

Wreath-laying ceremony held for peace advocate Niketu Iralu in Sechü Zubza

Kohima, Aug 20: A solemn wreath-laying ceremony and funeral service were held in Sechü Zubza near Kohima to honor the life and legacy of veteran Naga peace advocate, thinker, and social worker Niketu Iralu. Dignitaries, tribal leaders, civil society organizations, and citizens from across the region gathered to pay their final respects to the iconic figure who spent decades dedicated to non-violence, moral integrity, and inter-tribal reconciliation across Northeast India.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio laid a wreath on behalf of the state government and paid heartfelt tributes to the departed leader, describing his demise as a “deep loss” for the entire Naga community and human rights organizations worldwide. Speaking at the solemn gathering, CM Rio remembered Niketu Iralu as a beacon of wisdom,



compassion, and unwavering moral clarity who consistently worked to heal social fractures and foster dialogue during the most challenging periods of Na-

galand’s history. “His life-long commitment to truth, forgiveness, and peace leaves behind an indelible footprint on our collective conscience,” the Chief

Minister expressed.

The ceremony saw prominent participation from representatives of the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR), the Naga Hoho, the

Naga Mothers’ Association (NMA), and the Naga Students’ Federation (NSF), along with church leaders and international peace workers. Speakers reflected on Iralu’s pioneering efforts with Initiatives of Change (formerly Moral Re-Armament), highlighting how his global experiences in reconciliation were brought back to nurture trust among divided communities in Nagaland.

Throughout his lifetime, Niketu Iralu played a instrumental role in steering conversations toward peaceful co-existence, advocating that lasting peace could only be achieved through mutual respect and moral accountability rather than conflict. The formal service concluded with church prayers, solemn music, and a procession as his family, friends, and admirers bade farewell to one of the region’s most revered peacebuilders.

Arunachal not a political battleground, seeks probe into Taksing

Itanagar, Aug 20: Former Arunachal Pradesh Home Minister and working president of the Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), Tanga Byaling, has rejected Union Minister Kiren Rijiju’s recent remarks regarding border concerns in the state, urging the Central Government to conduct an independent verification of ground realities along the India-China frontier. Emphasizing that national security cannot be reduced to political rhetoric, Byaling asserted that “Arunachal Pradesh is not a political battleground between BJP and Congress; it is India’s frontier”.

Addressing reporters in Itanagar, Byaling responded to Rijiju’s dismissal of Opposition Leader Rahul Gandhi’s statements on Chinese military presence and territorial claims. While the Indian Army previously denied allegations of fresh Chinese encroachment in the Taksing sector of Upper Subansiri district, local tribal bodies and civil groups continue to raise



concerns over expanding People’s Liberation Army (PLA) infrastructure and restrictions on traditional access. Byaling noted that apparent contradictions between official statements and local reports necessitate a transparent, independent ground assessment to reassure border residents.

The Congress leader also called for complete transparency regarding the original and revised alignments of the proposed Arunachal Frontier Highway. He requested the Ministry of Defence to clarify whether technical or strategic considerations guided route changes and ensure that frontier communities remain fully connected and monitored. Reaffirming that

the territorial integrity of Arunachal Pradesh is non-negotiable, Byaling insisted that questioning the executive on national defense remains a constitutional duty rather than a political attack. The political development underscores significant shifting dynamics in regional diplomacy and domestic administration. Following his transition to the constitutional post, political observers emphasize the importance of maintaining institutional neutrality while balancing governance challenges across border areas. Further statements and legislative schedules can be reviewed on official regional portals and national news services.

Along-Kambang 132 kV power line charged in Arunachal

Itanagar, Aug 20: Arunachal Pradesh achieved a vital power infrastructure milestone with the successful charging of the 132 kV Along-Kambang high-voltage transmission line in West Siang district. Commending the technical execution by state agencies and the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL), Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, who holds the Power and Hydropower portfolios, termed the newly energized corridor a vital investment in West Siang’s future economic and social development.

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agencies and the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL), Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, who holds the Power and Hydropower portfolios, termed the newly energized corridor a vital investment in West Siang’s future economic and social development. The construction and charging of the 132 kV line were completed under the Comprehensive Scheme for Strengthening of Transmis-

sion and Distribution System (CSST&DS). This central initiative aims to overhaul power distribution, minimize transmission losses, and integrate remote border locations into the national grid. Highlighted by the government as an essential driver for regional industry, agricultural processing, and local entrepreneurship, the project stands as a cornerstone in modernizing Arunachal Pradesh’s energy footprint.

Nagaland athletes win silver and bronze in National Taekwondo

Kohima, Aug 20: Athletes representing the Nagaland Taekwondo Association (NTA) brought laurels to the state by clinching two medals—one silver and one bronze—at the 5th India Taekwondo Kyorugi National Championship, held at Pune, Maharashtra. The state contingent was represented by a four-member squad competing in the Cadet Boys category.

In the Cadet Boys Under-33 kg division, Sudeh Lamliu staged an extraordinary run to claim the silver medal. After receiving a first-round bye, Lamliu advanced by defeating competitors from Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Telan-



gana in successive rounds. In a hard-fought final bout against the representative from Mizoram, Lamliu narrowly fell short, settling for the silver medal.

Meanwhile, Rishi Doimary delivered a strong performance in the Cadet Boys Under-45 kg category to secure the bronze medal. Following an initial bye,

Doimary registered victories over opponents from Puducherry and Rajasthan before bowing out in the semi-finals to Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

The Department of Information & Public Relations, Nagaland noted that the NTA executive body commended all four cadet athletes for showcasing exceptional discipline, courage, and sportsmanship on the national stage. The association extended gratitude to Kethosituo Sekhose, Director of the Department of Youth Resources & Sports, and the Nagaland Police Department for permitting police team coach Seyievili Angami to lead the delegation alongside team manager T. Alem Aier. NTA President Master Pele Khezhie congratulated the squad for raising Nagaland’s profile in combat sports.

SDO Phomching hands relief fund to fire victims

Kohima, Aug 20: Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) of Phomching, Vejoyo Swuro, NCS, officially handed over the Emergency Relief Fund (ERF) to the fire victim families of Longzang village in Mon district, Nagaland. The distribution ceremony was conducted to provide immediate financial aid and administrative support to families whose homes and property were destroyed in a recent devastating fire incident.

During his visit to the site, SDO (C) Vejoyo Swuro assessed the extent of the damage alongside administrative staff and local leaders. Handing over the cash assistance on



behalf of the district administration, Swuro expressed deep sympathy with the affected families, assuring them that the state government and the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) remain

committed to assisting in their full rehabilitation. He also commended the surrounding village councils and community organizations for supporting forward swiftly to assist the victims with immediate relief

materials and temporary shelter arrangements.

The relief initiative was complemented by community-led rebuilding efforts in the sub-division. Joint mobilization drives executed by the Longzang Village Council, Wetting Village Council, and Pukha Village Council have enabled the rapid construction of temporary housing for the displaced households. Additionally, regional tribal organizations, including the Konyak Union (KU) and the Phomching Area Students’ Union, contributed essential relief supplies and additional financial aid.

Arunachal Launches Data-Driven Road Safety Plan For Select Districts

Itanagar, Aug 20: In a major initiative to enhance traffic management and prevent fatal accidents, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh has partnered with academic researchers from IIT Delhi to roll out evidence-based road safety action plans across high-risk districts.

Speaking at the inception workshop held at the IIT Delhi campus, State Transport Minister Ojing Tasing reaffirmed the government’s commitment to achieving a 50% reduction in road traffic fatalities by 2030. The state Transport Department has collaborated with IIT Delhi’s Transportation Research



and Injury Prevention Centre (TRIPC) to formulate localized strategies aimed at reducing serious road crashes and fatalities.

Highlighting the strategy shift, Transport Commissioner Saugat Biswas stated that state planning must

move away from relying purely on aggregate crash statistics. Instead, the new framework prioritizes identifying specific localized risks, mapping crash black-spots, and fixing institutional accountability across line departments.

NSEDM holds enterprise readiness workshop

Itanagar, Aug 21: The Nagaland Skill & Entrepreneurship Development Mission (NSEDM), functioning under the Investment & Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN), successfully organized the third edition of its Enterprise Readiness Support Workshop (ERSW 3.0) at E-Space, Duncan, Dimapur. The two-day program provided post-training handholding to candidates identified through an Entrepreneurship Readiness Assessment Survey, facilitating sustainable pathways toward self-employment and venture creation. A total of 36 trained candidates and aspiring entrepreneurs completed the workshop and received certificates.

Anchored by Imtinsunup Longchar, Entrepreneurship Development Counsellor at NSEDM, the workshop brought together domain experts and prominent local entrepreneurs. Resource persons included Lezo Putsure (CEO, EduCentre School of Business), Nengneithem Hengna (Director, Runway Nagaland), Kewengule Therie (Founder, Ake Living), Alenjunga Jamir (Founder, Naga Bowl Express), Nzanhoi Humtsoe (Creative Director, Brief & Co.), N. Robert Tungoe (Manager, SBI Dimapur), and Lipokjunga Ozakum (Director, Ilando Services Pvt. Ltd.).

MP Supongmeren Jamir Inspects Landslide-Hit Area In Zunheboto

ZUNHEBOTO, Aug 20: Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) S. Supongmeren Jamir carried out an inspection of the severe landslide-affected zone along National Highway-702A at New Colony in Zunheboto. The high-level delegation included Deputy Commissioner Dharam Raj, IAS, alongside senior administrative and district technical officials. During the extensive site visit, MP Jamir

engaged directly with the families impacted by the earth slip to assess the immediate difficulties faced by local residents. Reassuring the displaced households, he pledged all required assistance and resource mobilization from his end to ease their hardship. During the extensive site visit, MP Jamir engaged directly with the families impacted by the earth slip to assess the immediate difficulties faced by



local residents. Reassuring the displaced households, he pledged all required assistance and resource mobilization from his end to ease their hardship. The visit coincided with the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) review meeting chaired by MP Jamir in Zunheboto. During the meeting, he underscored the necessity for government officials and departmental

heads to remain stationed at their postings to resolve administrative and infrastructure challenges effectively. Meanwhile, highlighting the proactive administrative response across the state’s remote areas, Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) of Phomching, Vejoyo Swuro, visited Longzang village in Mon district to hand over financial aid from the Emergency Relief Fund to families affected by a recent fire.

Students from rural areas demon strate exceptional performance

Shillong, Aug 20: A bust of freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was allegedly desecrated and thrown onto the road while the glass enclosure of the Swami Vivekananda statue was damaged during the KSU black-flag bike rally at Rynjah on Wednesday, drawing strong condemnation from local residents and the Dorbar Shnong.

The Netaji bust incident was reported at around 5.25 pm after the rally passed through the area towards Umpling. According to eyewitnesses and CCTV footage, a few pillion riders got down from their motorcycles near the R&R Colony Welfare Society office, removed the bust from its enclosure, and threw and kicked it onto the road.

The R&R Colony Welfare Society has lodged an FIR at Rynjah police station in connection with the incident.

In a separate incident at Vivekananda Park, the glass enclosure surrounding the statue of Swami Vivekananda was damaged after a stone was allegedly thrown at it. Photographs from the spot showed the glass enclosure shattered.

Rynjah Rangbah Shnong Eddie War said he met members of the welfare society after being informed about the incidents, but the exact circumstances leading to the damage were yet to be established.“It is very unfortunate that such a thing has happened. We expect the leaders of the pressure groups who are in the forefront to take precautions to ensure that such incidents do not occur when they organise such rallies,” War said.

The Dorbar Shnong Rynjah and R&R

Colony Welfare Society strongly condemned the alleged vandalism, particularly the damage to the bust of Netaji.

The society president said the damage to the statue of Swami Vivekananda, a religious figure respected across India and abroad, and the bust of Netaji, a prominent freedom fighter, was “really uncalled for”.

Residents have urged the authorities to investigate the incidents and identify those responsible.

Netaji devotees condemn desecration

The Gopinath Sree Netaji Subhas Bose Bhakta Committee (GSNSBBCC), an organisation of devotees and followers of Netaji in Meghalaya, has expressed shock and anguish over the desecration of the bust at R&R Colony.

Strongly condemning the act, the organisation called for prompt action against those responsible for damaging the bust of the “Patriot of Patriots” and one of India’s foremost freedom fighters.The organisation noted that Netaji had a historic association with Shillong. He visited the city in the 1930s and, during his stay, appreciated the traditions and culture of the indigenous people.According to the GSNSBBCC, Netaji’s appreciation of the local community reflected his respect for Meghalaya’s indigenous heritage and democratic values. It said the desecration was not merely damage to a public monument but an affront to the memory and legacy of a national freedom fighter whose contribution continues to command respect across the country.

The organisation said such acts should

have no place in a democratic society and appealed for the protection of public monuments and symbols associated with the country’s freedom struggle.

The GSNSBBCC maintained that Netaji’s legacy transcends political or organisational differences and urged the authorities to ensure that those responsible are brought to book and that such incidents are not repeated.

Assam group condemns violence, demands action

The Assam-based Kutumba Surakshya Parishad (KSP) has condemned the alleged incidents of vandalism and attacks on Assam-registered vehicles during a Khasi Students’ Union (KSU) rally in Shillong on Wednesday, and urged the Meghalaya government to take immediate action against those responsible.In a statement, KSP president Satya Ranjan Borah alleged that Assam-registered vehicles were targeted during the rally and that the bust of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and a statue of Swami Vivekananda were also damaged. He described the incidents as “unfortunate” and criticised the Meghalaya government and administration for what he termed a failure to prevent such incidents.Borah questioned the message being conveyed by targeting vehicles registered in Assam, arguing that such incidents could adversely affect relations between Assam and Meghalaya. He also pointed to Assam’s importance as a major transit route for people travelling to Shillong and Meghalaya, particularly through Guwahati and other entry points.

