang targeted users of the Grindr app, robbed them at knifepoint, and was apprehended

New Delhi, Aug 19: A group that used the well-known LGBTQ+ dating app Grindr to entice victims and rob them by threatening them with a knife has been apprehended by Gujarati police. A criminal group that targeted people using the dating app Grindr was successfully disbanded by the Dunga Police in the industrial area of Vapi. Following a serious occurrence on August 12, when a young guy was enticed to a remote, dark location close to the Bharat Petroleum station in Karwad, authorities immediately began an inquiry. Three attackers ambushed the victim as soon as they arrived, punched him, threatened him with a knife, and took Rs 14,000

in cash before escaping. Within hours, the suspects in the Karwad area were located and captured by law authorities using sophisticated technical analysis. The three people who were detained are 19-year-old Shahbaz Abdul Aziz Chowdhary, 20-year-old Zaheer Samiullah Khan, and 19-year-old Jawahar Ramnaresh Yadav. They are all originally from Uttar Pradesh and are temporarily living in Vapi. After the perpetrators were apprehended, police were able to retrieve the entire amount of stolen cash from them. The group often used online dating services to target gullible people looking for intimate relationships, according to investigating authorities.

In order to arrange in-person meetings in remote, dimly lit areas, the suspects made fictitious accounts on the Grindr app and other such platforms, after which they robbed the victims. The young three went on this systematic criminal spree in an attempt to make quick and simple money, according to Deputy Superintendent of Police BN Dave. Following the initial complaint, a second victim stepped forward to report a similar robbery executed by the same group using the dating app. Law enforcement officials noted that perpetrators of such crimes frequently rely on the victims’ reluctance to report incidents due to deep-seated fears of social stigma, public embarrass-

ment, or potential exposure. Consequently, many similar offences often go unreported in industrial hubs where migrant workers and local residents interact online. But since all three suspects are currently being held by the police on remand, investigators anticipate that as the interrogation goes on, more information about the scope of the gang’s activities may become available. The successful operation emphasizes the need of public awareness when using dating apps and social media to set up offline meetups. To stop similar suspicious acts or personal encounters in the future, local police have asked locals to report them.

Nitin Meghalaya alerts border medical facilities to the dengue outbreak in Bangladesh

Shillong, Aug 19: Health and Family Welfare Minister Wailadmiki Shylla stated that Meghalaya has put health facilities and surveillance teams in border areas on high alert due to a rising dengue outbreak in neighboring Bangladesh, even though the State has not yet recorded an alarming increase in cases. Our team has been instructed by the Health Department to remain vigilant, particularly those located in border regions. We have not yet received any concerning or worrisome reports from the border regions. “A surveil-

lance team is traveling and assessing the situation,” Shylla stated. According to him, health facilities in border regions, including as PHCs, CHCs, and sub-centers, have been ordered to maintain vigilance and promptly report any suspected cases or unexpected increase in dengue illnesses. “In the border regions, we have health facilities like as PHC, CHC, and sub-centers. We have requested that they remain vigilant. They must notify us if they discover such cases. We haven’t yet noticed a growing tendency

in Meghalaya, particularly in the surrounding districts,” he stated. Although there hasn’t been a concerning rise in dengue cases in Meghalaya thus far, Shylla stated that the State was keeping a careful eye on the situation in light of the rising cases in Bangladesh. Undoubtedly, there may be a few cases, which are common, but as of right now, there hasn’t been a concerning increase in dengue cases, particularly considering the rising number of cases in Bangladesh, a neighbor,” he stated. According to the Min-

ister, surveillance teams have been visiting border regions to evaluate the situation and would remain vigilant. The increased surveillance coincides with a dengue outbreak that is getting worse in Bangladesh. The Directorate General of Health Services in Bangladesh reports that 17,880 instances of dengue have been reported so far this year, and at least 59 individuals have died from the disease. In the 24 hours prior, health officials reported 753 new illnesses and three fatalities.

Rs 75,000 a month for the driver of a car Fuel: Tamil Nadu MLAs’ Bonanza with Vijay



New Delhi, Aug 19: A car, a gasoline allowance, and a secretary. A huge bonanza for Tamil Nadu MLAs has been declared by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Joseph Vijay. Each of the 234 MLAs in the state will receive a car along with a fuel and maintenance allowance. The chief minister has said that the MLAs will receive a government vehicle to assist them in their constituency-related tasks. “MLAs must regularly visit their constituencies to address issues raised by the public. The chief minister defended the cost in the Assembly by saying,

“Government vehicles will ensure transparent and corruption-free governance.” The Tamil Nadu administration further mentioned that several MLAs in the present Assembly came from low-income households and were elected for the first time. According to Vijay, they require a car in order to carry out their responsibilities as representatives of the people. The announcement came after VCK MLA Jothimani said MLAs cannot work effectively without the required logistics support and requested cars for them. Additionally, the Vijay govern-

ment has declared that MLAs will receive a monthly stipend of Rs 75,000 to cover driver, petrol, and car maintenance costs. “All MLAs are required to travel in their constituencies to listen to people’s grievances and to monitor government projects,” Vijay stated in defense of the ruling. I’m pleased to offer government automobiles for all MLAs in order to assist members who need financial support and novices in carrying out their duties diligently. “MLAs will now additionally receive a Rs 25,000 state stipend to employ a secretary for official duties.

The lawmakers promptly applauded the Chief Minister’s announcement. TVK MLA Sabari Iyngaran shared her personal tale while applauding the government’s decision to provide automobiles to MLAs. “I didn’t have a job or a car. However, we now have automobiles and jobs thanks to our leader. I exclusively take the train to Chennai, and the police don’t even believe me when I claim to be an MLA when I drive to the Assembly. I must present my identity card. TVK MLA Sindhu thanked the chief

minister in the Assembly by breaking into the MGR song “Koduttathellam Kodutthan.” The chief minister was seen grinning as other MLAs pounded their tables in agreement. TVK ally Congress MLA Tharagai Cuthbert welcomed the announcement, saying it had made the MLAs “so happy”. She added that even opposition MLAs would welcome the decision, though, understandably, they might not say so. Raj Mohan, the minister of school education, supported the action as well, citing its broader advantages. He claimed that in addition to assisting MLAs in carrying out their responsibilities, the decision will provide jobs for secretaries and drivers. However, the Vijay government’s declaration has been criticized by the opposition DMK, which called it an unnecessary expense. “A significant amount of money will be required for this choice. The state will have to spend a lot of money on cars for all 234 MLAs, in addition to increased allowances that have been declared. Why was it necessary? A Sarvanan, a DMK spokesman, said.

Governor Arlekar goes to a man who has fallen unconscious close to Kerala Lok Bhavan

New Delhi, Aug 19: Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, the governor of Kerala, responded quickly on Wednesday to a bystander who had passed out close to the Lok Bhavan and made sure he received all the medical care he required. According to a Lok Bhavan source, the event happened while the Governor was driving away from his official residence to take part in Onam-related festivities. He witnessed a bystander, later identified as Girish, abruptly collapse to the ground unconscious as his automobile was leaving the Lok Bhavan. According



to the official, it was later discovered that Girish’s elevated blood sugar levels caused him to become ill. Without delay, Arlekar exited his car, hurried over to Girish, evaluated the situation, and stayed with him while giving his crew instructions to administer the required medical care. According to the official, the

governor’s staff brought water right away, gave it to Girish, and cleaned his face. The officer added that although Girish’s family members were contacted using his phone number and informed of the situation, they were unable to go there right away because they were far away. In order to prevent his condition from getting worse, the Governor ordered that Girish, who resides close to the Alathara Devi Temple in Vellayambalam, be transferred to a hospital first. All essential preparations were made for this, the official continued.

Rebecca Suchiang, Meghalaya’s first indigenous woman chief secretary, dies

Shillong, Aug 19: Rebecca V. Suchiang, Meghalaya’s first tribal woman chief secretary, passed away on Tuesday following a more than two-year battle with cancer, according to officials. Suchiang, who had been receiving therapy and had been ill for a while, died while being treated. Members of the civil service and political leaders in Meghalaya have expressed sorrow at her passing, recalling her contribution to the state’s governance. When Suchiang took over as Meghalaya’s Chief Secretary on September 30, 2021, she created history. An Assamese IAS official from the 1989 batch? She was the first indigenous tribal woman and the first Khasi woman to occupy the top bureaucratic position in the state, Meghalaya cadre. Conrad K. Sangma, the chief minister of Meghalaya, expressed his profound sadness at her passing and characterized her as a highly esteemed civil worker whose career was distinguished by a commitment to public service. Sangma recalled Suchiang’s leadership throughout difficult times and commended her capacity to make decisive judgments while retaining the

trust of her coworkers and subordinates in his condolence statement. Kong Rebecca, the first indigenous woman Chief Secretary, was admired for her leadership among her peers, her mentoring of her juniors, and her motivating work ethic. She also made audacious choices at difficult times, according to the Chief Minister. Sangma also emphasized Suchiang’s perseverance throughout her protracted fight with cancer, stating that she carried out her duties in spite of significant health issues. He recalled her tenacity and dedication to public service amid her illness, saying, “She fought bravely.” “Suchiang’s contribution to Meghalaya’s administration will continue to be an important part of the state’s public service history,” he continued. “Her service and dedication to the state will be remembered,” Sangma stated, offering Suchiang’s family, friends, and loved ones his sincere sympathies. Since Suchiang was the first Khasi woman to hold the position, her promotion to Chief Secretary in 2021 was seen as a major turning point for Meghalaya. Most of the state’s administrative positions.

EDITORIAL

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The transparency deficit in India's state-level policy making

India's economic narrative is increasingly defined by grand ambitions, high-growth projections, and rapid digital transformation. As the country positions itself as a global manufacturing hub and a preferred destination for foreign direct investment, the central government has consistently championed the "Ease of Doing Business" framework. Portals like the National Single Window System and the Udyam registration platform have streamlined national compliance. Yet, beneath this glossy veneer of federal digitization lies a glaring, localized paradox: India's states are eager to announce sweeping economic policies, but frequently fail to make the actual policy documents public.

This opaque approach to state-level governance is more than just a bureaucratic nuisance; it is a structural impediment to trade, investment, and enterprise. Across the country, legislative assemblies pass laws, cabinets approve incentive schemes, and chief ministers roll out high-profile industrial or startup policies. Press conferences are held, headlines are made, and political objectives are met. However, the primary-source documents—the detailed notifications, exact operational guidelines, eligibility criteria, and compliance timelines—frequently vanish into a bureaucratic black hole, never reaching the public domain. Recent tracking data highlights the alarming scale of this transparency deficit. Hundreds of state-level policies announced over recent years continue to operate without a corresponding primary document accessible online. In several states, a complete vacuum exists: policies are heavily publicized in the media, but official portals either display outdated drafts from previous years or show dead links. For businesses, this policy secrecy translates into heavy commercial friction. Commerce and industry thrive on predictability, stability, and clarity. When looking to commit long-term capital, build supply chains, or scale hiring operations, investors rely heavily on concrete regulatory frameworks. Without access to official policy notifications, businesses are left navigating an expensive guessing game. Compliance costs multiply as enterprises are forced to rely on hearsay, expensive intermediaries, or fragmented interpretations of executive actions.

Furthermore, this gap severely undercuts the judiciary's vision of economic fairness. The Supreme Court of India has previously ruled that government policy announcements are solemn promises to citizens and industry, and that failing to notify them in a timely, transparent manner violates the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitu-

tion. When states announce incentives or industrial frameworks verbally or via press briefings but fail to codify them in accessible public notifications, they violate the legitimate expectations of commercial entities. Fixing this crisis requires a shift from arbitrary administrative communication to institutionalized accountability. First, every state government must consolidate its legislative and executive notifications into a single, searchable, and authoritative digital repository. Second, state public relations machinery must sync directly with administrative departments to guarantee that the moment a policy is approved, its text goes live. Finally, federal bodies like NITI Aayog should integrate policy transparency metrics directly into state rankings, ensuring that ease of doing business evaluates not just how fast a portal opens, but whether the rules of the game are actually written down for everyone to see. India's states are undeniably the core engines of its future economic growth. But until state-level policymaking transitions out of the shadows and into clear public view, administrative opacity will continue to checkmate commercial potential.

The sourcing gap is not evenly distributed. The bulk of the missing policy documents come from a cluster of 10 states that account for 241 of the 414 missing policies (58 per cent). Of these, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat showed the greatest gaps, with a 100 per cent missing rate—not a single missing policy tracked by CSIS over the last three years was found to have its primary document updated in the public domain. After these four, Andhra Pradesh was the next worst performer with a 97 per cent missing rate, followed by Delhi and Odisha, both with a 96 per cent missing rate.

The categories most affected are precisely those most relevant to investors: infrastructure and governance-related policies account for 113 missing entries, and industrial policy and business regulation-related policies for 94. Together, they also represent nearly half of our entire backlog. Our data points to two problems. The first is straightforward: policies exist but are not published online. The second is harder to fix: roughly 30 per cent of the backlog comprises administrative actions, such as a state "approving" or "issuing guidelines". These "executive actions", often taken in cabinet meetings or by the chief minister, should have corresponding orders published to support implementation, but they are not always shared online. State gazettes, for example, tend to publish legislation and do not always include policies outside the legislative domain. This is a structural problem, not merely a research gap.

Stalled panels: navigating the unexpected speed bumps in India's solar journey

One hates to admit this, but India may have to temporarily pause further addition to its renewable capacity, especially solar. There are two main roadblocks that have led to a situation where it must back down on renewable generation. The first is that it is not able to provide long-term permanent grid connectivity, and the second, perhaps more important, is that we have practically no storage capacity, be it batteries or pumped storage.