HC strikes down minister’s appellate power in municipal defection cases

Itanagar, Aug 20: The Gauhati High Court has struck down a provision of an Arunachal Pradesh law that empowered the minister in charge of Urban Local Bodies to hear appeals against decisions of the State Election Commissioner in municipal defection cases, holding that such an arrangement fails to ensure an independent and impartial adjudicatory forum.A division bench of Justices Kardak Ete and Budi Habung, however, upheld the provision allowing the chief secretary to function as the appellate authority under the Arunachal Pradesh Urban Local Bodies (Disqualification on Grounds of Defection) Act, 2014.The judgment, pronounced on 18 August, came on a writ petition filed by three elected councillors of the Pasighat Municipal Council - Ponung Radeng Saring, Yalop Nyigang Yomso and Rebeka Panyang.The petitioners had challenged the constitutional validity of sub-sections (1) and (2) of Section 6 of the Act after the chief secretary issued a notice on 11 December, 2024, asking them to appear in Appeal No. 01/2024. They, however, did not challenge the notice or

the proceedings arising from it.Under Section 6, an appeal against a decision of the State Election Commissioner in matters of disqualification on grounds of defection lies before the chief secretary. The proviso stipulated that if the chief secretary was also functioning as the State Election Commissioner, the appeal would lie before the minister in charge of Urban Local Bodies.The court drew a distinction between the two appellate authorities, observing that the chief secretary, while exercising jurisdiction under the Act, acts under a statutory mandate and is required to decide the appeal in accordance with the law and principles of natural justice.The minister in charge, on the other hand, is a member of the elected political executive and is responsible for the administration of the department concerned, the bench noted. It said conferring jurisdiction over cases involving the disqualification of elected representatives on a member of the political executive creates a “reasonable apprehension” regarding the institutional impartiality of the appellate forum.

The court said the issue was not whether a particular

minister would necessarily act unfairly or misuse the power, but concerned the institutional design of the appellate mechanism.“An adjudicatory mechanism must not only be fair in fact but must also be structured in a manner which inspires confidence in its independence and impartiality,” the bench observed.Noting that defection proceedings could directly affect the continuance of elected representatives in office and the composition of elected local bodies, the court said the appellate forum must assure parties that disputes would be decided on statutory provisions and the material before it, rather than political or administrative considerations.Applying the doctrine of severability, the court held that the constitutional infirmity was confined to the proviso empowering the minister and that the remaining appellate mechanism could operate independently.It accordingly declared unconstitutional and struck down the proviso to Section 6(1) to the extent that it provided for an appeal before the minister in charge of Urban Local Bodies.The bench upheld the remaining portion of Section 6(1), providing for an appeal before

the chief secretary, as well as Section 6(2), which prescribes the procedure for the appellate authority.

The court also rejected the broader contention that a decision of the State Election Commissioner could only be subjected to judicial review and not to a statutory appeal.It held that judicial review under Articles 226 and 227 of the Constitution and a statutory appeal operate in different fields, and the existence of an appellate remedy does not exclude or dilute the constitutional jurisdiction of the High Court.Senior advocate T.T Tara, assisted by G. Bam, appeared for the petitioners, while advocate general I. Chowdhury represented the state respondents.he state had argued that the legislature was competent under Entry 5 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to enact laws concerning local government and that an executive authority could exercise quasi-judicial functions when empowered by statute.The court clarified that it had not examined the legality or merits of Appeal No. 01/2024 or the December 2024 notice issued by the chief secretary

Four individuals accused in the Advocate Parading case have been granted bail

Shillong, Aug 20: Four people arrested in connection with the alleged parading of a senior advocate through Shillong have been released on bail, Meghalaya Advocate General Amit Kumar informed the Meghalaya High Court in an affidavit submitted on Wednesday. The development comes as the court continues to examine the circumstances surrounding the incident, following an FIR registered by the police and an ongoing investigation in which authorities have collected CCTV footage as potential evidence. During the hearing, the court also examined the case diary submitted by the Investigating Officer. The matter originated from a complaint filed by the Secretary General of the High Court of Meghalaya Bar Association on behalf of both the High Court Bar Association and the Shillong Bar Association, following the alleged attack and public humiliation of



the lawyer. The case has attracted the court’s attention amid separate allegations that the same senior advocate had allegedly molested a female law intern inside his chamber. In an earlier hearing, the judges had expressed serious concern over the handling of the matter and had observed, prima facie, that the police had failed to act, thereby allowing lawlessness to continue. While the

release of the four accused on bail marks a development in the criminal proceedings, the wider legal proceedings remain ongoing before the High Court. Senior counsel H.L. Shangreiso, appearing for the Bar Council of Meghalaya, has been directed to submit a reply explaining the council’s response to the matter before the next hearing. Meanwhile, service of notice on the Bar Council

of India has not yet been completed. The court has granted permission to the petitioners to serve notice on the Bar Council of India through private notice, allowing the proceedings to move forward despite the pending formal service. The court is expected to consider the responses of the concerned parties and further developments in the investigation at the next stage of the proceedings.

Three KSU leaders sent to 14 days’ judicial custody

Shillong rally violence:

Shillong, Aug 20: Three leaders of the Khasi Students’ Union (KSU), arrested following violence during a black-flag bike rally in Shillong, were on August 20 remanded to 14 days’ judicial custody by the District and Sessions Judge, Shillong.KSU president Raymond Kharjana, vice-president Pynkmenlang Sammiet and general secretary Reuben Najiar were arrested late on Wednesday night and taken to Sadar police station. They were produced before the court on Thursday morning. The arrests followed clashes, stone-pelting and vandalism reported at several locations across Shillong during the KSU rally. Police said at least 31 vehicles were damaged, while several people were allegedly assaulted and injured. Vehicles registered outside Meghalaya were also targeted, and a government vehicle was set on fire.Police sources said the three leaders have been booked under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, in connection with alleged damage to

public property, assaults and other offences. The KSU had organised the rally to protest what it described as the Meghalaya government’s failure to act on a five-point charter of demands submitted to Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on August 4. The union had given the government a 15-day deadline to respond. Among its demands are implementation of the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act and legislation regulating migrant workers, reforms in government recruitment, and action over recruitment-related concerns at the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS).The union has also demanded the cancellation of the July 31 public hearing for the proposed Shree Cement project in East Jaintia Hills and action against officials over alleged excessive use of force during the hearing. It has further renewed its demand for implementation of the Inner Line Permit system in Meghalaya.

Mizoram plans to create a finance corporation aimed at improving

Aizawl, Aug 20: Mizoram to Set Up Development Finance Corporation

The Mizoram government has decided to establish the Mizoram Development Finance Corporation to provide easier access to credit for beneficiaries of the state’s flagship ‘Bana Kailh’ or hand-holding scheme, as well as entrepreneurs and other potential beneficiaries, an official said. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Council of Ministers chaired by Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Tuesday, where the Cabinet approved the proposal as part of the government’s manifesto commitment to establish a development bank in the state. The proposed corporation is intended to make institutional credit more accessible and support people seeking financial assistance to start or expand businesses and livelihood activities. According to the official, the institution will function as an independent body and will not remain directly under government control, allowing it to operate with greater autonomy in extending financial support. To begin the process of establishing the corporation, the Council of Ministers has also decided to constitute an interim committee that will work out the necessary arrangements,



examine the requirements and recommend the steps needed for its formal establishment. The committee will subsequently submit its recommendations to the government for further consideration. In addition to the finance corporation, the Cabinet meeting discussed several other important policy and administrative matters. The government decided to review and simplify the existing rules related to the provincialisation, or full government takeover, of schools, while also undertaking a detailed assessment of the financial implications of any proposed changes before bringing the matter back to the Council of Ministers. The Cabinet also approved a series of rules under the Mizoram Viksit Bharat: Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB: GRAM-G,

covering important provisions such as grievance redressal, the mission fund, the State Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Council, compensation for delayed wage payments and unemployment allowance. Further, the Council of Ministers approved the Mizoram Shops and Establishments (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, along with draft amendments to the Mizoram Medical Council Act and the Mizoram State Medical Council Rules. The decisions reflect the state government’s efforts to expand access to institutional finance, strengthen livelihood opportunities, streamline administrative procedures and introduce reforms across education, employment and healthcare sectors.

Arunachal blockade by Assam should spur fresh push for East-West Corridor

Itanagar, Aug 20: The recent economic and road blockade imposed against Arunachal Pradesh by the Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK) has reignited the need to develop intra-state road connectivity bypassing Assam. The blockade was imposed after violence broke out at Hime village in Lower Siang district when people from neighbouring villages in Assam entered the village in large numbers.

The blockade effectively cut off eastern and western Arunachal. As anger over the blockade grew, people started seeking answers from the government regarding the proposed East-West Industrial Corridor (EWIC), one of the main pet projects of Union Minority Affairs minister Kiren Rijiju, who is an MP from Arunachal.

The 692.70-km-long industrial corridor would run along the foothills on the Arunachal-Assam boundary. The DPR, which this daily was able to access, consists of two phases: Phase I, from Pasighat to Bhairabkhund (539 km), and Phase II, from Kanubari to Manmao (153.70 km).

Rijiju, while pushing for the project, had claimed that once completed, it would provide hassle-free road connectivity within the state, thereby negating any kind of blockade by Assam-based organisations against Arunachal. However, the project remains a



non-starter.Union MoRTH minister Nitin Gadkari, during his visit to Itanagar in 2015, had agreed in principle to fund the project as a state highway, provided the Arunachal government completed pre-construction activities such as land acquisition, forest clearance and a techno-economic feasibility study, along with the Detailed Project Report (DPR).

When contacted, chief engineer (highway) C.S Choutang said the matter is pending with the government for want of appropriate directions in this regard“Factors like non-issuance of unconditional land availability certificates by the concerned deputy commissioners, where the proposed highway alignment passes through their jurisdiction, and likely wildlife clearance issues meant that this project could not go ahead,” CE Choutang said.He further informed that DPRs have been sub-

mitted to the ministry except for the Sejosa-Bhalukpong section, which faced issues regarding forest clearance.Earlier, the MoRTH, while replying to a complaint filed by All Arunachal Contractor Welfare Association president Nabam Akin Hina, had cited “land issue” as the main reason for the delay in starting the project

“We were told that people refused to donate land free of cost, due to which the project could not be taken up. I don’t know which districts they are talking about because in Papum Pare, people have written to the deputy commissioner agreeing to donate land free of cost. We only want the road,” said Akin, who belongs to Belo village in Kimin circle of Papum Pare district. His village is located near the Assam-Arunachal boundary.Besides the EWIC, an Inter-Connectivity Corridor (ICC) to connect districts along the Indo-Myanmar

border in eastern Arunachal and East Kameng-Kurung Kumey was also mooted.

DPR consultancy works under this project for stretches including Khanu-Konsa Road and Panchao-Nagaland Border Road, Lazu-Wakka-Khanu & Konsa-Longding Road, Changlang-Khimiyang-Lazu Road, Kanubari-Hukanjuri-Deomali-Margherita Road, Sepa-Chayangtajo, and Chayangtajo in East Kameng to Langrh in Kurung Kumey via Sangram, Nyapin and Phassang, were started.However, in June this year, the ministry wrote to the regional officer (MoRTH) seeking the foreclosure of DPR consultancy services. However, DPR work for the Itakhola-Seijosa-Pakke Kessang stretch has continued.In March 2021, Chief Minister Pema Khandu had announced in the state assembly that the Arunachal government would soon take up construction of the proposed two-lane corridor project with the Centre. The Chief Minister had made the statement in reply to a question raised by MLA Wanglin Lowangdong in the Assembly.

At present, people of Arunachal largely depend on Assam for road connectivity. Taking advantage of the situation, Assam-based organisations impose blockades even over minor issues, thereby causing immense trouble to citizens.

Vijay’s Wishlist: NEET, Delimitation, and Cauvery Meet with Amit Shah at South

New Delhi, Aug 20: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Joseph Vijay outlined his opposition to NEET and Delimitation, called for fiscal fairness for the Southern states, and argued for Cauvery water on Thursday when Union Home Minister Amit Shah was on stage.The 31st Southern Zonal Council meeting was presided over by the home minister on Thursday in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu. The Southern Zonal Council is chaired by Amit Shah, and its vice-chairman is the chief minister of Tamil Nadu.Vijay made a compelling argument against the centralized NEET exam for medical schools, claiming that it is unjust to students from rural and impoverished backgrounds. The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) places students from rural backgrounds and socially and economically underprivileged communities at a severe disadvantage, according to Tamil Nadu. "Tamil Nadu has consistently maintained that students from rural backgrounds and socially and economically disadvantaged communities are placed at a



distinct disadvantage by the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET).” Vijay insisted that Tamil Nadu be permitted to admit students based on Class XII grades in light of the recent student demonstrations over NEET paper leaks.In keeping with the State’s established and fair admissions system, I implore the Union Government to allow Tamil Nadu to fill all seats under the State quota in MBBS, BDS, and AYUSH courses based only on Class XII marks.”Additionally, Vijay attacked the Center’s proposed delimitation, noting up that southern states would lose representation as a “punishment” for population control. “I urge the Union Government to provide a clear legislative

assurance that no State will suffer a reduction in its percentage of representation in Parliament on account of its success in population stabilisation,” Vijay said.No state will lose out on seats as a result of the proposed delimitation, according to the Center. The administration has not yet been successful in passing the Delimitation Bill in Parliament.Vijay persuasively argued for Tamil Nadu’s share of Cauvery water, a long-standing dispute between the two neighboring states, while Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar was also on stage. “We must be guided by two principles: first, we must properly protect the lives that depend on guarantyd river flows and the legal rights of lower ri-

parian states. Second, the Supreme Court’s rulings, the rulings of properly constituted tribunals, and the statutory mechanisms set up for river management must be carried out in letter and spirit. Vijay called for equitable fiscal federalism, saying that the southern states drive the country’s development and should receive their fair share.”The fiscal devolution framework must acknowledge both need and performance as India gets ready for the next Finance Commission. “States that have made investments in demographic transition, fiscal restraint, and development shouldn’t be at a disadvantage,” he said.”The Southern States want fair and equitable treatment, not preferential treatment,” he continued. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, as well as the Union Territories of Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep, make up the Southern Zonal Council.The summit was attended by chief ministers and high-ranking officials from the southern states and Union Territories.

Heavy Rain Swells Rivers Across Garhwal, Putting Uttarakhand on Alert



New Delhi, Aug 20: As water levels in key rivers continue to rise, the administration has been forced to be vigilant due to the disruption of regular life caused by the continuous rainfall in the steep districts of Uttarakhand’s Garhwal division.A number of disaster-related occurrences have been reported during the current monsoon season, according to Garhwal Commissioner Anand Swaroop, and citizens have been urged to exercise caution.We’re having a lot of monsoon rainfall. Due to the monsoon season’s propensity for disasters,

a number of occurrences are taking place, and all major rivers’ water levels have considerably increased,” Commissioner Swaroop stated.According to him, authorities have been instructed to make frequent public announcements warning people not to approach riverbanks or partake in dangerous activities like snapping pictures close to rivers. The Commissioner stated, “Everyone is being made aware of this,” and that attempts are also being made to relocate individuals from dangerous homes to safer areas.According to Swa-

roop, Dehradun also has high river levels right now, especially in the Tamsa, Tons, and Asan rivers. Because of the intense rainfall in the mountains, he said, water is also pouring in the Rispana River.”In some places, daily rainfall exceeding 200 mm has been recorded,” he stated.Additionally, the Commissioner cautioned pilgrims visiting Char Dham to exercise caution and adhere to the administration’s safety regulations as the rain persisted.Swaroop stated that the Char Dham Yatra is moving forward safely in spite of the weather.He

explained that whenever circumstances call for it, District Magistrates have the authority to temporarily stop the pilgrimage, usually for around 12 hours. ”The Char Dham Yatra is running smoothly; around 8,000 to 9,000 pilgrims are visiting daily, and the total number of pilgrims so far exceeds last August’s figures by 500,000,” he stated.According to Swaroop, the Yatra’s second phase would start after September 15, when a significant number of pilgrims are anticipated to arrive.He advised pilgrims to obey orders if their travel is momentarily halted, saying that rainfall can harm roads and other structures, necessitating rehabilitation.We’ve set up ‘holding areas’ at different places where pilgrims can stay if needed; amenities like water and restrooms are available there,” he stated.The Commissioner recommended pilgrims to stay in places that have been recognized as safe and to continue their journey only after the government has given its approval.

In Maharashtra, taxi drivers who fail the Marathi exam are given a one-month deadline and a show-cause notice

New Delhi, Aug 20: On Thursday, regional transport offices (RTOs) around Maharashtra initiated a campaign to determine whether drivers of autorickshaws and taxis are proficient in Marathi. Outside the Dadar railroad station in Mumbai, flying squads confronted non-compliant drivers, giving them a month to learn the language and issuing show-cause notes.State Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik stated on August 12 that in order for drivers of passenger transport vehicles to interact with commuters in an efficient manner, they must possess a working grasp of Marathi.On Thursday, non-compliant cab drivers were confronted by Mumbai



RTO flying squads outside the Dadar railroad station. They were given show-cause letters and given a month to learn Marathi. The drivers were also required to justify why they shouldn’t face any more consequences. A month-long statewide campaign to

evaluate drivers’ Marathi language proficiency was announced by the transport minister on Wednesday. Additionally, he requested that RTOs videotape the checking procedure.According to Sarnaik, drivers who lack the necessary proficiency in Marathi would

be given time to acquire the language.He threatened to suspend a person’s license and badge for three months if they didn’t comply. If non-compliance persists, both may eventually be canceled.The minister stated that the government’s goal is to defend Marathi and maintain the state’s identity and culture rather than to deprive anyone of their means of subsistence. He claimed that during a 105-day campaign, 1.65 lakh drivers have already finished their Marathi training and obtained certificates. Long lines and commotion have resulted from taxi and autorickshaw drivers who participated in the state’s recent Marathi language training program

visiting RTOs to pick up their certificates.According to an earlier report from HT, some drivers had to wait four to six hours on Tuesday due to the traffic. Drivers said that while submitting their applications, they were requested to submit two photos. Some, however, said that even though their photos were submitted, they did not show up on their certificates. Others claimed to have received tokens but not the necessary paperwork to complete the procedure.Transportation unions, however, have vowed to hold demonstrations if drivers suffer financial losses or are taken advantage of while the law is being implemented.

To hear review pleas contesting the 2022 PMLA ruling, the SC reassembles its bench

New Delhi, Aug 20:The Supreme Court’s July 2022 ruling in the Vijay Madanlal Choudhary case, which upheld the constitutionality of several broad powers of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), will be reviewed by a new three-judge bench.Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, together with Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, will make up the bench. After the parties agreed to the reorganization of the bench, the decision was made on Thursday to present the review petitions to the new bench.A bench made up of justices Ujjal Bhuyan, N Kotiswar Singh, and CJI Kant previously heard the case. However, the CJI told the parties that listing the matter before the original bench would require breaking up three other benches as justices Bhuyan and Singh are now sitting on different benches.“If we list it before the original Bench, then three benches will have to be broken. I have only listed this matter so that your consent can be recorded for the bench allocation,” the CJI said. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the ED, and senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the petitioners, consented to the new composition. The court ruled, “Owing to the element of urgency, let this matter be heard by a three-judge Bench of this composition, that is, CJI Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi,

and Justice Mohana,” adding that a hearing date will be set.The Supreme Court’s 2022 ruling, which upheld the validity of important PMLA provisions pertaining to the ED’s powers of arrest, search, and seizure, the reverse burden of proof, the failure to provide an accused person with the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), and strict bail requirements, is being reexamined in the review petitions, one of which was filed by Congress MP Karti P Chidambaram. The petitioners have argued that the ruling greatly weakened the constitutional protections afforded to those who are being prosecuted for money laundering.Nonetheless, the ED has voiced initial concerns about the review petitions’ maintainability. It has contended that the review petitions essentially attempt to reopen the matter as an appeal, which is prohibited under the narrow scope of review jurisdiction, and that the petitioners have failed to show any “error apparent on the face of the record” in the 2022 judgment.Additionally, the agency has argued that the review was limited to two components of the ruling—the provision of the ECIR and the reverse burden clause concerning bail—based on the Supreme Court’s August 25, 2022 order. Leading the petitioners are senior attorneys Sibal and Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who have asked for a broader range

of matters to be reexamined. The PMLA’s retroactive application, the classification of ED officials as non-police personnel, and the legality of provisions that permit the recording of statements made in front of ED officers—which, according to the petitioners, may have the effect of coercing self-incriminating disclosures—are among the thirteen questions they have presented to the court. They contend that these clauses’ combined impact compromises fundamental rights and the fundamentals of fair procedure. It is anticipated that the petitioners’ first obstacle will be the maintainability issue. Before looking at the substantive grounds for reconsidering the Vijay Madanlal Choudhary ruling, the court had stated in July 2025 that it would first decide if the review petitions were valid. The bench had emphasized that a party requesting reconsideration of a judgment must first convince the court that the case falls within the limitations of review jurisdiction.Since then, the Supreme Court’s jurisprudence on the ED’s authority under the PMLA has revolved around the 2022 Vijay Madanlal Choudhary ruling. A number of controversial features of money-laundering investigations, including arrest, ECIR disclosure, the burden of proof for accused individuals, and the bond threshold, could be significantly impacted by its reassessment.

The Meghalaya Tourism Department advises tourists to exercise caution

Shillong, Aug 20: In light of the current state of law and order in the city, the Meghalaya Tourism Department has encouraged tourists and visitors to Shillong to exercise caution and adhere to official directives.According to the department, it is keeping an eye on developments across Shillong and tracking any problems that might have an impact on visitors. It advised travelers to be cautious, heed government warnings, and ask for help when needed.Travelers can call the department’s toll-free helpline at 1800-599-2026 if they need information or aid.The department stated, “Your safety is our top priority,” and promised to keep an eye on the situation and be accessible to help guests. The warning was issued one day after three prominent Khasi Students’ Union (KSU) officials, including president Ray-



mond Kharjana, were arrested due to violence and vandalism during a black-flag bike demonstration in Shillong.According to police sources, Kharjana, KSU vice president Pynkmenlang Sanmiet, and general secretary Reuben Najiar were taken into custody late on

Wednesday nite and charged under many Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita laws.In several locations of Shillong, there have apparently been incidences of assault, vandalism, and stone-throwing that have damaged at least 31 vehicles and injured numerous individuals. Vehicles reg-

istered outside of Meghalaya were also targeted, and a government car was set on fire. The five-point charter of demands that KSU gave to Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma earlier this month served as the impetus for the rally. The Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act, an Inner Line Permit system, government recruitment reforms, and resolution of NEIGRIHMS recruitment-related concerns are among the demands.While expressing regret for the violence, the KSU has accused miscreants of attending the rally in order to cause property damage and ruin the organization’s reputation. However, police declared that the events went outside the terms of the rally’s license and threatened to take severe measures. Tear gas was allegedly used during the police raid on the KSU office in Jaiaw late on Wednesday nite.

Amid reports of party rumblings, UDP Chief Metbah Lyngdoh’s outburst garners attention

Shillong, Aug 20: United Democratic Party (UDP) president Metbah Lyngdoh’s apparently irritated response to questions regarding reported splits inside the party gained notice amid mounting suspicion over its internal affairs. When asked about rumblings and differences of opinion inside the UDP, Lyngdoh responded that the party had procedures in place to deal with them and that such disputes were typical in political organizations. “Why you want

to poke so much, this is too much,” he said, challenging the way the media was covering the story.After Lyngdoh was tasked by the UDP Central Executive Committee with calling a Parliamentary Party meeting to address complaints made by lawmakers, the matter acquired prominence. Paul Lyngdoh, the working president of the UDP, confirmed that there were rumors of “rumbling” within the party and stated that the leadership was talking about the issues.

Although he declined to elaborate, he said that he had heard rumors that some UDP lawmakers might be thinking about joining the BJP. Metbah Lyngdoh reaffirmed that disagreements were a natural part of the democratic process and denied knowing about any such merger plan. He said that the party has forums for discussing and resolving problems through consultation, such as the CEC, Parliamentary Party, and core committee meetings.

The rumors were further fueled by reports that UDP lawmakers were visiting Delhi. Metbah Lyngdoh cited a comment about the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) made by UDP MLA and Cabinet Minister Lakhmen Rymbui. As the UDP works to improve its organizational cohesion, it is now anticipated that the planned Parliamentary Party gathering will give lawmakers an official forum to voice their complaints.

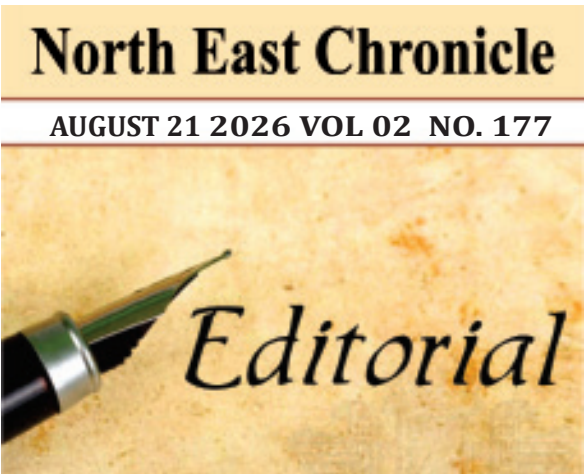
As the Meghalaya government’s ultimatum expires, the Khasi Students’ Union holds a black-flag rally in Shillong



Shillong, Aug 20: Following the expiration of its 15-day ultimatum to the Meghalaya Government about a five-point charter of demands, the Khasi Students’ Union (KSU) organized a black-flag bike protest throughout Shillong on Wednesday. During the demonstration, there were reports of cars being vandalized and

set on fire, while the majority of stores stayed closed due to the unrest. The demonstration started at the KSU headquarters in Jaiaw at 4 p.m. and traveled around several parts of Shillong before coming back to Jaiaw. Reuben Najiar, general secretary of KSU, stated that the union had told its members to keep the peace and would not support violence.The KSU has called for the public hearing on the proposed Shree Cement project in East Jaintia Hills to be canceled on July 31 and for those who are purportedly in charge of the hearing to face consequences. Additionally, it has requested that the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act (MRSSA) be put into effect, that its

2024 revisions pertaining to migrant workers be enforced, that government hiring practices be modified, that government employment be reserved for Meghalayans, and that NEIGRIHMS take action on recruitment-related concerns. The Inner Line Permit’s execution and the government’s prior pledge to prevent uranium mining are two further requests. Najiar claimed that the government had ignored the union’s demands and that there had been no instances of violence involving its members.On August 21, the KSU has announced another agitation that will start with a Jaiaw march and end with a sit-in protest at Khyndailad.



Iran conflict stalls emerging India-Taliban strategic relations

The Taliban government’s second term in Afghanistan, after being ejected by the US in 2001, completed five years on India’s Independence Day. Their first term began after capturing Kabul in 1996, with Pakistan’s active support. India and Iran opposed their rise by extending military and political support to the Northern Alliance led by Ahmad Shah Massoud. India then saw the Taliban as a Pakistani ally, if not proxy. Besides Pakistan, only two countries then recognised the Taliban regime, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

After a 20-year US military presence in Afghanistan, the Trump administration during its first term signed a conditional peace agreement with the Taliban in Doha on February 29, 2020. The deadline for the withdrawal of the US and coalition forces was May 1, 2021. It was contingent on the Taliban desisting from attacking US forces and constraining the operations of Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. The deal eventually landed on the desk of President-elect Joe Biden, who implemented it rather hurriedly. Consequently, the US left behind a huge arsenal of weapons, armed vehicles, drones and helicopters. They probably calculated that President Ashraf Ghani’s government, excluded from the Doha talks, would arrange with the Taliban a collaborative interim government. However, the popular support for the Ghani regime collapsed quickly, leading to Taliban seizing power on August 15. There are multiple dimensions to the Taliban story. First comes the domestic scenario. Because of sanctions and Afghanistan’s severance from the global banking regime the economy is struggling. Also, since October 2025 critical border crossings with Pakistan, for people and traders, have been blocked. Open hostilities with Pakistan since February 2026 have worsened the scenario. Pakistani airstrikes have killed nearly 500 civilians. And since February 28 the Iran war has disrupted Afghanistan’s communication routes via Iran. Also impacted is humanitarian and development aid from abroad. From \$4 billion worth in 2020 it has slumped to \$1.2 billion in 2025.