Renewable generating capacity is more dispersed compared to conventional capacity and, further, the capacities are relatively small. Consequently, one needs a transmission system that may run into a mesh of wires connecting small capacities instead of a single transmission line emanating from a big plant as we are used to. More lines would mean more "right of way" required to lay the cables. Apart from being a time-consuming affair, the fact is that the country does not have enough space available, at least in some parts. Moreover, the time required for setting up a solar plant is about 18 months whereas time taken for a transmission line

can take about 36 months. This mismatch has led to a situation where the generation unit is ready but the transmission line is nowhere in sight. So, today, the generator wants compensation—that in itself is a lengthy legal battle. During the solar hours, we have generation from not only solar but also wind, biogas, etc, to the extent they are connected to the grid. In addition, we have conventional generation from coal, gas, nuclear and hydro. The total generation from conventional and renewable sources is more than the demand for power during the day, at least as of now. So, somebody needs to back down since supply and demand need to match in real-time; otherwise, the grid will crash. The question is who should back down. Since the marginal cost of generation from solar and wind is zero, it is the conventional generation, such as coal, that needs to back down. In other words, renewable generation is treated as "must run" because unless we use that power, we are going to lose it forever.

But herein lies the catch. Coal-based generation cannot back down beyond a limit. The gener-

ators say that it would not be advisable to back down beyond 55% of the capacity of the plant because doing so may damage the machinery. The government, however, opines that there is no problem in backing down to even 40%. What should be this floor level (55% or 40%) is the matter of an ongoing debate. Now that India's solar capacity has touched 162 gigawatts (GW), the situation is such that even after going down to the floor level as far as generation from coal stations is concerned, supply is still exceeding demand. One, therefore, is now forced to curtail renewable generation also for grid stability. The curtailment was of the order of about 2 billion units (BUs) in 2025. If India had storage capacity in the form of batteries, it could have used this surplus power to charge and use these batteries during non-solar hours. The country could also have used this surplus power to pump water from the lower reservoir to the upper reservoir of pumped hydro and use it when generation went down in the non-solar hours.

As already mentioned, solar generators are suffering due to

non-availability of grid connectivity. They have been demanding compensation, and there is some talk of provision of limited succour. In addition, when solar generators are asked to back down, they are paid only to the extent they have supplied. However, a lot depends on the power purchase agreement that they have signed. In case there is a "deemed generation" clause, and if they are asked to back down for reasons other than grid stability, there is a possibility that they will be paid. The process, however, can be lengthy. So, how does India get out of this morass? The answer lies in building storage capacity. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has estimated that the country needs storage capacity to the extent of 888 gigawatt-hours (GWH) by 2035; what it has today is a mere fraction of this. Storage capacity in the form of pumped storage takes time as it faces all the vagaries associated with the construction of hydro plants.

Though the gestation period for battery storage is relatively low, a new problem has emerged as far storage projects are concerned. The market-determined price (that has

been arrived through competitive bidding) seems to be non-remunerative, and this affects the viability of projects and puts a big question mark on their successful completion. If India wishes not to back down on its renewable generation, one possible solution seems to be temporarily mothballing a few of the country's inefficient coal-based plants so that overall generation from coal falls to an extent. In the meanwhile, the country focuses on seriously building its storage capacity. This, unfortunately, will not be possible since there are instances of high demand during non-solar hours where conventional generation falls short vis-à-vis demand. To conclude, there seems to be no quick solution to India's problem of having to curtail renewable generation in the day and losing that power forever. On the lighter side, one can say that the country is better off adding only about 13 GW per year (as we have done over the last ten years) instead of about 45 GW per year that was required to displace coal. Had we done that, our problems would have multiplied and this crisis would have been at our doorsteps much earlier.

The asymmetric trap: Why Ukraine's drone triumph cannot offset its missile defense crisis

The combined military casualties in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war have exceeded 1.8 million, as per reports. Given its capacity, Russia has generally prevailed. However, recently, Ukraine has claimed that it has managed to turn the tide. Since November 2025, Kyiv has liberated large chunks of territory, with Moscow suffering a net loss for the first time since the invasion began.

Russian casualties have mounted, and so has strain on Moscow with reports of an acute manpower shortage. The single most important factor behind Ukraine's success is its ingenious deployment of drone warfare, targeting Russian logistics, supply lines, and command centres. Ukraine's long-range drones have struck targets as deep as 2,500 km inside Russia, reaching locations like Moscow, St Petersburg and the Urals, among others. Ukrainian drone expertise has become so advanced that its specialists are now advis-

ing Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations on countering Iranian drones. The evolution of Ukrainian military into a formidable force is now widely acknowledged. As per Michael Weiss in the Financial Times, "the country Trump once disdained as a burden has become a military powerhouse."

Despite Ukraine's growing military capabilities, especially in drone technology, Russia has consistently developed countermeasures to maintain its strategic upper hand. Ukraine's drone successes have not shielded it from Russia's massive missile campaigns. Inability to intercept the Russian ballistic missiles has left Ukraine quite vulnerable. In July 2026 alone, Russia launched 139 ballistic missiles—the highest monthly total this year, according to the Centre for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS). Casualties in Ukraine are mounting. The UN has verified at least 1,396 civilian deaths and 7,978 injured in Ukraine during the first six

months of 2026—a 37% increase over the same period in 2025. This toll is largely driven by long-range missile attacks, with June 2026 being the deadliest in four years (at least 293 killed). Ukraine's air defence faces a deepening crisis. Its shield has primarily depended on Patriot interceptors supplied by the US. The supply over the last few months has dried up due to US commitments in West Asia. In fact, experts attribute President Trump's repeated ceasefire offers in the war on Iran to the US's shrinking munition buffer stock. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky recently stated on social media that Ukraine has received only one-third of the air defence missiles that it received in 2025. Russia produces over 1,000 ballistic missiles annually, while Ukraine has received only 600 Patriot interceptors over four years of war. Russian ballistic missiles such as Iskander-M and Kinzhal are best intercepted by Patriot systems, and Ukraine's stock is critically

low.

In addition to diverted US supplies, several other factors have compounded the crisis. In 2025, the US unilaterally suspended key aid packages for Ukraine without coordination with allies; among other things, it is believed to be rooted in the Trump administration's strategic ambiguity vis-à-vis Russia. European efforts have also fallen short due to a profound mismatch between battlefield needs and Western industrial capacity. Europe's indigenous SAMP/T system produces only about 200 Aster-30 interceptors annually, while Russia manufactures approximately 1,440 ballistic missiles per year far outstripping combined western production. The shortfall is reflected in the fact that the European production of the SAMP/T has not increased since the invasion began. Technically, the Patriot remains the only system that can reliably intercept Russian ballistic missiles through "hit-to-kill" technology. The European

Aster-30 blasts in the vicinity of the targeted missile and uses fragmentation warheads rather than kinetic impact, making it less foolproof against incoming ballistic missiles. While Europe has launched initiatives like the "Freya" Project to develop a lower-cost Ukrainian-designed anti-ballistic missile system, experts estimate it will take years to materialise, with a prototype not expected until mid-2027. NATO announcements in July 2026, regarding licensed Patriot production in Ukraine, will also take significant time to materialise, subject to clearance from original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). As per The Atlantic, US defence giants Lockheed and Raytheon are reluctant to license Patriot missile production to Ukrainian manufacturers, fearing that they will be able to improve the Patriot and then produce it at faster scale and for much less money.

As a way out, Ukraine has been targeting Russian missile production facilities. In

June 2026 alone, Ukraine carried out a record 13 long-range strikes on Russian defence-industrial facilities, resulting in almost a 50% drop in Russia's monthly production of key missiles. Notwithstanding these strikes, as per Ukrainian intelligence reports, Russia still maintains significant production capacity and plans to produce hundreds of ballistic missiles in 2026. This shall potentially facilitate for up to 100 strikes per month without depleting reserves. Ukraine's air defence shall have to be supported by allies, in all possible ways. Russia's campaign against civilian infrastructure constitutes a war crime and poses an existential threat to Ukraine. Ukraine has suffered one of the severest bombardment campaigns in modern warfare. Notwithstanding the extraordinary resilience of the Ukrainian people, to expect them to continue bearing these attacks without the international community coming to their aid is simply unacceptable.

Lighten up: Why India's political class needs a sense of humor

Some two decades ago, when I oversaw the features sections of a newspaper, four representatives of a Chennai restaurant sought an appointment with me. The delegation owners, manager and the chef were agitated about the extremely negative review by our food critic, a quick-witted young woman with a preternatural gift for words.

As I heard them out, it became apparent that their problem was not so much that she didn't like the food, but the manner in which she expressed it. One of the offending lines, if I recall correctly, related to her description of their steak, which apparently tasted like an old hawai chapal that was left out for too long in the sun. My attempts to gently explain that simile and hyperbole were legitimate tools in some journalistic contexts failed to assuage their hurt. I remember one of them, a woman, telling me: "It would have been fine if she thought our steak was overcooked and rubbery, but was it necessary for her to compare it to a worn-out chapal?" The memory of this interaction came flooding back during the CJP-led youth protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar. I couldn't help thinking that the mimicry, the satire and the humorous memes about Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah must have hurt, even traumatised, the BJP leadership much more than the political broadsides, the blunt onslaughts, and even the most pro-

fane gaalis. While Modi forgave the 'misguided' students who frontally abused him and his mother, one couldn't help thinking that the mockery cut too deep to be simply laughed away.

We Indians, to understate the point, are extremely sensitive to the power of ridicule. It is a power that is derived from stripping away the very things we want for ourselves and those we admire or hero-worship—respect, dignity, gravitas. Here, more than elsewhere, a certain seriousness is the social currency for power and authority. We are better loathed or lambasted than lampooned. Better feared than made a flake of. This is why so many stand-up comedians have been the victims of police complaints, court cases and general public outrage, real and simulated. Since the backlash and the multiple FIRs against the group AIB for its celebrity charity roasts over a decade ago, so many comics have found themselves caught in legal proceedings and forced to apologise. The idea that freedom of speech includes the freedom to mock, satirise—at the risk of causing offence—is strongly protected in the West. It is a foundational notion that goes back at least as far as John Stuart Mill, who argued famously that our freedom of action and speech should not be circumscribed unless these acts or expressions caused or risked causing direct harm. At the cost of some over-simplification, his narrow definition of harm was

confined to the physical kind. It is arguable that he only codified a commonsense belief that people had at that time. The childhood version of Mill's Harm Principle is echoed in the well-known rhyme: 'Sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but words can never harm me'. Of course, there has been a revision of this classical liberal position in recent years. The growing acceptance and spread of hate speech regulations, predicated on the idea that psychological harms need legal protection, is the foremost example of this. Still, hate speech is notoriously hard to define, which is one of the reasons that the commitment to robust satire has not been fully abandoned. Sometimes, this has come at great cost, as did in France after the publication of satirical cartoons about the Prophet Muhammad.

As Salman Rushdie said, people don't have a right not to be offended. But in India, we not only officially acknowledge offence but punish those who may cause it. Our so-called insult laws, Sections 153A and 295A of the IPC (now Sections 196 and 299 of the BNS), have been misused, invoked to clamp down on satirical stand-up comics on the grounds that something said has provoked enmity between groups or outraged religious feelings. We will continue to remain a republic of hurt sentiments, but it is worth asking if what we saw at Jantar Mantar, more freewheeling carnival than everyday protest, will see

satire and mockery move from the fringe internet spaces to the mainstream of political life. My conjecture is that we are going to see much more of this in the days ahead. It is possible that Rahul Gandhi was taking a leaf from the CJP playbook by parodying Modi's foreign policy by hugging a fellow Congressman. The Congress leader is probably more aware than most about the power of ridicule. There is no way of measuring this, but the 'pappu' moniker, coined just before the 2014 general election, has probably done him more political damage than the entire collection of op-ed articles that criticised his alleged lack of political savvy and seriousness. The judiciary occasionally steps in to remind the political class of constitutional safeguards. Courts have noted that political criticism and caricature are intrinsic to a vibrant democracy, advising public figures against cultivating excessive sensitivity. Yet, the mere filing of frivolous complaints serves its intended purpose: a chilling effect that forces artists and commentators into self-censorship. Indian politics could do with a little bit of lightening up and its politicians would do well to learn to laugh a little more about themselves and those who they claim to venerate. Humour will serve us well if it shows up pretensions, exposes humbugery and makes people understand an ironic truth—the joke is never the real cause for blame.

Nifty Falls for Seventh Session as Crude, Global Yields Weigh on Markets

New Delhi: Indian equity benchmarks extended their losing streak on Wednesday as rising crude oil prices, elevated global bond yields and selling in heavyweight stocks kept investors cautious. The Nifty 50 fell 77 points, or 0.32 per cent, to close at 24,078.30, marking its seventh consecutive decline and its longest losing run in 11 months. The index has lost about 2.1 per cent over the seven sessions. The Sensex declined 326 points, or 0.42 per cent, to 76,909.68.

The broader market also remained weak, with mid-cap and small-cap indices declining 0.2 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively. Fourteen of the 16 major sectoral indices ended lower, with financial stocks among the key drags. The IT index bucked the trend,

rising about 0.7 per cent after a sharp decline over the previous three sessions. Brent crude remained around \$92 a barrel after rising to a three-week high, as uncertainty over shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and geopolitical tensions in West Asia kept supply concerns elevated. Higher oil prices are a particular concern for India because of the country's heavy dependence on imported crude and could add to inflationary pressures.

Global bond yields added to the pressure on emerging-market equities. Rising borrowing costs in the US, Germany and Japan have made relatively safer developed-market bonds more attractive to investors. Market participants were also cautious ahead of the release of the US Federal Reserve's meeting



minutes. Selling was visible across several heavyweight stocks, including financials, while the Nifty Financial Services index declined. The weak market breadth reflected the broader risk-off mood, with 2,173 stocks ending lower against 1,320 gainers on the NSE.

Among individual stocks, RailTel Corporation rose as much as 7 per cent af-

ter securing a one-year ₹166.80-crore work order extension from the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation. The order provided a positive trigger for the stock despite the broader market decline.

City gas distributors also attracted buying interest after the government approved an incentive scheme aimed at accelerating domestic piped natural gas connections. Indraprastha

Gas and Mahanagar Gas were among the beneficiaries, gaining 1.7 per cent and 1.5 per cent, respectively.

The market's weakness follows six consecutive sessions of losses leading into Wednesday. On Tuesday, the Nifty had closed at 24,154.90 after falling 0.55 per cent, while the Sensex declined 0.63 per cent to 77,235.46 as oil prices and global bond yields continued to weigh on sentiment.

With crude prices remaining elevated and global yields under pressure, investors are likely to continue tracking geopolitical developments, foreign fund flows and expectations for US monetary policy. The sustained decline has also brought the Nifty closer to the 24,000 level, making that zone an important near-term market level.

Gold, Silver Prices Fall in India Despite Gains in Global Markets

Mumbai: Gold and silver futures declined on domestic exchanges on Wednesday despite both precious metals gaining in international markets, as high local prices weakened physical demand and prompted investors to book profits.

Gold October futures on the Multi Commodity Exchange fell ₹636, or 0.41 per cent, to around ₹1.53 lakh per 10 grams. Silver September futures declined ₹4,023, or 1.73 per cent, to nearly ₹2.28 lakh per kg.

The domestic decline was driven largely by local market factors rather than the broader global trend. Elevated absolute prices have discouraged fresh physical purchases, with consumers becoming more cautious about buying jewellery at current levels.

Market participants also reduced positions and booked profits, with silver witnessing sharper selling because of its greater sensitivity to industrial demand and speculative activity.

Consumer behaviour in the gold market has also been changing. While demand for gold remains strong, buyers are increasingly opting for lightweight jewellery or exchanging and redesigning existing gold instead of

making large fresh purchases.

International prices moved in the opposite direction. Spot gold rose 0.10 per cent to around \$4,338.74 an ounce, while silver gained 0.99 per cent to approximately \$62.74 an ounce.

Global gold prices received support from easing US Treasury yields, while investors remained focused on the minutes of the US Federal Reserve's latest meeting for indications about the future path of interest rates. Lower rates generally reduce the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding assets such as gold.

Geopolitical uncertainty also continued to support safe-haven demand. Tensions in the Middle East, including concerns surrounding shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and friction between the United States and Iran, remained important factors for international precious-metal prices.

The divergence between domestic and global prices highlights the influence of local demand conditions and investor positioning on Indian precious-metal markets, even when international bullion prices remain supported by macroeconomic and geopolitical factors.

Maharashtra Approves Rs 28,227-Crore Metro, Ring Road Projects

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government has approved infrastructure projects worth a combined ₹28,227.35 crore to improve connectivity and ease traffic congestion across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region and Pune metropolitan area.



The approvals cover the proposed ₹17,724.99-crore Mumbai Metro Line 13 between Mira-Bhayandar and Virar and a ₹10,502.36-crore expansion of the eastern alignment of the Pune Ring Road.

Metro Line 13 will span 25.03 km, comprising 21.78 km of elevated track and 3.25 km underground. The corridor will have 16 stations, including 13 elevated and three underground stations, and is expected to connect Mira Road, Naigaon, Nalasopara and Virar with the wider Mumbai suburban transport network.

A key component will be a 4.92-km integrated six-lane road-cum-metro bridge across Vasai Creek, connecting Panju Island. A 19.3-hectare metro car depot is planned at Chikhaldongari in Palghar district.

The corridor will integrate with Metro Line 9 between Dahisar and Bhayandar as well as the Western Railway suburban network.

Passenger demand is projected to reach around 4.49 lakh commuters a day by 2031.

The second project involves a 31.8-km access-controlled expressway section of the Pune Ring Road, to be executed by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation. The stretch will connect Sortapwadi on the Pune-Solapur Highway with Varve-Budruk/Shivare on the Pune-Satara Highway.

The section forms part of the larger 169-km Pune Ring Road, which is intended to divert heavy through-traffic away from Pune's urban roads. Around 80 per cent of the required land acquisition has been completed, with construction targeted for completion by June 2029.

The approvals are expected to create opportunities for engineering, procurement and construction companies involved in urban

rail, tunnelling, bridges and expressway development. Larsen & Toubro, J Kumar Infraprojects, NCC, Afcons Infrastructure and Titagarh Rail Systems are among the companies that could potentially participate in different project packages.

L&T could compete for large civil and tunnelling packages, while J Kumar Infraprojects has an established presence in Mumbai-region urban rail projects. NCC has exposure to urban EPC and highway construction, while Afcons has capabilities in complex bridge, marine and underground projects. Titagarh Rail Systems could participate in future rolling stock and electrical-system tenders for the metro corridor.

The projects are expected to strengthen regional connectivity while creating a sizeable pipeline of civil construction, rail infrastructure and related engineering work over the coming years.

City Gas Stocks Rally as Centre Approves PNG Incentive Scheme



New Delhi: Shares of major city gas distribution companies rallied on Wednesday after the Central Government approved a new incentive scheme to accelerate domestic piped natural gas (D-PNG) connections, with the policy expected to improve the economics of expanding household gas networks.

Mahanagar Gas rose 3.83 per cent to ₹1,154, while Indraprastha Gas gained 3.09 per cent to ₹154.01 in early trade. Adani Total Gas advanced 2.24 per cent to ₹661.80, while Gujarat Energy, formerly Gujarat Gas, erased its opening gains and traded 0.32 per cent lower at ₹268.55.

The D-PNG incentive scheme will take effect from September 1, 2026, and is aimed at converting inactive or unbilled household pipeline infrastructure into active connections while expanding the country's domestic PNG customer base, currently estimated at around 1.74 crore connections.

Under the scheme, eli-

gible city gas distribution companies will receive an additional 200 standard cubic metres of lower-priced domestically produced gas under the Administered Price Mechanism for every incremental billed domestic PNG connection added above a prescribed threshold. The additional allocation is expected to improve the economics of domestic PNG expansion. Companies can potentially use the cheaper APM gas to replace a portion of the more expensive imported LNG currently used in higher-volume segments such as compressed natural gas for transportation.

The government estimates that the resulting savings could significantly shorten the capital expenditure payback period for domestic PNG expansion, from around 10 years to approximately three years.

The policy is also intended to encourage wider adoption of piped gas as a cleaner household cooking fuel. By making existing pipeline infrastructure

commercially viable and supporting new connections, the government expects CGD operators to accelerate household conversions. The incentive forms part of a broader effort to address operational and infrastructure barriers facing the city gas distribution sector. Measures such as streamlined municipal Right-of-Way approvals and efforts towards rationalising state-level VAT on natural gas are expected to support network expansion.

The government is also working towards a unified PNG registration portal for retail consumers, which could simplify the process of obtaining domestic gas connections.

For CGD companies, the policy could provide a combination of lower gas procurement costs and improved utilisation of existing infrastructure. Higher domestic PNG volumes could strengthen revenue visibility while allowing operators to make more efficient use of their distribution networks.

Investors, however, will continue to monitor how quickly inactive connections are converted into billed customers and the extent to which the cheaper gas allocation translates into sustained margin improvement. The impact is also likely to vary across companies depending on their existing customer base, network coverage and exposure to different gas segments.

Skoda-VW India Seeks Local Partner Amid Rising Costs, Weak Market Share



New Delhi: Škoda Auto Volkswagen India is exploring a stake sale and a potential partnership with an Indian conglomerate as the Volkswagen Group seeks to strengthen its position in the country while reducing capital requirements amid intensifying global cost pressures.

The group has operated in India for more than two decades, with Škoda entering the market in 2001. Despite its long presence, the Volkswagen Group's combined share of India's passenger vehicle market remains around 2 per cent, significantly below competitors such as Hyundai and newer entrants including Kia India.

Kia, which entered India in 2019, has expanded its market presence to around 6 per cent, highlighting the challenge faced by the Volkswagen Group in scaling its operations in one of the world's fastest-growing automotive markets.

The search for a partner also comes against the backdrop of a major global restructuring at Volkswagen. The German automaker is facing intense competition in electric vehicles, particularly from Chinese manufacturers, and is targeting more than €6 billion in annual net cost savings by 2030.

The restructuring in-

cludes plans that could affect up to 100,000 jobs across the group's brands and involves factory closures in Germany. Against this backdrop, sharing investment requirements in markets such as India could help Volkswagen limit capital exposure while continuing to pursue growth.

The company is also dealing with a major tax dispute in India.

Indian authorities have alleged that Škoda Auto Volkswagen incorrectly classified imported vehicle components for Audi, Volkswagen and Škoda models, resulting in an alleged duty shortfall of about \$1.4 billion. The dispute adds another layer of regulatory and financial uncertainty to the group's Indian operations.

JSW Group has emerged as a leading potential partner in discussions over a stake in the Indian business. The Sajjan Jindal-led group already has significant exposure to the automotive sector through its 35 per cent stake in JSW MG Motor India, its joint venture with SAIC Motor.

JSW is also expanding its electric-vehicle manufacturing capabilities, including plans for a greenfield EV plant at Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar in Maharashtra. Its partnerships with Chinese automo-

tive companies, including Chery, could further strengthen its access to EV technology and supply chains.

A partnership could provide Škoda Auto Volkswagen India with access to an established domestic business network and local supply chains while allowing the two groups to share future investments in electric vehicles and other technologies.

For JSW, an association with the Volkswagen Group could broaden its automotive portfolio and provide access to established European brands, technology and manufacturing capabilities.

For Volkswagen, a local partner could help improve localisation, reduce capital requirements and provide greater familiarity with India's regulatory and business environment. It could also support the group's efforts to build a more competitive position in the Indian market as demand for SUVs and electric vehicles continues to reshape the passenger vehicle industry.

The potential stake sale is therefore part of a broader effort to balance Volkswagen's long-term ambitions in India with the need for tighter capital discipline, greater localisation and a stronger response to intensifying competition.

Eco-Friendly Food Packaging Could Raise Delivery Bills by Up to 30%

New Delhi: Online food delivery in India could become 10 per cent to 30 per cent more expensive as restaurants and food-delivery platforms shift from conventional single-use plastic to alternatives such as bagasse, paper, aluminium and earthenware.

Plastic packaging currently accounts for around 5 per cent of a food order's total bill, with the cost generally passed on to consumers. Replacing it with sustainable alternatives is expected to raise packaging expenses, making affordability a major challenge for both restaurants and customers.

Anjali Ravi Kumar, Chief Sustainability Officer at Zomato, has highlighted consumer affordability as one of the biggest hurdles to reducing plastic use, as customers have limited willingness to pay a premium for environmentally friendly packaging.



Sustainable alternatives also need to meet practical requirements such as preventing leaks, retaining heat and safely carrying gravies and other liquid-heavy food. These requirements can make some alternatives more expensive than conventional plastic containers.

However, the cost gap could narrow as adoption increases. Higher production volumes, stronger supply chains and economies of

scale could gradually make sustainable packaging more competitive with conventional plastic.

Zomato has introduced initiatives to support the transition, including its Plastic-Free Future Programme and a Low Plastic Packaging filter that allows customers to identify participating restaurants. According to Eternal's 2025-26 annual report, more than 10,000 restaurants across over 500 cities had

joined the programme by March 2026, collectively delivering more than 100 million low-plastic packaging orders.

The company has also launched PackSwitch to help restaurants and cloud kitchens identify sustainable packaging suited to their menus and costs. Its broader efforts include supporting packaging innovation and recycling plastic waste generated through food deliveries.

The transition is particularly significant for smaller restaurants, which may have less bargaining power with packaging suppliers and may find it harder to absorb higher costs. Larger chains and high-volume kitchens could benefit more quickly from bulk purchasing and improved sourcing arrangements.

For consumers, the shift could create a trade-off between affordability and sus-

tainability. While some customers may be willing to pay more for environmentally friendly deliveries, a substantial increase in the final bill could discourage adoption among price-sensitive users.

The long-term impact will depend on whether manufacturers can scale up production while maintaining the durability and food-safety standards required by the delivery industry. Greater competition among packaging suppliers could also help bring prices down.

For restaurants and delivery platforms, the transition therefore represents both an environmental challenge and a cost-management exercise. The success of sustainable packaging will depend on making alternatives sufficiently affordable for businesses while ensuring that consumers continue to find online food delivery accessible.

UK relies on heat-stressed countries for fruit and veg it could grow itself-report

UK: The UK is vulnerable to food price shocks because of its dependence on imports of fruit and vegetable from countries even more exposed to the climate crisis, researchers say.

Much of Britain has sweltered under a record five heatwaves this year and endured drought and wildfires, with the hot, dry conditions damaging crops and reducing yields of domestic produce.

However, the UK relies on countries under even greater climate pressure for supplies of some of its most popular fresh foods, according to a report from the Food Foundation charity published on Wednesday.

While the UK generally produces enough grains, meat, milk and eggs to cover its needs, it has one of the lowest food self-sufficiency ratios among large western European countries.

About 40% of its food is imported – including 80% of its fruit and 47% of its vegetables – one of the highest rates of reliance on imported fruit in Europe, making the UK more dependent on imports than France, Germany or Spain.

The UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has forecast that without action to improve resilience, higher temperatures will cause lower yields, heat stress for plants, and poorer quality fruit, vegetables and other crops, especially across the Mediterranean, north Africa, and South and Central America.

The Food Foundation’s warning comes after the industry body the Cold Chain Federation, and top food experts, sounded the alarm in recent months that extreme weather, fuel shortages or cyber-attacks were all creating risks for supplies of food into the UK.