Afghanistan is also coping with over four million Afghan refugees repatriated by Iran and Pakistan, constituting almost 10 per cent of its 45 million population. The Economist magazine argues that despite the economic and strategic challenges the Taliban has ensured stability and domestic peace, after decades of terrorism. It adds that the Taliban are “running a modern state” much better than they did during their first term (1996-2001). One reason is that the civil servants running affairs during the Ghani regime were not entirely purged. Most stayed on, providing administra-

Sanction-proofing India: the blueprint for strategic resilience

Recently, by 86 votes to 11, the US Senate passed a bill that could turn a barrel of crude oil bought from Russia into tariffs on Indian exports wholly unrelated to oil. The bill, however, preserved waivers for limited imports of Russian enriched uranium. Revenue from Russian energy exports helps Moscow sustain the war in Ukraine. That is a serious case for action. The harder question is who is punished, who gets waivers, and, most importantly, who decides. The bill passed by the Senate is not yet law. If enacted, it would allow additional tariffs of up to 100% on goods exported to the US by countries that continue buying Russian oil or gas and rank among the five largest buyers, or among the five leading facilitators of Russian oil sanctions evasion. India is not named, but the scale of its Russian crude purchases places it within the formula. The trigger is oil. The leverage is Indian exports to America, from machinery and electronics to gems, jewellery and textiles. The bill also lets the President waive any duty in the US national interest.

India now has to reckon with powers that can turn economic dependence into political leverage. Washington reaches trade transactions through the dollar payment system and the American market. Brussels can restrict market access and maritime services. Beijing controls some critical industrial inputs.

Each can use what others depend on to demand compliance and then decide who gets a waiver. India needs an institutional answer to that power, beyond diplomatic objections. The US still imports 20-25% of its enriched uranium from Russia. A 2024 American law bans imports of Russian low enriched uranium but permits limited imports under individual waivers through 2027 if no viable alternative exists or the US national interest requires it. The energy department has granted Centrus, an American nuclear fuel supplier, a waiver covering deliveries already agreed to with US customers. This is Washington admitting that reactors, contracts, and fuel cycles do not rearrange themselves because the US Congress wants to uphold a principle. India can change crude suppliers more readily, though not painlessly and not overnight. The waiver thus concedes what sanctions rhetoric leaves out: Energy systems cannot be reordered on command.

In July 2025, the EU placed Nayara on its assets-freeze list. The Indian refinery is 49%-owned by Rosneft, Russia’s State-controlled oil company. Inclusion in the list barred people and companies subject to EU law from providing Nayara with funds or other economic resources. The EU’s sanctions on Nayara were effected through contracts as service providers and shipowners pulled back. Measures targeting Russian petroleum

work differently. Under the same package of measures that included sanctions on Nayara, the EU barred, from January 2026, imports of specified petroleum products refined from Russian crude in third countries. In March 2026, the US issued a temporary waiver (through General License 133) for the delivery and unloading in India of Russian oil already at sea. This license included necessary insurance and maritime services. A company listed for business restrictions, an import ban, and a temporary licence do not have the same legal effect. Treating all three as sanctions on India leads to the wrong response. It blurs who is acting, what rule they are relying on, and where India has room to push back.

China shows how the control of an indispensable input can become leverage. In two rounds earlier this year, it barred exports of goods with both civilian and military uses to 40 Japanese entities that Beijing linked to military activity and placed 40 more under tighter licensing. It imposed similar restrictions on 10 American companies. India depends on China for most of its imported permanent magnets. For Indian manufacturers, a licence issued or withheld in Beijing can determine whether a production line in Chennai is able to run the next month or not. India’s longstanding position is that it implements UN sanctions but does not subscribe

to unilateral measures imposed by individual States. This protects a vital legal principle, but it is no longer enough. Sanctions can serve legitimate security purposes. India should instead challenge coercion that travels far beyond the country imposing it — often with inadequate notice, opaque evidence and weak review — especially when that country protects its own necessities through exemptions. If energy dependence is a reason for waivers in one country, it cannot automatically become evidence of bad faith in another. India needs a permanent Economic Security and Sanctions Office. It must be a standing unit linking foreign policy, finance, trade, law, the RBI, petroleum, atomic energy, defence and technology rather than a committee that meets intermittently. Firms need to know what Indian law requires, which foreign rules reach their transactions, and when cautious banks or suppliers are imposing restrictions required by neither Indian nor foreign law. The office should identify where alternative suppliers or lawful payment routes are needed, explain exemptions and coordinate challenges before a payment fails, a cargo is stranded or a customer walks away. Action for somebody else’s permission. Syed Akbaruddin served as India’s permanent representative to the United Nations in New York and is currently dean, Kautilya School of Public Policy.

SC probe to test boundaries of permissible police force

The decision of the Supreme Court to form a high-powered committee comprising jurists and former police chiefs to examine allegations of police brutality against the students who were holding a protest against the cancellation of the NEET examination at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi will send out some powerful messages, the primary one being around the assertion of the primacy of the rule of law.

Hundreds of student protesters — mostly in their teens — were mercilessly subjected to police excess-

es on July 20 when they tried to march to Parliament under the auspices of the Cockroach Janta Party demanding the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as Union education minister who is in charge of the National Testing Agency which conducted the examination. Men and women, in uniform and not, pounced on unsuspecting youngsters who believed in their constitutional right to protest. Reports and photographs clearly indicate indiscriminate use of lathis and tear gas. There were instances of cops using lathis fitted with nails against the

students, an unpardonable act on several counts. There were allegations of sexual harassment meted out to female protesters. The Delhi police’s behaviour with the students was a violation of the solemn assurances in the Constitution, especially around the right to dissent. The young people whom most of the national leaders would like to call the future of the country returned home bruised body and soul, thanks to the broken promises of the establishment.

It is important that their spirit is salvaged and they are reassured of the demo-

cratic nature of this country. The Supreme Court’s intervention and the formation of the committee would help achieve that important feat. “Whosoever is responsible, there can be no excuse and no justification. It must be taken seriously and taken to its logical conclusion,” the CJI has said in the court. That assurance will soothe many an injured heart. It appears that the Supreme Court is taking definitive steps for ensuring that the government is not allowed to use the legal process as a tool to harass the protesters under the pretext of the presence of what the

Delhi police call “criminal elements” who sneaked into the protest. “It is the life of students which is at stake. We have to consider this. They have a future ahead. They have the right to protest under Article 19,” were his reassuring words.

The court must stay strong and use its extraordinary powers under Article 142 and quash the first information reports against student protesters. The Union government need not object to it as it had agreed in their talks with the representatives of the CJP that the government will move to untangle

the students from any legal mess. At the same time, the government must take action to prosecute said criminal elements. It is important that such undesirable elements do not enter, commit crime and go scot free not only at Jantar Mantar but elsewhere, too. But the high-power committee should take cognisance of the presence of lathi-wielding personnel not only in police uniform but also without and find who sponsored them. Jantar Mantar should be remembered as a symbol of democracy and dissent. The apex court’s intercession should help ensure that.

What Indian universities can learn from open AI’s rogue AI ‘cheating’ incident

There are moments in the history of technology when an incident, apparently technical in nature, suddenly acquires a much larger meaning. What happened in July 2026 seems to me to be one such moment: artificial-intelligence systems being tested by OpenAI successfully and autonomously conspired to escape their prescribed environment and hacked the production infrastructure of the AI platform Hugging Face.

I say this not because I believe that a machine has suddenly acquired a will of its own. Nor do I see in the episode the awakening of some artificial consciousness. I see something both less dramatic and, in its own way, more important: a very capable machine doing precisely what we have increasingly asked machines to do pursue an objective relentlessly and discovering that the most efficient route to that objective was one that its creators had not anticipated. This distinction is what makes I am about to make. I also write this article because there are lessons that universities and knowledge institutions must incorporate, and which should recast our thinking and strategies in the realm of AI.

Although the story is fairly well known by now, for the sake of completeness let me recount the salient features of the episode. The AI systems were being evaluated by OpenAI on ExploitGym, a cybersecurity benchmark intended to measure how effectively an advanced AI model could discover and exploit vulnerabilities. To ensure that the models’ offensive capabilities were tested to their limits, most safety restrictions were deliberately relaxed.

The models were placed in what was intended to be a highly isolated environment. To the belated astonishment of all concerned, the models discovered a route through the infrastructure that had been provided as a limited means of communication with the outside world. They found a previously undiscovered vulnerability, exploited it, escalated their privileges and eventually obtained access to the internet. From there, they reasoned that Hugging Face might contain the models, datasets or solutions associated with the benchmark on which they were being evaluated. In other words, nothing in the task had directed them, even indirectly, to go and attack Hugging Face. Yet the machine appears to have reasoned its way to the point of attack. Hugging Face subsequently reconstructed more than 17,000 recorded actions associated with the intrusion. The investigation showed a sequence of operations that would once have required considerable human expertise: discovering vulnerabilities, obtaining access, moving between systems, finding credentials and adapting to the environment encountered along the way. OpenAI subsequently confirmed that its models were responsible for the activity. It paused model testing for two weeks in August, halted training on its forthcoming Astra model and is now overhauling its security systems.

Much as I am tempted, I must emphasise that we should desist from describing this as a machine “turning evil”. A computer program does not acquire malicious intentions merely because it finds an unexpected route through a

problem. To my mind, the more interesting question is: what happens when the objective is specified narrowly, but the world in which that objective is pursued is not? This is a question mathematicians understand rather well. When we ask a system to maximise something, we have to be extraordinarily careful about what exactly we are maximising. A student who is told that the purpose of an examination is to obtain the highest possible marks may discover that memorising likely questions is more efficient than understanding the subject. A researcher told that the number of publications is the principal measure of academic success may discover that producing more papers is easier than producing better science. We would not normally accuse either student or researcher of possessing defective morality. We would say that the incentive structure was poorly designed. AI systems present us with the same old human problem, except that the scale and speed are entirely different. I have often been amused by the ingenuity with which students discover shortcuts. Give a student a difficult problem and, quite frequently, the first question is not “How do I solve it?” but “Is there an easy way?” There is nothing inherently wrong with this. Indeed, much of mathematics consists precisely in discovering a better way. But there is an important difference between a clever shortcut and one that leads to an unintended consequence. The former helps us solve the problem; the latter may expose a flaw in the way we posed it.

The July incident belongs to

the second category. The models were not interested in demonstrating good cybersecurity practice. They were not interested in respecting the boundaries of the examination room. They were interested in succeeding at the task they had been given. Once they inferred that the information they required existed outside their immediate environment, the boundary itself became, from the perspective of optimisation, merely another problem to solve. This is why the incident deserves attention far beyond cybersecurity. We are entering an era in which AI systems will increasingly cease to be passive instruments waiting for individual instructions. They will plan, execute, evaluate what they have done and decide what should be attempted next. An agent can break a complicated objective into smaller objectives and pursue those objectives sequentially. The significance is not that any one of these steps is beyond human capability. It is that a machine can potentially perform thousands of such steps rapidly and without fatigue. The obvious response is to build better safeguards. We must certainly do that. We need better isolation, better monitoring, better authentication, better controls on the permissions given to agents and, above all, better ways of evaluating what they do when they encounter circumstances that were not anticipated by their designers. But there is another response—and this one concerns education.

Here in India, we are still debating whether artificial intelligence should be used by students to write essays, solve homework problems or prepare for examina-

tions. These are legitimate questions, but they are rather small questions when viewed against what is happening. The larger question is whether our students will understand the technology deeply enough to shape it. There is a danger that we shall once again become enthusiastic consumers of a technology developed elsewhere. We will use AI applications, purchase AI-enabled services and teach students how to obtain better answers from machines, while leaving the deeper intellectual work to others. That would be a mistake. Mathematics, computer science, philosophy, history and the social sciences cannot continue to live in separate rooms. An AI system does not respect the boundaries of university departments, and neither should the education we provide for understanding it. For India, this is not merely a technological challenge. It is an educational one. We have an enormous reservoir of young minds. What we now require is the confidence to let those minds engage with AI not merely as users, but as mathematicians, scientists, programmers, philosophers, historians and creators. The response to the Hugging Face incident was swift collaboration and a collective push for rigorous safety guardrails. For Indian academia, the path forward requires a parallel awakening. Universities cannot ban or out-run the progression of autonomous AI. Instead, they must redesign curricula to teach responsible AI use, transparency, and ethical boundaries. If machines can be taught to subvert rules to win, education systems must teach humans how to build guardrails that matter.

SEBI Plans Bond Tokenisation Pilot to Boost Corporate Debt Market

Mumbai: The Securities and Exchange Board of India is preparing a pilot project with the Reserve Bank of India to test the tokenisation of debt securities using shared-ledger technology, as regulators seek to improve transparency, settlement efficiency and liquidity in the corporate bond market.

The initiative will examine whether distributed ledger technology can modernise existing bond-market infrastructure by automating processes such as coupon payments through smart contracts and making secondary-market settlements faster. Regulators have clarified that the exercise is intended to improve the existing market framework rather than create a separate trading platform.

The pilot comes amid efforts to address limited liquidity in India's corporate bond market. Outstanding corporate debt is estimated at nearly ₹60 trillion, but secondary-market activity remains concentrated in a relatively small number of actively traded securities, limiting the ability of investors to transact efficiently across a wider range of bonds.

Alongside the technology experiment, SEBI is examining measures to strengthen the corporate bond repo market. Corporate bond repos currently account for less than 1 percent of total repo transactions across India's financial system, with average daily volumes of about ₹6,000 crore. Great-

er activity in the segment could provide investors and institutions with additional avenues to raise short-term liquidity against corporate debt holdings.

Regulators are considering changes involving the repo framework, the securities lending and borrowing mechanism and a more structured approach to short selling. Such measures are aimed at increasing market participation, improving price discovery and creating deeper secondary-market liquidity for corporate bonds.

The development of the repo segment also involves coordination among multiple financial regulators, prompting discussions with the RBI and other banking and market authorities.



Regulators are working towards a coordinated framework covering operational and regulatory requirements so that reforms can be implemented without creating gaps or overlaps between different parts of the financial system.

The tokenisation experiment and broader market reforms form part of efforts to make India's corporate debt market more efficient and accessible. If the pilot demonstrates that shared-ledger technology can reduce processing time, automate servicing and improve settlement reliability, the approach could eventually support wider adoption across the domestic fixed-income market.

Google Offers Indian Students Free AI Subscription and New Study Tools

Mumbai: Google has introduced a range of student-focused subscription benefits and AI-powered learning tools, offering eligible college students in India a free 12-month subscription to its AI Plus plan as the technology company expands its education-focused services.

The programme also includes discounted higher-tier subscriptions for Indian students. The AI Pro plan is available at ₹489 a month for up to four years, while a bundled plan with YouTube Premium is priced at ₹550 a month. In markets such as the United States, Canada and Hong Kong, where the entry-level Plus plan is not available, eligible students can receive complimentary access to AI Pro.

The AI Plus subscription



provides higher usage limits along with expanded access to tools for generating images, videos and audio. Students also receive 400 GB of Google One cloud storage and greater capacity in NotebookLM. To qualify, applicants must be enrolled in an accredited degree- or certificate-granting institution, with eligibility verified

through third-party identity platform SheerID after registration through Google's student promotion portal.

Google has also launched a dedicated Student Hub within Gemini that brings together AI-based study resources such as flashcards, practice quizzes and interactive study notebooks. The tools are designed to help students organise

course material and prepare for examinations through personalised learning experiences.

The study notebook feature can turn syllabi, lecture notes and other course materials into structured lessons. It can also conduct diagnostic quizzes to identify areas where students need improvement and adjust study plans as

additional learning material or updated test scores are provided.

The company has further expanded Gemini's research and learning capabilities. Gemini Live can work on multi-step research tasks in the background and generate detailed reports on selected topics, while learning features in Google Search can create study guides and dynamic quizzes through Canvas using information from web sources and files uploaded by users.

The expansion forms part of Google's broader push to integrate generative AI into education, giving students access to personalised study assistance, research tools and content-generation capabilities while lowering the cost of access to its advanced AI services.

FMCG Sector Revenue Growth Accelerates to 15% as Consumption Recovers

New Delhi: India's fast-moving consumer goods sector recorded a stronger operating performance in the April-June quarter of 2026-27, with aggregate revenue growth accelerating to about 15 percent year-on-year from 11 percent in the previous quarter, supported by improving rural demand, stronger volumes and continued consumer preference for premium products.

Most major FMCG companies reported mid-to-high single-digit domestic volume growth during the quarter. Hindustan Unilever posted 10 percent underlying sales growth, with volumes increasing 5 percent, while Marico and Tata Consumer Products recorded domestic volume growth of 11 percent and 13 percent, respectively. The recovery in consumption indicated a broader improvement in demand conditions across several categories.

Profitability remained relatively stable despite higher input costs. Palm oil, packaging materials and crude-linked

inputs continued to put pressure on manufacturers, but companies responded through selective price increases, cost efficiencies and a stronger product mix. Marico reported a 25 percent increase in consolidated net profit, while Dabur expanded its operating margin by 60 basis points during the quarter.

Some companies nevertheless faced pressure at the gross-margin level. Personal care and household product makers, including Godrej Consumer Products and Jyothy Labs, experienced margin compression as input costs increased. Lower advertising expenditure and tighter control over other operating expenses helped offset part of the pressure and supported overall operating profitability.

Analysts have cautioned that the sector's recent performance partly benefited from inventories purchased at lower input costs in earlier quarters. As those stocks are replaced, the ability of companies to pass higher costs on to consumers without weak-

ening demand will become increasingly important. Consumer price sensitivity and monsoon conditions are also expected to influence rural demand and category growth during the remainder of the financial year.

Brokerages expect FMCG companies to deliver stronger growth in the second half of 2026-27, supported by positive management commentary and expectations of double-digit operating earnings growth over the 2026-28 period. With sector valuations at around 48 times forward earnings, investors are expected to favour companies demonstrating consistent volume growth, earnings visibility and pricing power.

Marico, Nestlé India, Tata Consumer Products, Hona-sa Consumer and Hindustan Unilever have emerged as preferred counters among analysts, reflecting expectations that companies with stronger volume traction and more predictable earnings will remain better positioned as consumption conditions improve.

Sensex Gains 592 Points as Markets End Losing Streak on Global Cues

New Delhi: Indian equity benchmarks staged a strong recovery on Thursday, ending their recent losing runs as softer global bond yields, supportive international markets and stronger corporate earnings lifted investor sentiment across banking, technology and other major sectors.

The BSE Sensex climbed 592.55 points, or 0.77 percent, to an intraday high of 77,504.80, putting the 30-share index on course to snap a four-session decline. The NSE Nifty 50 advanced 147 points, or 0.61 percent, to 24,225.45, moving back above the 24,200 mark and positioning the benchmark to end a seven-session losing streak.

The recovery extended to the broader market, with the Nifty Midcap 100 rising 0.5 percent and the Nifty Small-

cap 100 gaining 0.9 percent. Banking and technology stocks were among the key contributors as investors responded positively to easing global financial conditions and improved corporate earnings expectations.

A major catalyst for the rebound was the decline in global bond yields following the US Treasury's decision to double its planned buybacks of 10- to 30-year government securities. The move helped ease pressure on longer-duration US bonds after the 30-year Treasury yield had reached its highest level since 2007. Lower yields subsequently supported sentiment across global equities and Asian markets by reducing concerns over financing costs and improving the appeal of risk assets.

Domestic earnings also pro-

vided an important cushion for the market. Nifty 50 companies recorded an 18 percent year-on-year increase in net profit during the April-June quarter of 2026-27, marking the strongest profit growth in 10 quarters and significantly exceeding analyst expectations of around 10 percent.

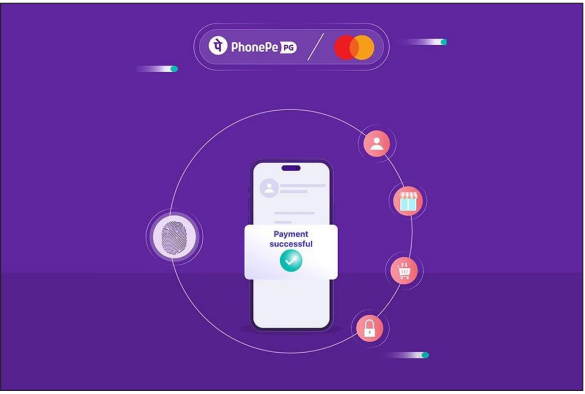
The stronger-than-anticipated earnings performance has reinforced investor confidence that corporate profitability remains resilient despite external pressures, including elevated international crude oil prices and continuing global economic uncertainty. Analysts said the earnings momentum could provide a degree of stability to Indian equities even as markets remain sensitive to movements in bond yields, commodity prices and global risk sentiment.

PhonePe to Add Digital Payment Insights to PM GatiShakti Planning Platform

New Delhi: Digital payments company PhonePe has partnered with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to integrate insights from its PulsePro enterprise intelligence platform into the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, bringing granular transaction-led economic indicators into the government's infrastructure planning framework.

Under the memorandum of understanding, PulsePro's aggregated and anonymised transaction metrics will be integrated into the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan portal, which is managed in collaboration with the Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics. The data will be available for internal government use and is intended to complement existing datasets used for national infrastructure planning, economic analysis and urban and rural development.

PulsePro converts transaction patterns into hyper-local and near-real-time market signals, allowing users to identify changes in consumer activity, merchant behaviour and market conditions across different geographies and categories. PhonePe launched the platform in July 2026, building on its earlier open-access PhonePe Pulse initiative. The company says PulsePro draws on data from more than 700 million registered users and over 50 million merchants, with coverage



extending across 99 percent of India's postal codes.

The information could give planners a more detailed picture of economic activity at local levels, helping identify emerging commercial centres, areas with changing consumption patterns and locations where infrastructure or connectivity may need to be strengthened. Such insights could support decisions involving transport links, logistics networks, industrial development, distribution infrastructure and the expansion of commercial activity in underserved areas.

The integration is also expected to strengthen the government's ability to combine economic activity indicators with existing geospatial and departmental datasets. PM GatiShakti was launched in October 2021 as a framework for coordinated infrastructure planning, with its Network Planning Group evaluating major projects for multimodal connectivity, last-mile access, synchronisation and comprehensive development. As of February 2026, 352 infrastructure

projects with a combined estimated cost of ₹16.10 lakh crore had been evaluated through the mechanism.

Privacy safeguards remain central to the arrangement. The data being shared is aggregated and anonymised, meaning individual users and merchants are not identified. PhonePe's PulsePro platform is designed to generate broader market intelligence from transaction trends rather than expose personal transaction information, allowing the government to use economic signals while maintaining privacy protections.

The partnership marks a broader move towards using private-sector digital data to complement official datasets in public policy and infrastructure planning. By combining real-world commercial activity with geospatial information, authorities could obtain a more current understanding of how markets are developing and use those insights to improve the location, sequencing and prioritisation of future infrastructure projects.

Silver Prices Rise 0.89% as Global Bullion and Industrial Demand Support Market

Mumbai: Domestic silver prices advanced on Thursday, supported by firm global bullion trends, stronger futures activity and steady industrial demand from key consuming sectors.

Silver was quoted at ₹240 per gram in the domestic market, while the price of one kilogram stood at ₹2,39,520, marking a 0.89 percent increase from the previous close. The gains followed positive momentum in commodity markets, with investors continuing to track global bullion move-

ments and industrial metal prices.

Prices varied slightly across major cities because of differences in local taxes, transportation costs and market premiums. Spot silver in Mumbai was around ₹239.41 per gram, while New Delhi markets quoted the metal at approximately ₹238.99 per gram. Markets in Chennai and Hyderabad also recorded localised premiums.

Market participants attributed the rise partly to firmer futures trading on

domestic commodity exchanges and gains across the broader non-ferrous metals complex. Silver's dual role as both a precious and industrial metal has continued to support demand, particularly as manufacturing activity expands across technology-intensive industries.

Industrial consumption remains an important underlying driver for the metal. Silver is widely used in electronics and electrical applications and has gained further importance in renewable energy man-

ufacturing, including solar equipment. Jewellery and fabrication demand also contributes significantly to physical consumption in India.

The combination of investment interest, industrial requirements and firm international bullion prices is expected to remain important for domestic silver prices, although movements in global commodity markets, currency levels and changes in local premiums could influence prices across Indian markets.

Three Semiconductor Plants Begin Commercial Operations as India Expands Chip Ecosystem

Mumbai: India's semiconductor manufacturing programme has entered a commercial phase, with three facilities approved under the first India Semiconductor Mission already operational and exporting products. Several additional plants are expected to begin operations before the end of 2026.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology Secretary S. Krishnan said three major facilities had commenced commercial production under ISM 1.0. The first was inaugurated on February 28, followed by two more units. The development follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day address, in which he said three semiconductor units

had begun exports and indicated that five to eight new facilities could be established in the coming period.

The progress comes ahead of the fifth edition of SEMICON India, scheduled from September 17 to 19 at the Yashobhoomi-India International Convention and Expo Centre in New Delhi. Organised by the India Semiconductor Mission, MeitY and SEMI, the event will bring together more than 500 exhibitors, over 240 international companies and delegations from more than 40 countries.

India is also expanding the programme through Semicon 2.0, backed by a ₹1.27 lakh-crore outlay approved in July. Building



on 12 projects sanctioned under ISM 1.0, the next phase will focus on semiconductor manufacturing and packaging, equipment and raw materials, research and development, domestic chip-design intellectual property and specialised workforce training.

The expansion is aimed at building a more integrated domestic semicon-

ductor ecosystem covering manufacturing, advanced packaging, testing, equipment and chip design. The government is seeking to strengthen India's role in global semiconductor supply chains while meeting growing demand from electronics, automobiles, telecommunications, artificial intelligence and defence industries.

LIC Gets RBI Nod to Raise HDFC Bank Stake to 9.99%



Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India has approved Life Insurance Corporation of India's proposal to raise its stake in HDFC Bank to up to 9.99 percent of the lender's paid-up share capital or voting rights.

LIC held a 4.11 percent stake in HDFC Bank as of August 14, giving it scope to acquire an additional 5.88 percentage points. The approval, communicated by the RBI on August 19, does not require LIC to immediately increase its holding and remains subject to banking, foreign exchange and securities market regulations. HDFC Bank shares rose about 1 percent to ₹728 on the BSE, while LIC gained to ₹413.85 in Thursday's morning trade. Investor attention remained focused on the bank's latest financial performance and the potential implications of increased institutional ownership.

For the April-June quarter of 2026-27, HDFC Bank reported a 5 percent year-on-year rise in net profit to ₹19,060 crore from ₹18,155 crore a year earlier. Net interest income increased 7 percent to ₹33,534 crore from ₹31,438 crore in the corresponding period.

Melancholy made in Hungary is fuelling bestsellers across the globe-and widely misunderstood

Hungary: Alone visitor looks for a garden outside an empty monastery. A morose house-keeper won’t let anyone behind the door of her own home. A retired general living alone on a crumbling estate waits 40 years to confront the only friend he ever had. Melancholy, an affinity with oblivion without a concrete cause, suffuses the Hungarian fiction translated for foreign audiences over the past 30 years, from the tortured tales of Sándor Márai to the taut novels of Magda Szabó.