The charity, whose mission is to change food policy and business practices to ensure everyone in the UK can afford access to a healthy diet, is calling on the government to invest more in helping British farmers adapt to the changing climate to increase domestic production.

In what the Food Foundation calls a “mismatch between UK



domestic food production and countries supplying the UK with healthy staple foods were rated that 18 (90%) of the top 20 moderately to severely vulnera-

ble to climate breakdown.

Five of the UK’s nine most-purchased fruits can be grown domestically – including apples, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and pears – but the UK grows less than 40% of domestic consumption for four of those.

For vegetables, only carrots reach a high level of self-sufficiency (94%), while the UK could grow more of the vegetables most popular with British consumers, including tomatoes, mushrooms, peppers, cucumbers, onions, broccoli and green beans, where only about half are produced domestically.

Anna Taylor, executive director at the Food Foundation, said: “There is a risk [the impacts of climate breakdown] will drive up prices in the future, putting nutritious foods further out of reach for many, so it is important government takes action now to prevent this.” Horticulture businesses, particularly those that rely on glasshouses, have been saying for some time that they are struggling with rising energy costs, which are higher than in neighbouring European countries, forcing some to cut production.

Energy costs are just one challenge growers face, along with labour shortages, poor weather and changes to post-Brexit subsidies.

Ali Capper, who runs an apple and hops farm in Worcestershire and chairs the British Apples and Pears trade body, said its members wanted to grow more fruit: “To do so they need the certainty that good government policy can deliver – certainty on continued and increased access to the seasonal workers scheme; water for food; an agile planning regulation; competitively priced energy.

Growers also need market certainty – long-term agreements and profitable returns.”

Food producers are calling on the government to address some of their concerns in its forthcoming horticulture sector growth plan.

Ukraine Faces Patriot Interceptor Shortage Amid War with Russia

Kyiv: Ukraine is facing a severe shortage of US-made Patriot interceptors as it continues its war against Russia, leaving it with very few missiles capable of intercepting Russian ballistic missiles. The Patriot interceptor is among the most sought-after air-defence weapons in the world, with dozens of countries seeking to strengthen their defence systems with the US-made technology. It is also one of the few weapons systems capable of intercepting ballistic missiles.

A CNN report showed a US Patriot interceptor system lying unused in a cornfield at an undisclosed location in Ukraine. Its canisters were reportedly empty, and the system had last been used about 10 weeks earlier. CNN said it was the first media outlet to receive conditional access to a Patriot system inside Ukrainian territory. Dmytro, the chief engineer of Ukraine’s air-defence system, said he had not seen the Patriot launcher operating for six weeks.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said Ukraine needs about 5 per cent of the US stockpile of Patriot interceptors to sustain its defence through the winter, while it currently has only around 1 per cent. Dmytro described the situation as deeply distressing, saying it was heartbreaking to have the equipment but be unable to intercept incoming missiles. He said ballistic missiles were passing overhead while Ukrainian forces were unable to respond effectively. According to him, the situation has existed since December 2025.

A global shortage of Patriot interceptors has emerged after heavy use of the systems in Gulf countries during March and April. According to the Foreign Policy Research Institute, coalition forces used an average of 225 interceptors every day during the first four days of the conflict with Iran. The institute said Lockheed Martin, one of the companies producing the interceptors, manufactured 620 in 2025, equivalent to about 1.7 per day. This has created a significant gap between the rate of consumption and production.

In January, the Pentagon entered into a seven-year agreement with Lockheed Martin aimed at increasing production to 2,000 interceptors annually by 2030. By that time, the war in Ukraine would have entered its eighth year.

It remains unclear how many Patriot interceptors the United States has pledged to provide to Ukraine or how large the US stockpile currently is.

In an interview, Zelenskyy said he had offered Raytheon and Lockheed Martin ownership and control of any interceptor-manufacturing facility they might establish in Ukraine.

He said he had told the US companies, “This will be your company. It will have our minds, our hands and our engineers.” He added that he would make every effort to build an excellent company for them, stressing that Ukraine did not need to sell the interceptors to anyone else because it needed them for its own defence.

During the NATO summit held in Ankara in June, US President Donald Trump reportedly offered Ukraine a licence to manufacture interceptors. Teams from Raytheon and Lockheed Martin subsequently travelled to Kyiv to meet Zelenskyy. However, Trump later expressed doubts about whether the licensing process would move forward.

Zelenskyy said he wanted the arrangement to materialise and expressed hope that the proposal would ultimately receive approval. Responding to Zelenskyy’s remarks, a White House official said no decision had been taken regarding Patriot interceptor production in Ukraine and that no guarantees had been provided.

Trump-backed Byron Donalds to face Democrat David Jolly in race to succeed Florida governor DeSantis

UK: Byron Donalds, a congressman backed by Donald Trump, won the Republican nomination for governor on Tuesday in the race to succeed Ron DeSantis.

Donalds, who has represented south-west Florida since 2021, trounced three reasonably prominent Republican rivals, including Jay Collins, DeSantis’s handpicked lieutenant governor.

If he wins the November election, as he is expected to do in the conservative stronghold, Donalds would become the first Black governor in any southern US state.

So confident was Donalds of victory that his television advertisements in the weeks leading to the primary ignored his Republican challengers and focused on former Republican congressman David Jolly, who secured the Democratic party’s nomination on Tuesday.

He continued that message on Tuesday evening. “I am grateful to my family, my team, my volunteers, and every Floridian who powered us to this victory,” he wrote on X. “My Democrat opponent would raise taxes, make life more expensive, and bring the Democrats’ radical left agenda to the Sunshine State – Florida cannot afford Liberal David Jolly. David Jolly has lost before, and he



will lose again on November 3. United, we will win the Governor’s mansion in 77 days and ensure that Florida remains the best state in this great country.”

In his victory speech, Jolly addressed political division and the economy before placing blame on Donalds for the state’s rising costs. “To my Democratic friends, thank you for welcoming me into the party. We have built friendships, we have found common ground,” he said.

He added: “Byron Donalds has sold the governor’s mansion to the highest bidder and the special interests across the state have been happy to play ball.”

DeSantis did not make an endorsement in the race, but Trump did, backing Donalds and his conservative credentials, with support that could prove decisive in Florida, arguably the arguably the heart of Trump’s Make America Great Again movement, and home to his Mar-a-Lago Palm Beach estate.

DeSantis was largely considered dead in the water in his own campaign to become governor in 2018, before Trump’s endorsement turned things around.

Republican voters roundly rejected the credentials

of Collins, an army special forces veteran who called Donalds a Washington elite; Paul Renner, the former Florida house speaker; and extremist James Fishback.

Instead, they favored Donalds, who at times polled close to 50% and is, according to his campaign website, “committed to implementing President Trump’s agenda to Make America Great Again”.

A vocal Trump ally who was reportedly considered for the 2024 vice-president pick that ultimately went to JD Vance, Donalds made affordability and reducing property taxes and insurance costs a central plank of his campaign, which some have seen as a dig at DeSantis’s obsession with culture war issues during his eight-year tenure.

Jolly, a former Republican congressman and lawyer, became an independent, then switched parties last year.

He ran a much more moderate campaign than the ones that worked well for progressive Democrats in other states’ primaries this summer, although that did not stop Donalds assailing him as “a radical liberal” who he claimed was an advocate for gender-reassignment surgery who supports transgender males in girls’ and women’s sports.

Jolly easily fended off a challenge from five other Democrats, including state representative Dotie Joseph and Dayna Marie Foster, a former high school educator who was endorsed by the Florida Democratic Progressive caucus.

Jolly faces an uphill battle in November, however. No Democrat has won a Florida governor’s election since Lawton Chiles in 1994; and no Democrat has won a statewide election in Florida since Nikki Fried, the current chair of the Florida Democratic party, was elected agriculture commissioner in 2018.

Donald Trump threatens to bomb Oman if it ‘gets in the way’ of ending Iran war

Washington: Donald Trump has again threatened to bomb Oman if it “gets in the way” of his effort to end the US-Israel war on Iran, as the two-month window to negotiate peace with Iran expired on Monday with no end to the conflict in sight.

The latest threats against Oman, which is not a party to the war, have illustrated how Trump’s unpredictable and often outrageous approach to diplomacy has upset US partners and failed to achieve the breakthrough that he has promised to end the war.

“If Oman gets in the way, we’ll bomb the shit out of them,” Trump told Fox News on Monday, the second time he has directed such a threat at Muscat, a longtime US strategic partner that has traditionally served as a key backchannel between Washington and Tehran.

The various conflicts in the Middle East continued on Monday, with Yemen’s Houthis claiming to have targeted military ships from Saudi Arabia – a US ally – in a missile and drone strike in the Red Sea. Saudi officials did not confirm the strike, which the Houthis said had struck a Saudi military ship and four escort vessels. The attack is said to have taken place at a port close to the Bab-al Mandeb strait, an important global shipping route that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

In Israel, Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner met Benjamin Netanyahu for more than four hours after the Israeli prime minister rejected

a US-backed peace plan for the Gaza war that included a withdrawal of Israeli troops from the devastated territory.

Netanyahu has said he rejected any withdrawal that would take place before Hamas fully disarms. Kushner was said to have told Netanyahu not to create obstacles to a peace deal, US officials told media outlets.

Trump has staked the political legacy of his second presidential term as being the “peacemaker-in-chief”, but his efforts to disengage the US from conflicts across the Middle East are stalling.

The US president delivered the threat against Oman as he struggles to draw the conflict to a conclusion, almost six months after it was launched, and as a diplomatic window agreed with



Tehran ran out with no final agreement in sight. But Trump also claimed during Monday’s interview that he was “not in a hurry” to reach a deal.

That two-month window for a negotiated settlement closed on Monday without a breakthrough. Trump

has repeatedly claimed the war would end “soon”, and talked up the prospect of a lasting peace deal in recent months, without such a breakthrough materialising.

In the same interview, Trump said Iran should “put up the white flag of surrender”, but signalled he was not about to impose a fresh deadline on Tehran. “I have no time schedule. I’m not in a hurry,” he said.

Trump signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran at the Palace of Versailles on 17 June, on the sidelines of the G7 summit, which had paused hostilities and set a maximum 60-day window – extendable only by mutual consent – for the two sides to reach a comprehensive deal covering sanctions relief, Iran’s nuclear programme and other disputes.

Trump also dismissed concerns that Washington’s own arsenal was being depleted by nearly six months of fighting, telling Fox News that what the US had expended against Iran so far was “peanuts”.

He suggested many of the US’s more advanced munitions, including air defence systems, had already been “given away” to Ukraine under his predecessor, Joe Biden – a claim that echoes warnings from defence analysts earlier in the war that US and allied stockpiles were being drawn down faster than they could be replenished.

The remarks came after Trump used his Truth Social platform to restate the nego-

tiating red line. “The number one Goal is, and always will be, that Iran cannot have, in any way, shape, or form, a Nuclear Weapon,” he wrote.

The strait of Hormuz – a crucial chokepoint for global trade, through which about a fifth of the world’s seaborne oil supplies typically pass – has been all but closed since the US and Israel launched their war on Iran in February. Iran is to the north of the strait. Oman is to the south.

The two countries have been in talks over control of the strait.

In a casual aside at a cabinet meeting in May, the president also threatened to “blow up” Oman if it failed to “behave”.

It comes after Trump also threatened to declare the strait of Hormuz as “a territory of the United States” during a speech on Friday.

In addition to Oman’s decades-long military and economic ties with the US, the Gulf nation of 5.3 million people has played a mediation role in the war and has itself come under attack from Tehran.

Iran’s foreign ministry said on Monday that talks with Oman were “continuing in earnest”, despite Trump’s latest outburst.

Trump also confirmed for the first time that Washington had opened a direct backchannel to Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which the US and Israel have targeted throughout the conflict.

“They’re good poker players, but they’re dying,” he said of the IRGC leadership.

Want to effortlessly master denim-on-denim style



Denim has consistently maintained its relevance, even amidst ever-changing trends. It has certainly evolved, with waistbands raised and silhouettes flared, yet it remains a crucial staple throughout the decades. There are numerous methods to style denim. One popular approach is the denim-on-denim look, which involves wearing two or more denim items simultaneously.

Let’s hear from an expert to understand which type of denim pieces shoppers are gravitating towards and what it tells about the style of denim-on-denim. Amar Nagaram, co-founder of VIRGIO, shared his sartorial and industry insights to decode how fashion enthusiasts are coming back to this style.

Why is denim-on-denim so loved?

Any styling technique is rooted in some sense of sartorial behaviour and convenience. Denim has been a part of casual wear for a long time, but the denim-on-denim style makes it more premium, appropriate for more

‘dressy occasions.’ Since versatility is becoming a key part of sartorial identity as lifestyles become more and more hectic (such as an evening dinner with friends after work), an outfit is also meant to juggle and multitask for more occasions.

Denim-on-denim style, as per Amar, is becoming a comfort zone again, but in an intentional way. Earlier on, people just threw on random denim pants or pieces, but now they are choosing to look at the bigger picture and be more coordinated and cohesive.

He described what is going on in the fashion scene and how the denim-on-denim style is panning out: “Denim-on-denim is definitely rising again, but in a more elevated and intentional way. It is no longer just about throwing two denim pieces together. The current fashion landscape is moving towards coordinated denim looks, cleaner washes, sharper silhouettes, and brunch-ready styling. Think matching denim sets, denim shirts with wide-leg jeans, structured denim tops, and relaxed layering. The

trend feels fresh because it balances ease with polish.”

We then asked which all denim pieces are involved in this styling. Amar said, “At VIRGIO, we see consumers going for denim pieces like denim bomber jackets, denim shirts, denim blazers, shirt jackets, denim corsets, dresses, and wide-legged pants. Sometimes pairs or trios of denim pieces are bought together. This shopping behaviour tells us that denim-on-denim is a versatile styling direction many women prefer, as they want an effortless yet put-together look. For everyday wear, the key is to make it feel styled, not stiff.”