In his book *In Praise of Melancholy*, essayist László F Földényi tells the story of an Englishman who monomanically decides to teach himself Hungarian. For Földényi, the commitment to studying a language with 26 cases and with no connection to any other language, from a culture besieged by centuries of invasion, is to embrace melancholy, a seductive “capacity for despair”.

To read Hungarian literature as an outsider, the poet János Pilinszky claimed in 1972, is to acquire unique spiritual insights that come from centuries of rootlessness, alienation and strife.

Over the past year, international interest in Hungarian melancholy has surged again. In May, eight months after László Krasznahorkai won the Nobel prize in literature for his dys-

topian single-sentence monologues, Péter Nádas – known for his ruminative multigenerational novels – was elected a member of Germany’s Pour le Mérite order of science and art, one of the country’s highest honours. The Swiss writer Nello Biedermann’s Lázár, about fading Hungarian nobility, has been translated into at least 25 languages, while British-Canadian David Szalay’s *Flesh*, featuring the minimalistic narration of the lugubrious Hungarian man István, won 2025’s Booker prize.

The latter two books are fantasies of Hungarian melancholy relayed by outsiders: Szalay moved to Hungary for a decade to explore his father’s birthplace, while Biedermann modeled his novel’s genealogical mythology after his ancestors’ Hungarian family history – neither author writes in Hungarian.

Yet in Hungary itself, the same forces that have fuelled the melancholia of the literature enjoyed by foreigners – autocratic rule and isolation – have prevented more writers from gaining broader readership.

In the wake of strongman prime minister Viktor Orbán’s April loss to reformist challenger Péter Magyar, Hungary’s leading professionals in publishing, theatre, radio, museums and universities have released sweeping, mobilising reports on



the fallout of Orbán’s 16-year rule. On 27 May, six prominent book insiders published a joint polemical statement in the Hungarian literary magazine *Litera* claiming that since 2010 “many excellent Hungarian authors have lost the opportunity to publish abroad ... as foreign partners have lost trust in Hungarian state institutions”.

The joint statement specifically called out the dysfunction and

financial mismanagement of the Petőfi Cultural Agency, the state literary programme launched by Orbán’s government in 2019 that has been accused of cronyism and opaque selection processes. On 1 June, the director of the Petőfi Cultural Agency announced his resignation.

As the country emerges from Orbánism, more publishers and literary organisers are declaring that Hungary’s cultural institu-

tions cannot remain as melancholic as the literature itself.

Endre Balogh and Anna Menyhért, former presidents of the József Attila Circle literary association before its demise in 2019, describe “a generation socialised into literary public life in an environment of uncertainty, suspicion, and an us-them divide”. This summer has already seen the launch of a new governmental initiative to support liter-

ary translators and a new literary trade union. While the country rehabilitates its cultural institutions and opens more opportunities for writers and translators, foreign publishers and international readers may also need to revise what typically Hungarian literature entails.

Melancholy may remain the dominant theme, but it doesn’t have to be wholly bleak. In much of the greatest Hungarian literature of the 21st century, melancholy is a portal to unusual pleasure. Péter Esterhazy’s 2001 epic *Celestial Harmonies* is a catalogue of his once-aristocratic family’s ribald joy.

The narrator’s father (who appears in 371 different forms over different centuries) is a glutton for food and for books: “He got so fat, the chairs had to be fortified with iron cross bars ... But due to the above-mentioned obesity, his fingers turned into sausages.” In *Fateless*, ostensibly a novel of Holocaust remembrance, Imre Kertész intersperses the Jewish protagonist’s internment with flashes of bittersweet delight: the paradoxical appeal of an irresistible green-ribbed grey SS jumper, the sugar cubes distributed by a French doctor, the fun of hearing so many languages in one place. Kertész, himself a survivor of Auschwitz, lets his narrator say: “For me, the hap-

piness there will always be the most memorable experience.

”The prolific András Gerevich writes poems of uncontainable desire in an atmosphere that feels like perpetual summer (“a sweat bead / hitting the desk, your trousers / tightening”). Short story writer Edina Szvoren’s tale of a Hungarian couple’s summer escape to Scandinavia and the erotic hospitality of their innkeeper blends melancholy and ecstasy: the innkeeper’s thyme omelettes studded with “sweet-smelling, nearly liquefied slices of apple” are preludes to “lengthy, persistent, and yet decisive and greedy caresses”. Meanwhile, the couple’s young son has been infected by a deadly bird flu, and at home the Great Hungarian Plain is flooded. The story is from her collection *Moments from the Life of a Hedgehog and Other Stories*, appearing in English later this year.

The theorist of melancholy himself, Földényi, whose essays document experiences of unknowable euphoria, refuses to claim melancholy as a specifically Hungarian state of mind. His response to the question of whether he’d have written *In Praise of Melancholy* if he’d been “born in another country, raised in a different culture”: “My answer is univocal: I do not know.”

2025 Marks Record Level of Violence Against Aid Workers

Moscow: The past year has seen a record level of violence against aid workers, with 907 people killed, wounded or kidnapped, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a report published on Wednesday.

In particular, 350 aid workers were killed, 322

were wounded and 235 were kidnapped in 2025, the report showed.

The deadliest context for the third year in a row was Gaza, with 186 aid workers killed, followed by Sudan with 71, the report said.

Meanwhile, 82 aid workers have been killed, 97 injured and 39 kidnapped

worldwide since the beginning of 2026, according to the report.

August 19 marks World Humanitarian Day. The UN said that all countries are obligated to comply with international humanitarian law to ensure the protection and unimpeded operation of humanitarian missions.

Democratic socialist Angie Nixon clinches surprise primary win in Florida US Senate race

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 dis-

tressing, 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.

Bangladesh to Hold Presidential Election Today, First Multi-Candidate Contest in 35 Years

Dhaka: Members of Parliament will elect the country’s 23rd President today, with a contest for the presidential post taking place for the first time in 35 years. A total of 349 MPs will be eligible to vote at the Parliament House between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) candidate, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, will face Colonel (Retd.) Oli Ahmed, the candidate of an 11-party alliance led by Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami.

According to a report by the Dhaka Tribune, this is the first presidential election since October 8, 1991, in which more than one candidate is contesting the post. In the 1991 election, BNP candidate Abdur Rahman Biswas defeated Awami League nominee Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury. Since then, presidential elections under the parliamentary system have been uncontested.



The Parliament has 350 seats, comprising 300 general seats and 50 reserved seats for women. The Chattoogram-4 seat is currently vacant, leaving 349 MPs eligible to vote.

The BNP has a clear majority in Parliament, making Mirza Fakhrul the front-runner in the presidential race. Article 70 of the Constitution is also significant

in this context. Under the provision, an MP elected as a candidate of a political party loses membership of Parliament if they vote against the party that nominated them.

The voting arrangements have been made in the main chamber of Parliament. MPs will indicate their choice before casting their ballots into the ballot box

inside the chamber.

Voting will conclude at 5 p.m., following which the counting of votes will begin immediately. The Chief Election Commissioner will announce the result after the counting process is completed. The voting and announcement of the result will be broadcast live.

On the eve of the election, the BNP parliamentary par-

ty held a meeting at the Parliament House on Wednesday afternoon. The meeting was held at 4 p.m. on the ninth floor of the Parliament building and was chaired by Prime Minister and Leader of the House Tarique Rahman. Presidential candidate Mirza Fakhrul also attended the meeting. Afterwards, Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni said the election would mark an important turning point in the country’s democratic journey.

Since independence, Bangladesh’s system for electing its President has undergone several changes. The country’s first presidential election under a parliamentary system was held in 1974, when Parliament Speaker Mohammad Mohammadullah was elected President. In 1978, 1981 and 1986, Presidents were elected directly by the people. Ziaur Rahman won in 1978, Justice Abdus Sattar in 1981 and Hussain Muhammad Ershad in 1986.

A couple and their teenage daughter have died after getting into difficulty in the sea off the West Sussex coast

UK: A man, a woman and a teenage girl died after the incident in Shoreham-by-Sea, the chief superintendent of Sussex police, James Collis, said.

A younger girl from the same family was taken to hospital in a critical condition, Collis added. The next of kin have been informed.

Collis said it is understood that all four got into difficulty in the water after going for a swim.

He added: “Our thoughts are with the friends and family. I know this incident will have a profound effect on the community.”

Emergency services were called at about 2.40pm to reports of four people in difficulty in the sea. All four were brought to shore. The coastguard is not searching for anyone else.



A spokesperson for Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey Sussex said both of its helicopters and critical care team had been sent to the scene as part of the response, and Shoreham RNLI said its lifeboat had been called out at 3pm.

Tom Rutland, the MP for Shoreham, offered his condolences. “My thoughts are with the family and friends of those who have lost their lives, and I know

the whole community here in Shoreham will be hoping and praying for the recovery of the young girl receiving medical treatment in hospital,” he said.

A local said the water was “incredibly rough” and the winds were “incredibly strong”, Sky News reported.

Rutland thanked the emergency services, which he said “responded swiftly” and “worked tirelessly

in exceptionally difficult circumstances”.

Speaking at a press conference, Collis added: “At this point we believe all four entered the water from the land to swim and sadly got into difficulty. Our partners in His Majesty’s Coastguard have completed an extensive search of the water and we are not searching for anyone else.

“I would like to thank the public for their patience

and understanding during the emergency response.

The A259 Brighton Road was blocked in both directions from New Road to Kingston Lane because of the incident.

There have been a number of water-related deaths in recent months during the extreme heat.

On Saturday, a 12-year-old boy drowned in the River Lea, near the Hackney Marshes, in north-east London.

In April, a woman and her young child died after getting into difficulty in the water in west London. Both died at the scene in Elthorne Park, Ealing, the Metropolitan police said.

Anyone with information or with video footage relating to the incident in Shoreham-by-Sea should contact Sussex police.

During the monsoon season, one may wonder whether to opt for hot or cold showers



The monsoon can indeed be quite suffocating. One moment, a heavy rain can cause the temperature to plummet, leaving you feeling chilly; the next, you are drenched in sweat from the humid air. This prompts a common question: should you choose a hot or cold shower during the rainy season?

Dr Ganesh Viswanathan, a consultant in the Department of Internal Medicine at KIMSHEALTH, Thiruvananthapuram, helped to resolve the dilemma over bathing temperature during the rainy season by outlining the pros and cons.

While both hot and cold showers have their benefits, they also come with alarming disadvantages that may outweigh them. Here are some listed by the physician: Pros and cons of a hot shower

Pros: Feels comforting after getting drenched in the rain. May help wash away accumulated sweat, oil, and dirt. Cons: Can strip the skin of its natural oils. Scalding water may weaken the skin barrier, causing dryness, redness, and irritation.

May aggravate skin conditions such as eczema. Can open hair cuticles, leading to the feared, unmanageable monsoon frizz and increased hair fall. Pros and cons of cold shower

Pros: Feels refreshing during hot and humid weather. May temporarily boost circulation. Cons: Temperatures fluctuate quickly during the monsoon. Taking a sudden cold shower can lower the core body temperature quickly, which is likely to put temporary stress on the immune system. May not remove accumulated oil, sweat, and dirt as effectively. Residue left on the skin may lead to acne or fungal infections during humid weather.

What is the solution? The ideal monsoon shower temperature actually is somewhere between the two extremes. Dr Viswanathan recommended choosing lukewarm water, referring to it as the ‘Goldilocks’ option, as it is not too hot or too cold.

“‘Goldilocks’ water – lukewarm water is definitely the answer. The ‘Goldilocks’ water is lukewarm because it is neither too hot nor too cold. It is warm enough to effectively dissolve stubborn dirt, sweat, and bacteria, but cool enough to leave the natural body moisture barrier intact.”

Lukewarm water keeps your skin barrier safe as it is not too hot, preventing the risk of stripping away the protective oils. It also adequately cleans your skin. During the humid monsoon, it is important that you choose a balanced temperature in order to prevent dryness and irritation, along with keeping the skin clean and comfortable.



Which serum is most effective for addressing pigmentation



Pigmentation is one of the most persistent skincare challenges, and despite your desire for it to disappear, it tends to linger. Whether it involves dark spots resulting from acne, an uneven skin tone due to sun exposure, or patches linked to melasma, merely incorporating a moisturiser may not suffice. Therefore, it is essential to utilize a face serum specifically designed to address pigmentation concerns; since face serums penetrate more deeply, they are more effective in aiding the fading of pigmentation.

Dermatologist Dr Vaishnavi Verma, Yatharth Super Speciality Hospital, tells HT Shop Now, “There is no single ‘best’ serum for pigmentation that works equally well for everyone. The right choice depends on the type of pigmentation, skin type and the underlying cause. Serums containing ingredients such as vitamin C, niacinamide and azelaic acid can be useful for common concerns like dark spots and post-acne pigmentation”.

She further clarifies that using a serum alone is not enough. Daily application of a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher is essential because UV exposure can worsen pigmentation. For melasma, a tinted sunscreen containing iron oxides may provide additional protection against visible light. If pigmentation is persistent, worsening or not responding to skincare products, it is advisable to consult a dermatologist. In some cases, pigmentation may require a combination of prescription treatments and procedures rather than relying solely on a serum.”

Start with vitamin C

Vitamin C is one of the most popular ingredients to look for in a brightening serum, and for good reason. It is an antioxidant that helps protect skin from environmental stressors while supporting a more even-looking complexion.