4 tips to wear denim-on-denim without looking flat

One problem with denim-on-denim is that it can appear too flat and bulky, given the inherent construction of denim. But it can be solved with the help of a few hacks.

mar suggested these:

1. Play with proportion
Pair a fitted denim top or shirt with relaxed, wide-leg, or straight-leg jeans.
- This creates shape and prevents the look from feeling too heavy.
2. Keep the washes close, not chaotic
- For a cleaner brunch look, choose denim pieces in similar washes or complementary tones.
- A tonal blue-on-blue look feels more elevated than overly mismatched denim.
3. Add softness through styling
Break the denim with softer elements like gold jewellery, a sleek belt, strappy sandals, a woven bag, or fresh makeup.
- These details make the outfit feel brunch-appropriate instead of rugged.
4. Let one piece be the hero
- If you are wearing a statement denim corset, shirt, jacket, or skirt, keep the rest of the look simple.
- Denim-on-denim works best when the outfit has one clear focal point.

A Basic Home Solution: Instructions for Creating Wax at Home

To make a safe DIY hair removal sugar wax, combine 1 cup white sugar, 2 teaspoons lemon juice, and 2 tablespoons water in a skillet. Boil over medium heat until the mixture reaches an amber honey color, then cool fully before spreading it on clean skin. If you meant earwax removal, try a few drops of

mineral oil, baby oil, or 3% hydrogen peroxide to soften it. DIY Sugar Wax for Hair Removal:
Ingredients: 1 cup sugar, 1/4 cup lemon juice, 1/4 cup water.
Heat: Boil in a pan until golden or amber, then transfer to a secure glass jar. Prep: Prepare by dusting your skin with corn-

starch or baby powder to absorb moisture.
Apply: Spread the cooled wax in the direction of hair growth.
Remove: Place a cloth strip on top, tighten the skin, and pull the strip quickly against hair development.
Earwax Softening Remedies: Drops: Tilt your head

and insert 5 drops of baby oil or hydrogen peroxide into your ears.
Wait: Tilt your head for 5 minutes to allow the liquid to work.
Flush: Rinse gently with warm water using a bulb syringe before tilting to drain.Warning: Never put cotton swabs, pins, or sharp items into your ear canal.

Why Your Makeup Appears Completely Different by 3 PM in the Monsoon

A specific type of monsoon beauty reality check tends to occur around 3 PM. The makeup that appeared polished, fresh, and nearly flawless in the morning can quickly seem heavier, shinier, and noticeably less refined. Foundation starts to shift, the T-zone becomes overly prominent, concealer seeps into fine lines, and what began as a fresh complexion may appear fatigued by mid-afternoon. The reason for this change is not solely your makeup; it is the weather.

Humidity, sweat, excess moisture in the air and the skin’s natural oils can all change the way products behave over the course of the day. As Monika Khullar, Beauty & Artistry Head, explains, “Humid conditions, coupled with sweating and oils in the skin, could impact the way make-up behaves during the course of the day.” While makeup may look fresh immediately after application, prolonged exposure to humidity and moisture can leave it looking oily and less fresh.

The answer, however, isn’t to pile on more product. If anything, the monsoon calls for a lighter, more considered approach.

Start With The Skin, Not The Makeup

The most important step happens before foundation ever touches the face. Skin preparation during humid weather needs to be thoughtful rather than elaborate. Too many layers of skincare can leave the surface of the skin overly hydrated or slippery, giving makeup less to grip onto.

Vaishnavi Jain, Head of Product Development, PAC Cosmetics, feels the key is to “keep your skincare light.”

She recommends starting with well-prepped skin while avoiding excessive layers that could make makeup slip faster.

The same principle applies to the makeup itself. Lightweight, breathable formulas are better suited to monsoon conditions, particularly when the goal is a base that looks like



skin rather than sitting heavily on top of it.

Snigdha Suman, GM – Marketing & Business Development, Avon, notes that humidity and sweat can make foundation feel heavier, cause base makeup to crease and leave the complexion looking dull or greasy by afternoon. Her recommendation is to work with the weather rather than against it, opting for lightweight, breathable makeup alongside good skin preparation and long-wearing formulas.

The Less-Is-More Base

A monsoon complexion doesn’t necessarily need less coverage, it needs more control over how that coverage is applied.

Vaishnavi recommends building coverage gradually rather than applying a thick layer at once. The idea is simple: start light and add product only where it is actually needed. This allows the skin to retain a more natural appearance while reducing the amount of makeup that can shift as the day progresses.

It is a subtle change in technique, but one that can make a significant difference. Instead of attempting to create a completely opaque canvas in the morning, think of your base as something that should move with your skin.

The Powder Trick That

Can Change Your 3 PM Face

If there is one step worth paying particular attention to during the monsoon, it is setting.

“Setting your make-up with a loose powder” can help keep the base in place, particularly in areas where makeup tends to break down first. Vaishnavi recommends focusing on the nose, forehead and under-eye area, where oil, sweat and movement can cause products to crease or disappear.

The trick is not to powder the entire face until it looks flat. The objective is to control the areas that need it while allowing the rest of the complexion to retain its natural dimension.

When 3 PM Hits, Don’t Start Again

The instinct when makeup begins to break down is often to add another layer. But this can create the very problem you’re trying to fix.

Instead, Vaishnavi recommends removing excess oil or sweat first and then touching up only where necessary. A strategic refresh is far more effective than attempting to recreate the morning base.

This is also where choosing the right formulas pays off. Snigdha emphasises the importance of long-wearing products during the

monsoon, while still keeping the overall makeup lightweight and breathable. The goal is makeup that remains comfortable as temperatures and humidity rise, not makeup that fights the weather all day.

Think Seasonally

Beauty routines tend to be remarkably habitual. The products that worked perfectly during a dry or cooler season can suddenly behave very differently once the monsoon arrives.

For Monika, understanding this seasonal shift is an essential part of creating a successful makeup regimen. “Knowing the changes in the skin with changes in the season is important in creating a good make-up regimen,” she says, adding that lightweight, breathable and long-lasting products, combined with proper skin preparation, can help improve makeup wear.

So perhaps the 3 PM face isn’t something to fear or fix completely. It is simply a reminder that monsoon beauty requires a different strategy.

Prep lightly. Build coverage slowly. Set strategically. And when the afternoon arrives, refresh rather than restart. Because the best monsoon makeup isn’t the makeup that refuses to move, it is the makeup that knows how to move beautifully with you.

Are you aware that your air conditioning unit may be a factor in causing skin dryness

Skin dryness is not merely a result of using aggressive skin products or neglecting proper skincare practices. In truth, your dietary preferences and lifestyle choices, along with the functioning of your air conditioning system, could be the underlying causes as well.

Dermatologist Dr Shefali Saini speaks on how long hours of sitting in an air conditioner can actually impact your skin. She says, “When patients tell me their skin suddenly feels dry, tight or unusually sensitive, the first thing I ask isn’t about the weather; it’s about their daily routine. More often than not, they spend long hours in air-conditioned offices, commute in air-conditioned cars and return home to air-conditioned rooms”.

She further mentions that many people assume dry skin is only a winter concern. However, prolonged exposure to air conditioning can have a significant impact on the skin barrier

throughout the year, even during the hot and humid months.

How does air conditioning affect the skin?

Dr Saini says, “Our skin is protected by a natural barrier made up of skin cells, lipids and natural moisturising factors. Think of it as a protective wall that helps retain moisture while shielding the skin from environmental irritants, and air conditioners reduce the humidity in indoor environments”.

She mentions that as the surrounding air becomes drier, water evaporates more readily from the skin through a process known as transepidermal water loss (TEWL). “Over time, this increased water loss can compromise the skin barrier, making the skin less efficient at retaining moisture”, she says.

Initially, you may simply notice that your skin feels tight after cleansing. With continued exposure, it may start to feel rough, look dull, become more sensitive or even develop

mild flaking. Dry skin and dehydrated skin are not the same

“This is something I often explain to my patients”, Dr Saini says.

She briefly chalks up the difference: “Dry skin is a skin type characterised by reduced oil production. Dehydrated skin, on the other hand, is a temporary condition caused by a lack of water within the skin”.

“This means that even someone with oily or acne-prone skin can experience dehydration”, she clarifies. In fact, it’s not uncommon for patients to complain that their face feels oily by the afternoon but still feels tight or uncomfortable. This usually indicates that the skin barrier has been disrupted and is losing water faster than it should. Who is more susceptible?

Although anyone can experience AC-induced dryness, I tend to see it more frequently in:

Individuals with naturally dry or sensitive skin

People with eczema or an

impaired skin barrier

Patients undergoing acne treatments such as retinoids or benzoyl peroxide

Professionals who spend prolonged hours in centrally air-conditioned offices. Frequent travellers exposed to dry cabin air and air-conditioned environments

Early signs you shouldn’t ignore

Your skin often gives subtle signals before significant dryness develops.

Some of the early signs include:

Tightness after washing your face

A dull or tired-looking complexion

Rough texture despite regular skincare. Lips that frequently become dry

Makeup settling into fine lines

Increased sensitivity to products that were previously well tolerated

These are usually signs that the skin barrier needs support. My advice for protecting your skin barrier

When patients ask me how to manage AC-in-

duced dryness, my advice is usually quite simple. Healthy skin doesn’t necessarily require an elaborate routine—it requires consistency and products that respect the skin barrier. Start with a gentle cleanser that removes impurities without leaving the skin feeling stripped. If your cleanser leaves your skin feeling squeaky clean or excessively tight, it may be too harsh for daily use.

Moisturising is equally important. One of the most effective habits is applying a moisturiser immediately after cleansing, while the skin is still slightly damp. This helps reduce water loss and supports barrier recovery.

Lip care is another step that’s often overlooked. Because the lips have a naturally thinner barrier and fewer oil glands, they tend to show signs of dehydration much earlier than the rest of the face.

Finally, don’t skip sunscreen simply because you’re indoors. UVA rays can penetrate through



window glass and contribute to pigmentation and premature skin ageing. If you spend your day near windows or commute regularly, daily sun protection remains important.

A simple barrier-supporting routine

For people experiencing dryness due to prolonged air-conditioned environments, I generally recommend keeping the routine

simple and consistent.

During the daytime, finish with a broad-spectrum sunscreen.

A lightweight option makes daily protection easy, even if you’re spending most of your time indoors. My final take

Air conditioning is a part of modern life, and avoiding it isn’t always practical. What we can do, however, is adapt our skincare to the

environment our skin is exposed to every day.

Supporting the skin barrier through gentle cleansing, regular moisturisation and daily sun protection goes a long way in preventing dryness before it becomes a bigger concern. In dermatology, prevention is often far more effective than correction, and healthy skin almost always begins with a healthy barrier.

ENTERTAINMENT

Shakira brings hope to earthquake-stricken quibdo schools: 'not broken'

Agency : Following the devastating earthquake in Colombia, Grammy-winning Shakira visited the schools in Quibdo that were damaged by the powerful shakes that struck the country on August 10. The star took to Instagram, where she shared a string of images and videos of herself visiting the schools that were damaged in Chocó and announced the first wave of relief and rebuilding efforts she plans to lead with the help of a foundation.

She wrote as the caption: "Colombia is hurting, but Colombia is not broken. These past few days, I've seen something powerful people showing up for each other, especially for

our kids." Shakira added: "That's why I'm so proud to announce that the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund is dedicating \$500,000, working hand in hand with Pies Descalzos, to support children returning to the classroom."

"These funds are being matched by Live Nation, for a combined \$1 million contribution. I am also committing my personal resources to the reconstruction of the Technological University of Quibdó, where many of our @piesdescalzos graduates go on to continue their higher education." She added: "I am also very pleased to announce that the Howard G. Buffett Foundation has committed to building,

alongside Pies Descalzos, 10 new schools in Chocó. Everyone can join in the effort to help our kids through this crisis. If you're a registered nonprofit, or you know of one doing this work, I encourage you to register your interest and share your story with us."

On August 14, it was reported that the death toll from August 10's 7.4-magnitude earthquake had risen to 273, David Tamayo, director of the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management, said. He also said the quake left 3,824 people injured and 377 missing. In terms of infrastructure, Tamayo said 12,584 homes had been destroyed and 74,873 damaged.

Gauahar Khan reveals the weirdest habit of husband Zaid Darbar

Mumbai : Gauahar Khan has opened up about her husband Zaid Darbar's "underarm fetish". Gauahar said that Zaid thinks her underarms always smell fresh, so he likes to sniff her and tell his sister that his wife has soft skin. Gauahar and Zaid made this revelation in a chat with Neha Dhupia and her husband Angad Bedi.

In a now-viral video, Neha asked about Zaid's "underarm fetish". Gauahar was shocked and asked, "Where did you get this information from? What all have

you seen? Are you in our bedrooms?" Zaid said, "Matlab aisa kuch nahi hai yaar. Mujhe aisa lagta hai ki baby skin, haan, ekdam aise mulayam type." Gauahar added, "He also thinks that my underarms smell fresh all the time, so he wouldn't care." Zaid said, "I wouldn't do anything; I just touch that. I just touch that, and I smell that." Gauahar said, "He smells it, and then he tells his own sister, 'Dekh kitni acchi khushbu aa rahi hai.'" This revelation left Neha Dhupia and Angad Bedi in splits. This video

has gone viral on social media.

In the same interview, they also talked about how their families opposed their marriage as Gauahar is 6 years older than Zaid. "He proposed marriage to me within one month, and the families opposed the idea. They even raised questions regarding the age gap. We were very clear that if anyone has any issues in coming to the wedding, they can skip it. But the nikah was perfect. I didn't expect him to cry, but he did during my entry," Gauahar recalled.



Zaid added, "I didn't stop for around 10 minutes. I couldn't stop after looking at her." Gauahar and Zaid got married on December 25, 2020, in the presence

of their close friends and family members. They are now parents to two sons: Zehaan, born on May 10, 2023, and Farwaan, born on September 1, 2025.

Emraan Hashmi scores his first ₹100-crore solo hit with Awarapan 2



Mumbai : Emraan Hashmi's highly-anticipated film 'Awarapan 2' released in theatres on August 14, and has been performing well at the box office. Despite its box office clash with Sunny Deol and Preity Zinta starrer Batwara 1947, Awarapan 2 has been racing ahead by a wide margin in terms of box office numbers. Now, much to fans'

delight, the film has crossed the Rs 100 crore mark in India, making this Emraan's first Rs 100 crore film as a solo lead!

Awarapan 2 has officially crossed the Rs 100 crore mark at the Indian box office. According to Sacnilk, the Emraan Hashmi starrer earned Rs 9.75 crore on its first Tuesday, taking its India

net collection to Rs 100.75 crore. In terms of gross earnings, the film has collected Rs 120.33 crore in India so far.

The film has maintained a strong run since its release. After opening with Rs 22 crore on Friday, Awarapan 2 witnessed a significant jump on Saturday, raking in Rs 33.75 crore. It followed that up with Rs 26 crore on Sunday, while Monday saw the film collect Rs 9.25 crore. The box office performance also stands in stark contrast to its clash release, Batwara 1947. While Awarapan 2 added Rs 9.75 crore on Tuesday, the Sunny Deol-led film managed just Rs 1.8 crore on the same day. Batwara 1947 now stands at a five-day In-

dia net collection of Rs 30.32 crore.

Meanwhile, Awarapan 2 also continued its strong run overseas, where it collected Rs 2.00 crore on Day 5. This takes the film's total overseas gross collection to Rs 23.80 crore so far, pushing its worldwide gross to Rs 144.13 crore. Awarapan 2 has also emerged as a strong commercial success in terms of return on investment. With a reported budget of around Rs 45 crore, Awarapan 2 has delivered an impressive 122% return on investment, according to a TOI report. Its strong box-office performance has helped the Emraan Hashmi starrer recover its costs and turn profitable within just days of its release.

Raj Kundra reveals he contemplated suicide over Shilpa Shetty divorce rumors behind bars

Mumbai : Businessman-turned-actor Raj Kundra has opened up about one of the darkest phases of his life, revisiting his 2021 arrest in the pornography case and the 63 days he spent at Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail. In a recent conversation, Kundra spoke about the emotional toll of the period and how his wife, actor Shilpa Shetty, stood by him through the ordeal.

While speaking to ABP News, he recalled that he had gone to the police station after being summoned for questioning and had no reason to believe that he would be arrested. He recalled that he actually learned about his arrest through a post on X while he was still at the station. Raj said, "I was called to the police station for questioning and I went there without doubting anything. While I was there, I read on X that I had been arrested. When I asked the police officer, he said, 'Yes, this is the order.'"

Kundra said Shilpa also found out about his arrest through the news. He re-

called that she immediately stepped in to handle the situation, including arranging legal assistance and dealing with the fallout as his businesses faced uncertainty. He said, "Shilpa got the news about my arrest through the news. She got all the best lawyers, but she didn't know what to do. At that time, my businesses in India employed around 4,000 people. Shilpa kept saying, 'How will I manage all this?' I was told I would have to spend 63 days in jail, but I had no idea how long it would actually take. My mind wasn't even working. I was an IPL team owner one day and suddenly I was put behind bars. When I came out, I was the happiest because I felt I had a fresh new start." Raj also opened up about the food served in custody, saying he found it extremely difficult to eat. He recalled that inmates were served food from a shared pot, which he said was often difficult to even identify. He said that he struggled to eat during his 63 days in custody and survived largely on biscuits and water.

He also recalled one particularly painful night in jail, when he came across media reports claiming that Shilpa Shetty was planning to leave him and seek a divorce. He said the reports left him deeply shaken, especially as he was already struggling with the circumstances of his imprisonment. He shared, "I was managing there somehow. One day, news came through the media — it was a rumour, as I later found out — that Shilpa Shetty was leaving Raj Kundra and that we were getting divorced. That night I couldn't sleep because I felt like giving up my life. I felt there was no point in living because, for me, there is nothing more important than my wife and my family. I felt like ending my life. The next day, I spoke to her on the phone. She said, 'This is rubbish news. I am with you. I trust you. Don't worry about it.' After that call, I got so much courage. I thought, 'Break whatever you want to break. My wife is with me. I can take on the world. I don't care.'"

Amitabh Bachchan recalls being told 'you are too tall'

Mumbai : Veteran actor Amitabh Bachchan has spent more than five decades in the film industry, establishing an unmatched legacy. However, his path to becoming one of Hindi cinema's biggest stars was anything but smooth. On a recent episode of Kaun Banega Crorepati 18, Big B revisited his early days in Bollywood and spoke about the hurdles he faced at the beginning of his career. He recalled being told that he was too tall for certain roles and even remembered an instance when he was asked to leave a film set after turning up late.

In a special episode of Kaun Banega Crorepati 18, Amitabh Bachchan interacted with Commonwealth Games 2026 gold medallists Lovlina Borgohain, Jhandu Kumar, Sharmila Dhankar and Asmita Dey. During the conversation, Asmita asked

the senior actor whether he had ever been scolded on film sets, drawing a parallel with athletes being reprimanded when they make mistakes during training. The veteran actor readily admitted that he had faced his share of reprimands too, particularly during the early years of his acting career.

He recalled an incident when he arrived late on set once. The Piku actor said, "Usually, I try to reach the shoot on time. Once, I was late. The director was standing outside the set. I arrived in someone else's car because I did not have one at the time. When I reached, the director saw me and said the shooting had been packed up. He told me, 'Get out of here,' and asked me to leave." Meanwhile, on the work front, Amitabh Bachchan will be next seen in Kalki 2 alongside Prabhas.

Govinda and Sunita Ahuja's marriage is safe: manager clarifies recent court visit rumors

Mumbai : Hours after Sunita Ahuja was spotted outside a family court in Mumbai, Govinda's manager has now confirmed that it was to withdraw the divorce case and not file it. While speaking to NDTV, Govinda's manager Shashi Sinha stated that "fights happen and yet things continue". He also expressed disappointment with how Govinda and Sunita Ahuja's personal matter is being hyped in public and hoped for everyone's 'good sense'.

"But once it reaches the courts, the whole world knows. Did the world need to know? There was no need. Family matters should stay within the family. Many things get resolved after sitting and talking things through. If the case was to be

withdrawn today, why was it filed in the first place? This pains me. Why did we become a spectacle?" Manager said. "Govinda currently has no reaction. All of this just happened minutes ago. There is no reaction at all. May God grant everyone good sense, and may everyone act wisely. That is all that matters. I speak well for everyone — for Govinda, for Sunita, for the children, for all," Shashi Sinha added.

For the unversed, Sunita and Govinda's marriage has been under scrutiny in recent months. It all started after rumours of Govinda dating his co-star Komal Rani surfaced online. Rumours of their alleged relationship started after Govinda and Komal were spotted together at the Mum-



bai airport recently. Their appearance quickly became a talking point on social media, with reports connecting Komal to earlier speculation surrounding Govinda's personal life.

Later, Sunita also reacted to the speculation surrounding Govinda and Komal. When asked about the actor's appearance with the actress, she told paparazzi, "Vinash Kale Viprit Buddhi," suggesting

that she was unhappy with the situation.

When further questioned about people calling Govinda 'Cheater Number One', Sunita added, "Ye question mujhe Govinda ke fans ko puchna

hai ki jab main bol rahi hoon koi cheez toh sab mujhe troll karte hain, ab main chahti hoon ki Govinda ke fans aur media ab jawab de, mujhse mat pucho, mujhe koi interest bhi nahi hai."

Awarapan 2 actor recalls arriving in Mumbai with just ₹5,000 and struggling to eat

Mumbai : For many actors, the road to recognition is anything but quick. Suvinder Vicky is a good example of that. Today, he is being noticed for his role in Emraan Hashmi's Awarapan 2, but getting here took him years of small roles, financial struggles and plenty of patience.

Suvinder comes from Punjab and has no film background. He was interested in acting from a young age and decided to train professionally, enrolling in a Master of Arts in Theatre and Television at Punjabi University, Patiala. Like many actors with dreams of making it in Bollywood, he eventually made his way to Mumbai.

But Mumbai did not exactly roll out the red carpet for him. Suvinder had earned ₹5,000 from a theatre production and used that money to trav-



el to the city and try his luck. The money did not last long. Within a month, he had run out of it and returned to Punjab. He has also spoken about a time when he struggled to even afford food while living in Mumbai. His acting journey, however, continued. Suvinder made his film debut in 2004 with the Punjabi film Des Hoyaa Pardes. For years, he worked mostly in smaller

parts, often playing an uncle or a distant relative. Almost a decade later, he entered Hindi cinema with Uda Punjab, where he had a small role. He also appeared in Akshay Kumar's Kesari.

These weren't the kind of roles that suddenly turned him into a star, but they kept him working. He continued taking up whatever came his way while waiting for that

one opportunity that would allow audiences to really notice him. There were also times when acting alone wasn't enough to pay the bills. In an interview with Film Companion, Suvinder revealed that he sold insurance policies while pursuing his acting career. Talking about the difficulty of balancing a regular job with his passion, he said, "Acting isn't like a proper 9-5 job. The trend in our family was always that either you look after the farm or get a regular job. My father fortunately had a regular job and would do as a hobby, so I inherited that passion. Even I tried to do that, without actually wanting to do it, that I do regular work and pursue this as my hobby. I would get anxiety thinking I will have to do something apart from acting."

Amitabh Bachchan recalls early career rejections and being told he was too tall

Mumbai : Veteran actor Amitabh Bachchan has spent more than five decades in the film industry, establishing an unmatched legacy. However, his path to becoming one of Hindi cinema's biggest stars was anything but smooth. On a recent episode of Kaun Banega Crorepati 18, Big B revisited his early days in Bollywood and spoke about the hurdles he faced at the beginning of his career. He recalled being told that he was too tall for certain roles and even remembered an instance when he was asked to leave a film set after turning up late.

In a special episode of Kaun Banega Crorepati 18, Amitabh Bachchan interacted with Commonwealth Games 2026 gold medallists Lovlina Borgohain, Jhandu Kumar, Sharmila Dhankar and Asmita Dey. During the conversation, Asmita asked the senior actor whether he had ever been scolded on film sets, drawing a parallel with athletes being reprimanded when they make mistakes during training. The veteran actor readily admitted that he had faced his share

of reprimands too, particularly during the early years of his acting career.

He said, "Humko badi daant padti hain, shuru-shuru mein toh bahut padi thi. 'Tumko kuch aata nahi hai, acting-wacting, tum bahut lambe ho, jaake ghar jaao.' I used to get scolded a lot. In the beginning, I was scolded immensely. They would tell me, 'You don't know anything about acting, you are too tall, go back home'."

Big B went on to recall that even after he began landing acting opportunities, directors would often point out his mistakes and correct him on his performance. He added, "Then when I finally got work, they would say, 'Okay, fine, stand over there and say the dialogue.' They would ask, 'Is this any way to deliver a dialogue?' They



would scold and correct me, and slowly, I improved." He recalled an incident when he arrived late on set once. The Piku actor said, "Usually, I try to reach the shoot on time. Once, I was late. The director was standing outside the set. I arrived in someone else's car because I did not have one at the time. When I reached, the director saw me and said the shooting had been packed up. He told me, 'Get out of here,' and asked me to leave." Meanwhile, on the work front, Amitabh Bachchan will be next seen in Kalki 2 alongside Prabhas.

Nine people from Bangladesh were killed in a hotel fire in Kolkata; an AC blast is suspected



Kolkata, Aug 19: In the early hours of Wednesday, a large fire at a hotel in Kolkata claimed the lives of at least nine people, including a toddler.Around two in the morning, a fire broke out on Free School Street next to New Market, one of the busiest and most inhabited parts of the city. The fire trapped a number of visitors inside the building and prompted a significant rescue effort. Bangladeshi citizens were among those who perished in the incident, according to the fire service. According Indian news agency ANI, they had traveled to Kolkata for medical care. The hotel lacks fundamental fire safety procedures, according to preliminary assessments. The hotel owner and employees are now at large, but Kolkata Police have opened a case and started looking for them. Nine individuals, in-

cluding a kid, were discovered unconscious and subsequently pronounced dead at a hospital, while about sixty people were evacuated from the building during the operation. A Jharkhand native has been recognized as one of the victims. Initial reports suggest the fire broke out on the third floor of the hotel and may have been triggered by an air-conditioner explosion, though the exact cause is yet to be confirmed. Smoke quickly filled the hotel rooms as the fire spread to nearby areas, triggering panic among guests who rushed out in alarm. Firefighters were alerted to the blaze at 2:07 am. After receiving information about the blaze, four fire tenders rushed to the spot. A disaster management team also reached the scene and joined the rescue efforts.Firefighters worked to evacuate those trapped

inside the building and eventually brought the fire under control.“The dense smoke made it difficult for firefighters to climb the staircase and reach the upper floors. While nine people have died, more deaths are feared,” a police officer told news agency PTL.“Our priority is to rescue those trapped and determine the reasons for the fire. The flames have been doused,” he added.The Kolkata hotel fire comes just two days after another deadly blaze at a hotel in West Bengal’s Birbhum district. At least eight people were killed and several others injured after a fire broke out at Hotel Bideshini in Tarapith in the early hours of August 17. The majority of the guests were asleep when the fire broke out on the bottom level of the five-story hotel around 4:30 in the morning. The hotel is next to the Tarapith temple, next to the sacred pond. Two children and five other members of a single Meghalayan household perished in the fire. The family was reportedly lodging on the hotel’s top level. When they realized the fire had started, they tried to escape with the kids, but as they descended, they ran into the flames.After being saved, the injured were brought to Rampurhat Government Medical College and Hospital to receive medical attention.