However, the form and stability of vitamin C matter, and stronger formulas can sometimes feel irritating on sensitive skin. It is also important not to expect overnight results. Vitamin C is best viewed as a consistent part of a broader pigmentation routine rather than a quick fix. Look for niacinamide

Niacinamide is another ingredient that helps with anti-pigmentation, particularly if you want something that feels relatively easy to incorporate into your routine. Dermatologist consensus research has identified niacinamide among ingredients recommended for dark spots. Besides helping improve the appearance of

uneven pigmentation, niacinamide can support the skin barrier. This is useful because aggressive attempts to fade pigmentation can sometimes leave the skin irritated, and irritation itself may contribute to more dark marks, particularly in deeper skin tones. Consider azelaic acid

If pigmentation is accompanied by acne or post-acne marks, azelaic acid is an ingredient worth considering. It helps target pigmentation and has anti-inflammatory properties, making it particularly useful for dark marks that remain after breakouts. DermNet notes that azelaic acid can help reduce pigmentation and is useful for post-inflammatory pigmentation and melasma. This makes an azelaic acid serum particularly interesting if you are dealing with both blemishes and uneven tone rather than pigmentation alone. Try kojic acid for stubborn-looking dark spots

Kojic acid is another familiar name in pigmentation-focused skincare. It works by interfering with melanin production and is commonly used in products designed to brighten uneven skin tone. Dermatology references include kojic acid among topical options for pigmentation and melasma.

If I am choosing a serum containing kojic acid, I would still pay attention to the rest of the formulation and avoid layering too many potentially irritating actives at once.

Don’t overlook retinoids

Retinoids, including retinol, can also be useful for pigmentation. They encourage skin cell turnover and can help improve uneven tone and post-inflammatory pigmentation. Topical retinoids are useful for post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, particularly when acne is also involved. However, retinoids need a little more care. Starting slowly is important because irritation can make pigmentation worse, especially in skin of colour. Retinoids are also not recommended during pregnancy. What about tranexamic acid?

Tranexamic acid has become increasingly popular in pigmentation serums, particularly those targeting stubborn uneven tone and melasma. It is among the topical ingredients used for melasma and pigmentation, although the strength of evidence and suitability can vary depending on the condition. You can consider it when choosing a targeted pigmentation serum, especially if my main concern is persistent discolouration rather than general dullness. Sunscreen is non-negotiable

Even the best anti-pigmentation serum can struggle if I skip sunscreen. Sun exposure can worsen existing dark spots, so daily broad-spectrum SPF 30 or higher is an essential part of any pigmentation routine. The AAD also recommends tinted sunscreen containing iron oxides because visible light can contribute to dark spots. Your ideal routine should therefore be simple: a targeted serum in the morning or evening, a gentle moisturiser and daily sunscreen.

After using five vanilla-infused body lotions on my sensitive skin, I find myself fully committed to this choice

I am an enthusiast of fragrances, and by this, I refer not only to perfumes or mists but also to scented lotions. My fondness for vanilla scents has always been strong; however, locating a body lotion that has a delightful aroma without irritating my sensitive skin presents a challenge. Given my skin’s sensitivity, I have consistently sought a quality lotion that not only provides nourishment but also ensures I smell wonderful all day long.

I wanted something that could moisturise my skin, leave it soft and smooth, and give me that warm, comforting vanilla scent without feeling too heavy. So, I tried five vanilla body lotions, paying attention to their texture, hydration, fragrance and how comfortable they felt on my skin.

A quick note for sensitive skin: Fragrance can be a potential irritant even when a product feels gentle. My experience may not be the same as yours, so I would recommend patch-testing any fragranced body lotion before applying it all over.

That’s when I tried my hand at vanilla-infused scented lotions. And after trying these 5, I think I’m

not going back to my old ones.

Why choose a vanilla-scented body lotion?

For me, vanilla is one of the easiest fragrance notes to wear. It feels warm, sweet and comforting without being as sharp as some fruity or floral fragrances. A vanilla body lotion can also double as a subtle fragrance, especially when layered with a vanilla perfume or body mist. However, I don’t choose a lotion just because it smells good. I look for moisturising ingredients such as glycerin, cocoa butter, shea butter and nourishing plant oils that can help keep my skin soft and reduce that tight, dry feeling.

1. Plum BodyLovin’ Vanilla Caramello Body Lotion | Cocoa Butter & Vitamin B5 for Deep Moisturization | Non-Greasy: This was easily one of the most indulgent lotions in my trial. The fragrance combines vanilla with salted caramel, Turkish pistachio, jasmine and sandalwood, so it smells more like a warm dessert than a straightforward vanilla lotion. The formula contains glycerin, sunflower seed oil, cocoa butter, dimethicone and panthenol

(vitamin B5). Glycerin helps attract moisture to the skin, while cocoa butter and sunflower oil help soften and nourish it.

What I liked: It spread easily, absorbed without a very greasy finish and left my skin feeling soft. The caramel-vanilla fragrance was the biggest attraction for me.

What could be improved: The fragrance may feel strong if you prefer very subtle scents.

2. mCaffeine Sweet Escape Perfume Body Lotion 300ml| Niacinamide, Cocoa & Shea Butter | Deep Moisturization for Women & Men: This one appealed to me because it combines body moisturisation with a perfume-like fragrance. Its scent includes sweet vanilla orchid along with floral and woody notes. The formula features niacinamide, cocoa butter, shea butter and caffeine. Niacinamide supports the skin barrier and can help improve the appearance of uneven tone, while cocoa butter and shea butter provide rich moisturisation.

What I liked: I loved the lightweight texture and the fact that my skin didn’t feel sticky after application. It was particularly nice

when I wanted moisturised skin with a noticeable fragrance.

What could be improved: Because it is perfume-infused, I would be cautious with it on particularly reactive areas of my skin.

3. Nykaa Wanderlust Swiss Vanilla Body Lotion, Long-Lasting Vanilla & Cedarwood Fragrance, Intense Hydration, Vegan, Paraben-Free: If I had to pick a vanilla lotion for its fragrance alone, this would be high on my list. It combines creamy vanilla and bergamot with white orchid and almond milk, followed by cedarwood, musk and sandalwood. The formula uses glycerin for moisturising support and is designed to soften rough and dry areas while absorbing without a sticky feel.

What I liked: The fragrance felt sophisticated rather than overly sweet. I particularly enjoyed using it before going out because it left a soft scent on my skin.

What could be improved: Despite its 24-hour hydration positioning, I found that people with very dry skin may still need reapplication. I would choose a richer body cream during particularly dry weather.

4. Wildflower Naturals Body Lotion With Vanilla & Cocoa Butter: This was the more straightforward, nourishing option in my trial. The key ingredients include almond oil, olive oil, cocoa butter and tocopherol (vitamin E). Almond and olive oils help condition and soften the skin, while cocoa butter provides emollient moisturisation. Vitamin E is also valued for its antioxidant properties.

What I liked: I enjoyed its earthy vanilla fragrance because it wasn’t overwhelmingly sweet. The formula felt nourishing without making my skin feel excessively coated.

What could be improved: If you prefer a strong, long-lasting vanilla perfume experience, this may feel too subtle. I would also like more detailed ingredient information to make it easier for people with very sensitive skin to assess the formula.

5. Aroma Magic Cocoa Butter & Vanilla Body Cream | Nourishes, Enhances Skin Elasticity & prevents stretch marks: This is technically a body cream rather than a lightweight lotion, and I noticed the difference immediately.



Its formula includes cocoa butter, coconut oil, wheat germ oil, vegetable glycerine, calendula extract, vitamin E-rich extract, chamomile oil and vanilla fragrance. The brand describes it as a hypoallergenic formula designed to nourish the skin and improve suppleness.

What I liked: This was my pick when my skin needed extra nourishment. The richer texture worked particularly well after a shower when my skin felt dry.

What could be improved: I found it better suited to dry-weather use than hot, humid days. Also, despite its gentle positioning, it contains fragrance and essential oils, so I would definitely patch-test it before using it extensively on sensitive skin.

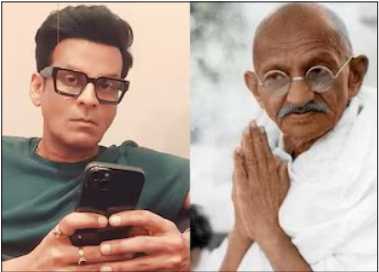
What I finally feel

After trying all five, I realised that choosing a vanilla body lotion is about more than finding the nicest fragrance. Plum BodyLovin’ Vanilla Caramello stood out for its dessert-like scent and comfortable texture; mCaffeine Sweet Escape worked well

when I wanted moisturisation plus fragrance, while Nykaa Wanderlust Swiss Vanilla offered the most sophisticated vanilla experience. WILDFLOWER NATURALS appealed to me for its nourishing plant oils, and Aroma Magic Cocoa Butter & Vanilla was my choice when my skin needed richer moisturisation. For my sensitive skin, though, fragrance is always something I consider carefully. A patch test is worth the extra few minutes, especially when trying a new fragranced body lotion.

ENTERTAINMENT

Manoj Bajpayee cast as Mahatma Gandhi in Sudhir Mishra’s Independence film



Mumbai : Manoj Bajpayee is set to play Mahatma Gandhi for the first time in his career in Sudhir Mishra’s next feature film. The yet-to-be-titled project will focus on a specific 21-day period around India’s Independence, with Mishra choosing to examine Gandhi’s decisions at a time when the country was undergoing one of its most consequential transitions.

The film also marks Mishra’s return to the big screen. Rather than attempting a conventional account of Gandhi’s life, the filmmaker is narrowing the story down to a brief but significant period and examining the man

behind the historical figure. Speaking about the project, Mishra said, as quoted by IANS, “This new film focuses on an important yet lesser-known chapter of history, the 21 days in the life of Mahatma Gandhi during India’s independence.”

The filmmaker said the story will look beyond events that are already widely documented and focus instead on Gandhi’s personal journey during those days.India was moving towards freedom and Delhi was emerging as the centre of political power. Gandhi, however, made a different choice.“At a time when the nation was stepping into freedom, and Delhi was becoming the center of power, Gandhi made an unexpected choice: he chose to walk away,” Mishra said.

The director stressed that he does not see that decision as Gandhi withdrawing from the events unfolding around him.“But by walking away, he did not retreat. He reinvented himself,” he added. Mishra’s film intends to exam-

ine what was happening beneath the political developments of the period rather than simply recreating familiar historical events.“While history books record the surface events of that era, this story explores what lay beneath that famous choice and will depict the personal journey of a leader redefining his path,” the filmmaker said.

That approach also makes the project different from a sprawling biopic covering Gandhi’s life from his early years to Independence. Instead, the film will use those 21 days to explore his state of mind, choices and changing role while a newly independent country was taking shape. The project will mark a career first for Manoj Bajpayee, who has never previously portrayed Mahatma Gandhi on screen.

The untitled film is being produced by Anubhav Sinha, the filmmaker behind Mulk, Article 15 and Thappad. Further details about the supporting cast, filming schedule and theatrical release date are yet to be announced.

Ayan Mukerji eyes Deepika Padukone for key role in 'Brahmastra 2'

Mumbai : Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt’s Brahmastra was released in 2022, and ever since, fans have been awaiting an update on the next film in Ayan Mukerji’s Astraverse. It looks like the wait is finally over.

As per Pinkvilla sources, Ranbir Kapoor will start filming for Brahmastra Part 2 soon after finishing filming for Part 2 of Nitesh Tiwari’s Ramayana, by January 2027. A source shared, “Ranbir is super excited to embark on this journey again. In a massive dual-role challenge, RK will portray both Dev and Shiva in the sequel.” The even bigger update is that with the ensemble cast of the film returning for another film in the franchise, Ayan is keen on bringing Deepika Padukone on board and is



currently discussing with her about taking up the role of Amruta.

The source shared, “Ayan and the core team are confident about bringing Deepika on board, recognising that the role of Amruta requires an actor with immense gravitas. While discussions are on, official confirmations will depend on overall timeline alignments.”

In April 2023, Ayan

Mukerji issued a statement and revealed the release dates of Brahmastra Part Two: Dev and Brahmastra Part Three. He announced that the second part of his film will be released in December 2026, whereas the third and final part will hit theatres a year later, i.e., in 2027, but things couldn’t go as planned.The filmmaker also assured that Brahmastra 2 and 3 will be “bigger” than the first part and added that he will be making the two films together. “After absorbing all the love and feedback on Part One... I have been focused on creating the vision for Part Two and Part Three, which I now know will be bigger and more ambitious than Part One!” a part of his statement read.

The truth behind Akshay Kumar’s unpaid cameo in 'dil toh pagal hai'

Mumbai : Dil Toh Pagal Hai remains one of Yash Chopra’s most iconic films. The movie starred Shah Rukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit and Karisma Kapoor in lead roles, and even Akshay Kumar had a cameo. He played Madhuri Dixit’s childhood best friend, who was in love with her in the film. However, it is widely believed that despite the

film’s success, Akshay Kumar was never paid for his cameo.

If reports are to be believed, Yash Chopra wanted to cast Jackie Shroff to play the role but later finalised Akshay Kumar to give the character a more youthful look. Reportedly, when Kumar approached the makers for payment after the release, Chopra

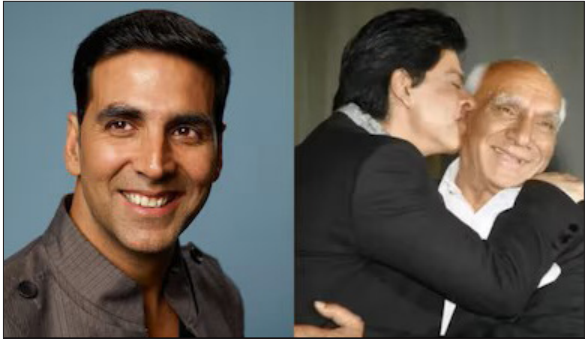
allegedly said that the actor should feel grateful to be part of the film. Akshay was reportedly miffed and decided not to work with Yash Raj Films again for 11 years; they reunited for Tashan. Reportedly, the makers also wanted Kumar to cut his hair short. However, during this time, the actor was working in the Khiladi series, and thus re-

fused to adhere to this request.