As rivals are questioned, Arsenal is ready to defend the Premier League title



London: Going into the Premier League season, Arsenal and Manchester City are in peculiar positions, but it’s clear who of the championship contenders is more at ease with their new circumstances. When Arsenal hosts promoted Coventry in the season’s first game on Friday, they will begin a campaign as English champions for the first time since the 2004-05 campaign. Despite the positive atmosphere at the Emirates Stadium, City has been nervously adjusting to life without Pep Guardiola since the Spaniard terminated his incredible ten-year tenure at the end of the previous campaign. After years spent in City’s shadow, Mikel Arteta’s side triggered a seismic shift in the Premier League’s balance of power last season as they finally clinched their first top-flight title in 22 years.Arsenal finished seven points above runners-up City and are flying high as they begin their bid to win successive English titles for the first time since the 1930s.Arteta won’t let his players rest on their laurels, with the painful defeat

against Paris Saint-Germain on penalties in the Champions League final in May serving to strengthen Arsenal’s desire for more silverware. On the evidence of Arsenal’s emphatic 3-0 win over City in the Community Shield on Sunday, the Gunners have already widened the gap between the clubs since last season.Arteta’s side have added Newcastle midfielder Bruno Guimaraes and Christos Tzolis to their title-winning squad, with both impressing in the demolition of City.“The desire comes because I want to live that moment again,” Arteta said.“We know the difficulty of the task. We know that it’s going to demand something special and we are ready for it.”Guardiola failed to win the title in his last two years at the Etihad Stadium after taking the trophy six times in seven seasons until 2024.Former Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca has been hired to replace Guardiola, but the Italian faces an almost impossible task to replicate his predecessor’s astonishing haul of 20 trophies in an unforgettable decade in charge.

Three Shots in Three Seconds: A Ludhiana Pizza Outlet Fire Captured on Camera

Ludhiana, Aug 19: Unknown attackers opened fire inside a pizzeria late at nite, firing three rounds in three seconds before running away, causing panic. CCTV cameras located at the business recorded the whole event, which took place in the city’s affluent Bhai Randhir Singh Nagar neighborhood. The perpetrators can be seen in the video entering the store and firing three bullets in a row before fleeing. Following the incident, patrons and employees of the outlet were seen fleeing in fear.In order to identify the suspects and track their locations, police are currently reviewing the CCTV video. The ‘Gopi Lahoria Group’ Instagram page uploaded a message claiming responsibility for the fire, which changed the course of the situation. Concerns about a potential gang connection were raised by the post’s allegedly threatening wording addressed at



the publication.The police cyber unit has also joined the inquiry in response to the social media post. Authorities are investigating if the Instagram account was made by criminals to incite terror and fraudulently claim responsibility for the attack, or whether it is actually associated with a gang. Investigators are also looking into technical aspects of the account, such as facts that may be used to locate the account and identify its operator. The social media post and

the CCTV footage are presently being handled by police as important pieces of evidence.

Investigations are underway to determine the reason for the fire, the identify of the assailants, and the veracity of the gang’s allegation.Police are attempting to determine if the shooting was a targeted act or a component of a larger extortion or gang dispute. The event has once again sparked worries about gun violence and gang-related threats in Ludhiana.

Following a setback in his Test debut, an England star shares Virat Kohli’s advice: “That Was The End”



New Delhi: Jordan Cox, a young player for the England cricket team, talked candidly about his time spent in the same dressing room as Indian superstar Virat Kohli while playing for the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) squad in the Indian Premier League (IPL). Despite not playing a single game for RCB in the 2026 Indian Premier League, Cox had the opportunity to spend time with Virat and revealed that the star batsman is always available via phone or text if he has any questions. The England cricketer continued by saying that he enjoys asking Kohli for help on a variety of subjects. He also recalled how Kohli advised him to accept

the pressure that comes with significant events. “I probably don’t want to share all of them, but I just wanted to ask him a few questions. He was saying: ‘Enjoy the moment. You only get one debut. Just enjoy it and have fun’,” Cox told BBC Sport.“Family and friends, everything they have worked hard for, every time they have come to a game to support you, show them something why they have done all that sacrifice for you. I’ll keep it forever, I think. He’s someone that I’ve looked up to and I’ve managed to spend what felt like four months with him in India. He’s someone that I’ll text if I’m ever feeling down or need a bit of help. He’s al-

ways at the end of the phone,” he added.

Cox also had a conversation with Kohli after his Test debut in New Zealand was delayed due to injury. The England cricketer was deeply impacted by the setback but an advice from Kohli helped him in understanding the situation. “I was three days away from playing my first Test and then got injured, which was just unlucky, a freak incident,” said Cox. “There were definitely thoughts of ‘I’m never going to play again’. I had that Test cap right there, then I couldn’t get it. It felt like that was the end, as bad as that sounds. I remember talking to Virat about it. He said: ‘There are billions of people who don’t even know who I am. The sun will come up in the morning - I don’t really care’.” “He’s frantic on the field, so it’s clear that he cares when he gets out there. He’s one of the nicest individuals you’ll meet when he’s not playing. It has to do with how I can be that way. “How can I be so aggressive on the field and then everyone says ‘He’s a great bloke’ when I leave?” he continued.

The Parliamentary Board and the Poll Panel are on Nitin Nabin’s to-do list

New Delhi, Aug 19: As BJP President Nitin Nabin’s team settles in, there is a lot of expectation that the Parliamentary Board, the party’s top decision-making body, would be reorganized. The Board has the authority to suggest candidates for jobs like Chief Minister and Prime Minister under the party constitution. It also has the power to establish coalitions, decide on policies, and start disciplinary measures. The Central Election Committee, which selects candidates for elections, is composed of all members of the Parliamentary Board. It is likely that Nitin Nabin will soon constitute the Parliamentary Board, the Central Election Committee, the National Executive, and the National Council. The party’s National President serves as the ex-officio chairman of the Parliamentary Board, while a General Secretary is appointed as its secretary. Senior leaders are typically included in the Parliamentary Board, with special attention paid to regional, caste, and religious equations during its formation.According to the BJP constitution, the board can have a maximum of 11 members (including the president), though it currently has 12 members. The current members include Nitin Nabin, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Ra-

j Nath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Health Minister JP Nadda, former Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, OBC Morcha President Dr K Laxman, Dr Iqbal Singh Lalpura, Dr Sudha Yadav, and Dr Satyanarayan Jatiya. National General Secretary (Organization) BL Santhosh has been appointed as the Secretary of the Parliamentary Board. Questions have been raised regarding the exclusion of several prominent leaders from the current Parliamentary Board. BJP sources, however, dismiss these claims, saying seniority was taken into account during the board’s formation and that representation has been provided to SC, ST, and minority communities.Chief Ministers’ Membership The Chief Minister of a BJP-ruled state was also included as a member of the Parliamentary Board; however, this practice has previously been a subject of controversy. When Rajnath Singh became party president in 2006, he removed then-Chief Minister Narendra Modi from the Parliamentary Board - a body Modi had joined during the tenure of former president LK Advani. Modi was reinstated as a member in 2013 after becoming the Prime Ministerial candidate; however, Shivraj Singh Chou-

han, then-Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, was also inducted into the board at the same time. Another controversy arose in 2022 when JP Nadda, upon assuming the presidency, removed Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan and former national president Nitin Gadkari from the Parliamentary Board.The argument against including a Chief Minister in Parliamentary Board is that the board is responsible for selecting the Chief Minister; therefore, a sitting Chief Minister should not be a member of it. Now many are questioning which of the BJP’s seventeen Chief Ministers should be included? Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis is currently a member of the Central Election Committee but not the Parliamentary Board. Senior Chief Ministers like Yogi Adityanath (Uttar Pradesh) and Himanta Biswa Sarma (Assam) also have strong claims for inclusion.Additionally, the BJP president must decide whether to retain JP Nadda on the Parliamentary Board in his capacity as a former president. If Nadda remains on the board, the question will arise as to whether Nitin Gadkari - also a former president - should remain a member. The Central Election Committee also needs to be constituted.

In Round 7 of the Sinquefield Cup, R Praggnanandhaa and Fabiano Caruana draw



St. Louis: After the seventh round of the Sinquefield Cup, which is a part of the Grand Chess tour, Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa and American Fabiano Caruana engaged in a fierce draw with black pieces, and they were tied for second. The draw moved Praggnanandhaa one step closer to qualifying for the Grand Chess Tour’s grand finale, which is set for later this year. The Indian’s score now stands at four of a possible seven. Wesley So of the United States maintained his excellent performance in the competition by drawing with the incredibly strong Anish Giri of Holland to stay half a point clear of his closest opponents. Along with Praggnanandhaa, Caruana and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France share the second position with four points apiece in their kitty. With just two rounds remaining in the USD 475000 prize money tournament, as many as four players -- Vincent Keymer of Germany, American duo of Levon Aronian and and Sevan Samuels and World Championship contender Javokhir Sindarov -- share the fifth spot on 3.5 points each. Giri is currently ninth on 3 points a half point clear with his compatriot Jorden Van Foreest Standing last. Caruana and Praggnanandhaa faced an early endgame in the Ruy Lopez opening, therefore the outcome was never much in doubt. Caruana attempted to exert pressure since he did not want to give the Indian much, but as it turned out, there was little hope in the middle game without queens.It didn’t take long for Praggnanandhaa to achieve a perfect level position the board because the pieces were exchanged on a frequent basis. Praggnanandhaa had an additional bishop with naked kings on board, and the game was drawn in 56 moves.

Lack of Khel Ratna Arjuna Awardees for 2025 include Tejaswin Shankar, Divya Deshmukh, and Gayatri Gopichand

New Delhi: Following an unprecedented reevaluation of the selection panel’s recommendations made more than six months ago, the Sports Ministry on Tuesday announced a drastically reduced list of 17 Arjuna Award recipients and decided against awarding the coveted Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award to any athlete for the year 2025. The selection panel led by retired Supreme Court judge Arun Kumar Mishra evaluated hockey player Hardik Singh for the nation’s top athletic honor, but he ultimately lost out. The nation hasn’t had a Khel Ratna recipient since 2014. World Cup-winning chess player Divya Deshmukh, decathlete and high jumper Tejaswin Shankar, and shuttler Gayatri Gopichand were among the 17 sportspersons named for the Arjuna Award on Tuesday.Also on the Arjuna Award list were Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi, Gayatri Gopichand’s women’s doubles partner Treesa Jolly, Glasgow Commonwealth Games silver medalist boxer Narendra Berwal (+92kg), and young deaf rifle shooter Dhanush Srikanth. The selection committee this year had recommended 24 names for the Arjuna Award, but the ministry approved only 17. The awards were announced following a massive delay, with the ministry initiating a re-evaluation process to ensure only deserving can-



didates were honoured and to “preserve the integrity of the awards.”The 19-year-old Deshmukh is the first Indian woman to win the Chess World Cup. Vidit Gujrathi was part of the gold medal-winning Indian team at the 2024 Chess Olympiad.Tejaswin Shankar, who won a historic decathlon silver medal at the 2023 Asian Games and followed it up with a second-place finish at the Asian Championships last year, recently won a pathbreaking bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games despite battling a knee problem. He was among the athletes who criticised the delay in the announcement of the awards, calling it disrespectful to sportspersons.In 2024, a record 32 athletes were conferred the Arjuna Award, including 17 from para-sports. This time, only two para-athletes made the final cut.Para club thrower Ekta Bhyani, who won gold at the 2024 Para World Championships, and shooter Rudransh

Khandelwal, a 2024 Para World Cup gold medalist, were the only para-athletes selected.Ekta also won a silver medal at the World Championships held in Delhi last year.The list, however, does not feature any cricketer, which has been the case since pacer Mohammed Shami received the honour in 2023. I. Arumainayagam, a member of the gold medal-winning Indian football team at the 1962 Asian Games, was the sole recipient of the Arjuna Award for Lifetime Achievement.The ministry has named three Dronacharya Award recipients.Boxing coach Chhote Lal Yadav, who was part of the women’s national camp as well as the support staff of the legendary M.C. Mary Kom, is the most prominent name on the shortlist. For the Dronacharya Award for Lifetime Achievement, Dharmendra Yadav, who coaches the men’s national squad, and wrestling coach Virender Kumar have been named.The Khel Ratna, the

country’s highest sporting honour, carries a medallion, a citation and a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh, while the Arjuna Award carries a cash prize of Rs 15 lakh. Last year, the Khel Ratna was bestowed on four athletes: world champion chess player D. Gukesh, men’s hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh, para-athlete Praveen Kumar and shooter Manu Bhaker. The awards were traditionally presented on August 29 every year to commemorate National Sports Day, which also marks the birth anniversary of one of India’s greatest sportspersons, hockey wizard Major Dhyan Chand.However, following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when the ceremony was conducted virtually due to health protocols, the date has not remained consistent.On more than one occasion, the ceremony has been pushed back by a couple of months after August 29 to accommodate performances in multi-sport events. The latest it was held was on January 17 last year. However, the announcement of the 2025 awardees after more than half of 2026 had passed marks the biggest delay since the inception of the awards in 1991. This year’s selection panel included, among others, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) Vice-President Gagan Narang, former badminton player Aparna Popat and former hockey player M.M. Somaya.

Rahul Gandhi wrote to his ally Hemant Soren, saying, “Go Meet Jharkhand Protesters”

New Delhi, Aug 19: Hemant Soren, the chief minister of Jharkhand and an associate of Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, has been asked to meet with the students who are demonstrating against suspected anomalies in the state’s recruitment exams.Gandhi stated in a letter to Soren on August 14 that the demonstrations have been “peaceful” and that the students’ demands are “legitimate” as the protests neared day 24 on Monday.Many job seekers have been holding a sit-in protest in Ranchi, calling for an investigation into alleged irregularities in the Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission Combined Graduate Level (JSSC-CGL) exam, the 14th Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) Civil Services Examination, and other

recruitment tests. “The Congress party believes that the right to peaceful protest as enshrined in the Constitution of India is one of the central pillars of our democracy. We have, therefore, offered our full support to students protesting paper leaks and irregularities in the education system over the last few months,” Gandhi said. He also “appreciated” that the Jharkhand government has begun a dialogue with the students.

“I believe that there is also agreement on several demands raised by the students. However, the protests continue, and some students remain on an indefinite hunger strike. I am writing to suggest that you personally meet with representatives of the protesting students,” he said.Gandhi, the leader of opposition in

Lok Sabha, said the move will help “reinforce the government’s commitment to resolve their remaining concerns”. Gandhi said the youth of India are its future and asserted that “we owe them our solidarity and support at this moment of crisis”. Rahul Gandhi was challenged by the demonstrating students on Saturday to stop supporting the alliance formed by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha if the “chief minister was not listening to him”.Additionally, they said that although Gandhi had shown support for them, “no concrete action” had been taken.Additionally, they have said that they will demonstrate outside Soren’s home on August 20 and called for his resignation. Soren is now completing his fourth term since 2024.

What Happens If India Loses to Pakistan in the 2026 Hockey World Cup Clash?



New Delhi : To say that India have their work cut out against Pakistan at the Hockey World Cup 2026 would be an understatement. India may sit in the second spot in Group D, but their hopes of making it to phase two of the tournament will entirely rest on the result against their arch-rivals Pakistan on Wednesday, August 19. India won their first match of the campaign against Wales 3-1, albeit with

some issues, especially at the back. But the cracks got left wide open when they took on England on Monday. After being pegged back early, India ensured that they took the lead heading into half-time with captain Harmanpreet Singh scoring from a penalty corner, before Dilpreet Singh got the first field goal of the tournament for his side. England fought back after the break and took the lead be-

fore the end of the third quarter before Nick Bandurak got his second goal and ensured that they qualified for the next round. Now, the pressure is all on Harmanpreet and Co. and if they can ensure that there are no more hiccups on the way and they can get to the next round. But what if Pakistan can edge out a draw or produce an upset and get the win? Here's a look at India's qualification scenario heading into their final group game. In order for India to qualify for the next round, they will need to beat Pakistan or at least get a draw. India currently have three points from their first two games.

England are top of the table, having won both of their opening matches. Pakistan and Wales are at the bottom half with just a point each from their first two games.

This is the best case for the Indian team. The win takes you to six points, and you don't have to worry about what happens in the England vs Wales game. A draw against Pakistan will mean that India will reach four points from three games. In that case, India will need Wales to either draw or lose to England. If England beats Wales, then India will finish second in the group and qualify for the second round.

However, if Wales does manage to pull off an upset against England and win, then both teams will sit on four points each. Then the second place will be decided on goal difference. A loss means it is curtains for India and their hopes of making it to the next round. Pakistan will move ahead of them with the win and sit on four points.

1,800km Journey, 30-Point Heartbreak, But Ashith and Amrutha Continue Forward

New Delhi: The journey from Dharwad to Delhi is roughly 1,800km. Ashith Surya and Amrutha Pramuthesh made it in a hurry, leaving a tournament midway after a call from Delhi told them their World Championships dream was suddenly alive. They arrived on Saturday. Four days later, they walked onto court for the biggest match of their lives. And for the next 71 minutes, they lived the dream. There was a small group of people in the stands on Tuesday afternoon who had probably never heard of Ashith and Amrutha before. By the end of the match, they were willing the Indian pair to stay alive at every point.

Every time Ashith and Amrutha won a point, the cheers grew a little louder. Every time they reached match point and failed to convert it, a collective 'aah' went around the stands. There was disappointment in those



sounds, but also something else: the feeling that, for a little while, this was their court, their moment, their World Championships. Ashith and Amrutha had arrived in Delhi almost by accident. They had been playing at the State Championships in Dharwad when they were told that withdrawals had opened up a place in the World Championships draw. They were on the reserves list and had been promoted to the main draw. The decision was almost immediate. They pulled out of the tournament in Dharwad, packed their bags and

made the journey to Delhi. Other players had been here for days, preparing for the peculiar conditions at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium. The likes of PV Sindhu and Ayush Shetty arrived well in advance, getting a feel for the high ceiling and air-conditioning, with the drift proving to be a key factor at these World Championships. Lakshya Sen, meanwhile, had devised a specific plan, training at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati, where the air-conditioning and ceiling height were similar to those in Delhi.

The big names had time to settle in, find their bearings and acclimatise to the conditions. Ashith and Amrutha had little of that luxury. They had something else instead: a World Championships debut on home soil. "This is what we have dreamt about," Amrutha said. "We never thought we'd get an entry for this, so as soon as we got the news, we were just very happy." That was why leaving Dharwad halfway through a tournament did not require much thought. "This is a much higher tournament, so we are happy about it," Ashith said. The opportunity was too big to miss. So they arrived in Delhi, stepped onto the biggest stage of their careers and proceeded to give themselves a chance to create an upset. World No. 60 Ashith and Amrutha took the opening game 21-16 against Turkiye's Emre Sonmez and Yasemen Bektas, ranked No. 71.

Women's Hockey World Cup: India Thrash South Africa 6-1, Near Second-Round Qualification

New Delhi: India secured their biggest win in Women's Hockey World Cup history as they thrashed South Africa 6-1 to almost secure qualification into the second round of the tournament. Sunelita Toppo, Navneet Kaur, Sushila Chanu, Deepika, Lalremsiami and Sakshi Rana ensured India secured all three points and go to the top of Group D. China had defeated England 4-2, meaning that they remained in second spot after 2-2 draw with India. It also sets up Group D beautifully now with India facing England in their final pool game and needing just a point to qualify on August 20. For Indian fans, the result on Tuesday will have them dreaming. Their biggest win in the tournament's history was a 4-1



win against Spain all the way back in 1974. That year and that performance will strike a chord as it was the last time the Indian eves made it to the

semi-finals of the World Cup. Since then, the Indian team has had many stars come and go. All shining promise, but failing to break that glass ceil-

ing. With this Indian team, you sense that this side not only has the quality but the depth to go all the way. In the game against China, which

Jamal Musiala Reveals Neurological Issue After Bayern Munich Friendly Collapse

New Delhi : Jamal Musiala revealed he was dealing with a neurological issue after collapsing during Bayern Munich's preseason friendly against Heidenheim, saying he had been diagnosed with temporary but easily treatable absence seizures. The 23-year-old Germany international went down shortly after coming on as a second-half substitute in Tuesday's friendly, just three days after a similar incident during Bayern's game against RB Leipzig. Players from both teams immediately formed a circle around Musiala as he received medical attention on the pitch. He was later helped from the field.

Musiala subsequently took to Instagram to reassure fans and explain what had happened, saying he understood why the recent incidents had



caused concern but wanted to make clear that he was doing well. "I have been diagnosed with temporary, brief absence seizures that are easily treatable and are caused by a neurological dysfunction," Musiala wrote. "These can lead to the moments that have occurred recently, such as against Leipzig and now in Heidenheim." Musiala said the episodes could appear alarming but had become part of his ev-

eryday life while he receives medical treatment, adding that he remained optimistic about his recovery. "I know that these moments can look scary at first glance, but for me, they are currently part of my everyday life," he said. "I am receiving the best possible medical treatment for this and am very optimistic." The Bayern midfielder also stressed that there was no additional health risk and said he had been working closely

with neurological specialists. "The important thing is that there is no additional health risk," Musiala added. He explained that, after consulting neurological experts, he had personally decided to continue living his everyday life and pursuing his career, with the approval of the specialists treating him.

Musiala said Bayern Munich and his private circle had been supporting him throughout the process and that he had taken responsibility for the decision to continue playing. Musiala's latest collapse came only three days after he went down during Bayern's friendly against Leipzig. German news agency DPA reported after that incident that the midfielder had left the field on his own but appeared dazed.

Vinesh Phogat Calls Brij Bhushan Goon, Criminal, Vows Supreme Court Battle

New Delhi: Wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Tuesday launched a fresh attack on former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, calling him a "goon and a criminal" and vowing to continue the legal battle against him in the Supreme Court. Phogat, 31, made the remarks while speaking to reporters in Jind on the sidelines of a political programme. Her comments came just weeks after a Delhi court acquitted Singh in the sexual harassment case involving women wrestlers, a verdict that has been challenged by the complainants. "Who is Brij Bhushan? Forget about him. He is a goon and a criminal. Why should we give so much respect to that man?" the former World Championship bronze medallist said. "How many people have been troubled in Gonda? How much land has he encroached upon? We will fight this battle in the Supreme Court and take it forward. Where does he fly in helicopter? Where did all this money come from?" the Asian Games gold medallist added. The remarks come against the backdrop of a long-running legal battle that began after leading women wrestlers, including Phogat, Sakshi Malik



and Bajrang Punia, publicly accused Singh of sexual harassment in 2023. The protests triggered a Supreme Court intervention, following which Delhi Police registered an FIR and later filed a chargesheet against the former WFI chief. In May 2024, the Rouse Avenue Court had found sufficient material to frame charges against Singh for sexual harassment and outraging the modesty of women in connection with five complainants, while criminal intimidation charges were also framed in relation to two wrestlers. Singh had pleaded not guilty and denied the allegations. However, on August 3, 2026, the same court acquitted Singh and former WFI assis-

tant secretary Vinod Tomar. Reports on the judgment said the court found that the prosecution had failed to prove the charges beyond reasonable doubt and described the allegations as politically motivated and appearing fabricated. Phogat and the other wrestlers have rejected the outcome and indicated that they intend to challenge the verdict. The controversy has remained one of the biggest stories in Indian sport, with the 2023 protests leading to intense scrutiny of the WFI and the administration of wrestling in the country. Singh, who has consistently denied the allegations, was replaced as WFI chief after his term ended in 2024.

Devdutt Padikkal Stays Focused Amid India's No.3 Competition

New Delhi: Devdutt Padikkal's return to India's Test side was not part of the original plan. The left-hander got his opportunity only after Sai Sudharsan, India's preferred No.3, was ruled out of the two-Test series against Sri Lanka with a toe injury. Padikkal, who had not played a Test since 2024, was brought back into the XI for the opening Test in Galle. But the 26-year-old has made sure the opportunity has not gone unnoticed. Before the Test, Padikkal struck an unbeaten 142 against Sri Lanka XI in the warm-up game in Colombo. He then carried that form into Galle, producing a superb 167 in the first innings, his maiden Test century. Padikkal was equally valuable in India's second innings, making 44 as the visitors set Sri Lanka a daunting target of 362. His



performances have inevitably raised questions about what happens when Sudharsan returns, but Padikkal is not getting carried away by the prospect of securing a long run at No.3. "I don't think those kinds of conversations (long run at No.3) take place. It's important that whenever you get that opportunity, you have to take it. I don't really go looking for those conversations,"

Padikkal said after the fourth day's play. The Karnataka batter's immediate focus remains on making the most of every opportunity rather than worrying about selection battles. "I don't really put too much emphasis on getting a run of games or things like that because in modern-day cricket, you cannot really expect those kinds of things. It's a highly result-driven business.

Jadeja's No-Ball Costs India Wicket in Galle, Gambhir Frustrated

New Delhi : Gautam Gambhir was left visibly frustrated after Ravindra Jadeja's no-ball denied India a crucial wicket against Sri Lanka on Day 4 of the Galle Test. The India head coach watched on as Jadeja produced a delivery that turned sharply, took the edge of Dhananjaya de Silva's bat and travelled towards first slip, only for the dismissal to be overturned because the spinner had overstepped. It was a particularly painful moment for India because

Dhananjaya had been completely beaten by the variation. Jadeja's delivery looked almost identical to his stock ball in flight and release before turning sharply past the middle of the bat. The edge appeared to give India another breakthrough, but the no-ball meant Dhananjaya survived. Gambhir has previously been outspoken about the importance of avoiding no-balls. In 2023, he criticised Arshdeep Singh after the pacer bowled three con-

secutive no-balls against Sri Lanka, arguing that such mistakes could not be accepted at international level. The latest lapse will therefore have been particularly frustrating for the India coach, especially with the team closing in on victory. Jadeja has nevertheless played a significant role in India's commanding position in Galle. He took three wickets in Sri Lanka's first innings, while also reaching 350 international wickets during the match. The no-ball also adds



to a long-standing statistical issue for the left-arm spinner. Since 2021, he has bowled 84 no-balls in Tests, the most among spinners during that period. Pakistan's Noman Ali is next on the list with 40, followed by Sri Lanka's Lasith Embuldeniya with 33. India had already done most of the hard work before the missed opportunity. After taking a 178-run first-innings lead, they were bowled out for 193 in their second innings, setting Sri Lanka a target of 372.

The hosts then lost four wickets before stumps. Mohammed Siraj removed Nishan Madushka, Manav Suthar dismissed concussion substitute Pasindu Sooriyabandara and Lahiru Udara, while Prasidh Krishna accounted for Kamindu Mendis. Sri Lanka eventually closed on 84 for four, leaving them 288 runs short with six wickets remaining. Dhananjaya, who survived Jadeja's no-ball, was unbeaten on 31 alongside Sonal Dinusha on 25.