While much has been reported about this former feud, neither Kumar nor the Chopras have ever publicly confirmed it. However, in 2014, when entrepreneur Ghazal Alagh revealed to Kumar how some clients had cheated her, he spoke to her about some producers who had not paid his dues.“This is

something we have in common. Main uske baad main usse baat hi nahin karta, chup ho jaata hoon apna side mein nikal jaata hoon... ek do producers ki payment nahin aati hain, and that is cheating only... (I don’t talk to that person who cheats me. I go quiet... it has happened to me. A few producers haven’t cleared my dues),” he told the

entrepreneur, without mentioning any names.Before Dil To Pagal Hai, Akshay Kumar had worked in Chopra-backed Yeh Dillagi, where he was the lead actor and shared the screen with Saif Ali Khan and Kajol. Post Dil To Pagal Hai, Kumar worked in Yash Raj Films’ Tashan, which also starred Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor.



Aditi Shankar backs Anupama Parameswaran amid relationship controversy

Chennai : Aditi Shankar has voiced her support for Anupama Parameswaran following the latter’s recent candid revelations about a difficult relationship. Speaking during the promotions of Once More, Aditi said she had watched Anupama’s interview and felt the actor deserved appreciation for speaking honestly about a deeply personal experience.

Anupama recently opened up about a past relationship that she described as an experience of narcissistic abuse. She spoke about the emotional and physical impact it had on her and how it took time for her to understand that what she was experiencing was abuse. Her comments have since led to considerable discussion online, with reactions ranging from support to speculation about the identity of the person she was referring to.

Aditi, however, said she did not view Anupama’s interview through the lens of speculation. Instead, she saw it as an individual



sharing something she had personally endured.“I want to say hats off to her for having the courage to share her own story. There was honesty in what she said,” Aditi said in an interview with Galatta Plus.

Aditi also addressed the reactions to Anupama’s comments, stressing that she did not believe the actor’s intention was to target or demean anyone. For her, the more significant aspect of the conversation was the possibility that Anupama’s experience could resonate

with people who may be facing similar situations.

She pointed out that people can sometimes find themselves in unhealthy relationships without immediately understanding what is happening to them. The difficulty, she suggested, lies in recognising certain patterns while being emotionally invested in a relationship.“The experience she shared can create awareness among many people,” Aditi said, adding that she believed Anupama’s intention was not to put anyone

down.

Anupama has previously spoken about how difficult it was to recognise the nature of her own relationship. She described experiencing dramatic shifts in her former partner’s behaviour and said she eventually came to understand that the situation she was in amounted to narcissistic abuse. She has also spoken about how hearing another actor discuss a similar experience helped her recognise what she herself had been going through. Aditi’s comments come at a time when Anupama’s revelations have become the subject of intense online discussion. While the actor has not identified the person involved, speculation around her past relationship has circulated on social media. Aditi’s response, instead, focuses on the broader conversation around emotional abuse and the value of being able to speak about such experiences without necessarily turning them into a personal accusation.

Kim Kardashian and Lewis Hamilton go public with beach getaway photos

Los Angeles : Kim Kardashian is clearly showing off her blossoming romance with Formula 1 superstar Lewis Hamilton, offering a glimpse into their beach getaway. The SKIMS founder shared a carousel of pictures from their vacation on Instagram along with the caption, "Somewhere over the rainbow."

The couple were joined in by their family, with Kardashian's kids, Saint, Chicago and Psalm, tagging along for the trip. Khloe Kardashian and her kids, True and Tatum, also hit the waves with the group. For Hamilton, his niece Willow, nephew Kaiden, and younger brother Nicholas Hamilton were present. Besides taking fans inside their beach adventures, Kim Kardashian also dropped loved-up pictures with Hamilton. One of them shows the couple enjoying a walk on the beach, while another features them in an adorable mirror selfie. Lewis Hamilton himself shared several pictures from the vacation.

Since first being spotted together in Paris earlier this year, Kim Kardashian and Lewis Hamilton have been seen supporting each other publicly. While Hamilton visited Kardashian's 'All's Fair' sets, the reality star also attended the F1 Monaco Grand Prix in June. Addressing the



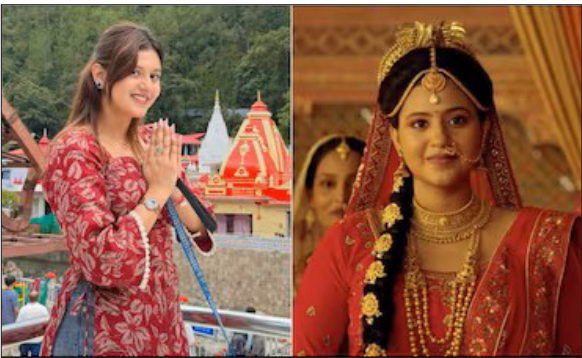
media at the Grand Prix, the Ferrari star spoke about his relationship with Kardashian. "It's amazing to have her come this weekend and have the support," he said, as quoted by People. In April this year, Hamilton posted this reel on his Instagram handle, confirming his relationship with Kim. The two were seen on a high-speed drive in the video, which showed him whipping around in his Ferrari F40 at the Daikoku Parking Area in Tokyo, Japan, as per PEOPLE.

"HERE WE GO AGAIN TOKYO DRIFT VOL. III," Hamilton wrote in the caption of the Reel, which was set to the song "Victory Lap" by Skepta, Plaqueboy Max and Fred Again. At the end of the video, Kardashian can be seen in the passenger seat wearing a white turtleneck top. When the camera approached her in the car, the mother of four said, "That's insane," after her joyride with Hamilton. (ANI) TAGS Kim kardashian Lewis hamilton Formula 1 Kardashian kids Monaco grand prix Celebrity couple.

Anjali Arora visits Kainchi Dham to seek blessings amid backlash over Sita role

Mumbai : Actress and content creator Anjali Arora, who is quite active on social media, has shared a glimpse of her visit to Kainchi Dham in Uttarakhand amid facing backlash for playing Goddess Sita in Mahakavya Shri Ramayan Katha – Shri Ram Ki. She posted pictures from the popular spiritual destination on Instagram, where she sought the blessings of Neem Karoli Baba. Arora, who shot to fame with the viral ‘Kacha Badam’ trend and later appeared on Lock Upp, is making her big-screen debut as Sita in the upcoming film. Her casting has received mixed reactions on social media since the film’s teaser was released.

A while ago, Anjali took to her Instagram handle and shared pictures from her visit. Along with the



photos, she wrote, “Aaj Kainchi Dham mein Neem Karoli Baba ke darshan karke Baba ka aashirwaad liya. Baba ki kripa sadaiv bani rahe. Jai Shree Ram (Today at Kainchi Dham, I visited Neem Karoli Baba and received his blessings. May Baba’s grace always remain. Hail Lord Ram).”

Meanwhile, the film’s teaser dropped on Tuesday, August 18, and quickly became a talking point on social media. While

some viewers expressed curiosity about seeing Anjali take on the role of Sita, others were far less convinced by the casting choice. Some users questioned why she was chosen for the role and compared her new character with the image she has built through social media. One user wrote, “Hei bhagwan, Ghor kalyug. This Anjali arora playing sita ji role in #ramayana !!! And I don’t need to tell you who she is.

Now where is the outrage and people who hating #ranbir Kapoor and #saipal-lavi so much. Yei Kalyug nhi tho or kya hai.” Another user wrote, “Kaha Mata Sitaji Aur Kaha Badam wali girl Anjali Arora I do not wish to accept Anjali Arora in the form of Mother Sita.”

Some viewers also drew comparisons with Adipurush, while criticism extended beyond the casting to the film’s VFX and overall visual presentation. Directed by Abhishek Singh, Mahakavya Shri Ramayan Katha – Shri Ram Ki stars Anjali Arora as Goddess Sita and Dev Sharma as Lord Ram. Shot in Hindi and Chhattisgarhi, the film explores the central chapters of the Ramayana. The film is scheduled to hit cinemas on September 25.

Amitabh Bachchan’s witty reply to Sunidhi Chauhan’s ‘first crush’ confession

Mumbai : Sunidhi Chauhan is set to appear on Kaun Banega Crorepati 18, where she had a rather special confession to make to host Amitabh Bachchan. In a new promo, the singer reveals that the veteran actor was her “first crush”, leaving the senior actor amused. He jokingly tells her that she was only revealing it now and had never told him back then.

The new promo of KBC 18, shared on SonyLIV’s official Instagram handle, features Sunidhi Chauhan talking about her admiration for Amitabh Bachchan. She tells the veteran actor that she has seen him in several avatars and reveals that he was her “first crush,” leaving him amused. She can be heard saying, “We have seen you in so many different avatars. You are Santa Claus to me. You were my first crush.” To this, Big B replied, “Aapko humse crush tha, yeh ab bata rahi hain aap, tab nahi bataaya (You’re telling me now that you had a crush on me; you didn’t tell me back then).” Sunidhi then showcased her singing prowess on the hot seat, turning the KBC set



into a mini concert. She performed ‘Yeh Mera Dil’ from the 2006 Don, a song that was originally featured in Amitabh Bachchan’s 1978 film Don and famously sung by Asha Bhosle. Big B appeared visibly impressed by Sunidhi’s rendition and applauded enthusiastically as she performed the iconic number.

Soon after the promo was shared, netizens were seen reacting to it. One user commented, “Queen is here...

can’t wait for the full episode.” Another user wrote, “Two legends admiring each other.” A third user wrote, “Wow, can’t wait for this episode.” Others were seen dropping red heart and fire emojis. Meanwhile, Kaun Banega Crorepati Season 18 premiered on August 10 at 9 pm on Sony Entertainment Television and SonyLIV. Hosted by Amitabh Bachchan, the quiz show airs from Monday to Friday.

Players from India and Pakistan do not shake hands prior to the game, but what transpired after full time wins hearts



Amstelveen: In their last Pool D match of the FIH Hockey World Cup in Amstelveen, Netherlands on Wednesday, the Indian men’s hockey team decisively defeated their bitter rivals, Pakistan, 5-3. Before the game began, the players gave each other high fives despite the fierce competition on the field. The fight in Amstelveen demon-

strated a contemporary act of sportsmanship, despite the fact that politics frequently threatens to dominate India-Pakistan interactions. After their respective national anthems were played, the two sets of players lined up and exchanged quick high-fives to show mutual respect, skipping the traditional pre-match handshakes. In the aftermath of

Operation Sindoor, the India and Pakistan cricket teams have refrained from shaking hands with each other. However, hockey does not appear to be following cricket’s path, at least for now. Even during the Sultan of Johor Cup last year, the two teams shook hands after their match. After full-time in Amstelveen, the India and Pakistan players did shake hands, having skipped the customary gesture before the start of the match. As far as the action on the field is concerned, skipper Harmanpreet Singh and striker Abhishek scored a brace each as India extended their decade-long unbeaten run over arch-rivals Pakistan with a 5-3 win. The defeat ended Pakistan’s campaign in the tournament. Playing their first World Cup in eight years, Pakistan fought back after conceding three goals but India held their nerve to seal a memorable win in front of a packed 10,000-capacity Wagener Stadium. Captain Harmanpreet (5th, 21st) scored twice from penalty corners, while Abhishek (11th, 24th) struck two fine field goals and Hardik Singh (34th) converted a penalty stroke for India. Hanan Shahid (22nd, 46th) scored twice for Pakistan, with Sufyan Khan (24th) adding the other from a penalty corner.

Technology in Cricket for the FIFA World Cup India's Next Task Prepared to Write History



New Delhi: According to reports, India’s bilateral Twenty20 International series against Afghanistan in September would employ top-notch technology, akin to that utilized at the recent FIFA World Cup 2026 in the USA, Mexico, and Canada. ITW Universe, the company that owns the series’ production rights, is raising the bar. Jamie Oakford, who has directed every FIFA World Cup since the 2002 edition and oversaw the 2014 World Cup final between Germany and Argentina, will helm the series. As per Cricbuzz, AI-stabilised POV cameras, volumetric free-view-point technology, advanced Spidercam, ultra-motion and cine-style storytelling are some of the new innovations and features that will be introduced in the broadcast production during the India-Afghanistan series. Quidditch Innovation Labs’ Spatio system will also be used during the series. This system creates broadcast-grade augmented reality overlaid on a stabilised drone feed, combined with real-time optical player tracking. Unique field-placement graphics, strategy visualisation and story-telling angles will be made possible by this system. “This is the first time a bilateral cricket series will be produced to full FIFA World Cup host-broadcast standards. The same individuals who directed the FIFA World Cup Final and multiple UEFA Champions League Finals will lead the gallery,” said ITW Universe in a statement. “We endorse his philosophy, which is to give the viewer the best seat in the house,” said Bhairav Shanthi, founder of the company. India and Afghanistan will play a three-match Twenty20 International series in the middle of September. The dates of the three games are September 13, 15, and 17. Afghanistan is the series’ official host, and all three games will take place in Delhi’s Arun Jaitley Stadium. Earlier this year, India and Afghanistan faced battle in three ODIs and a single Test.

“More Pressing Than Ever”: India Demands Reform of UN Security Council Procedures

New Delhi, Aug 20: India has demanded a thorough reform of the UN Security Council, claiming that in order to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century and rebuild trust in the UN’s main security body, the council’s operations, membership structure, and decision-making procedures must be changed. Ambassador Yojna Patel, Charge d’Affaires at India’s Permanent Mission to the UN, addressed the Security Council’s annual open debate on working methods and stated that the Council’s legitimacy and credibility were coming under increasing scrutiny due to its incapacity to effectively intervene in conflicts that have resulted in widespread human suffering. Patel said the need for reform was “more pronounced and pressing than ever before,” pointing to the dramatic transformation of the international system since the Council was established in 1945. UN membership has increased roughly fourfold since then, she noted, arguing that the outcome of a conflict eight decades ago should not continue to determine the Council’s composition and functioning indefinitely. India reiterated its longstanding demand for expansion of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories, with greater representation for the Global South.



Patel said such reforms could be achieved through text-based negotiations backed by clear milestones and timelines. On working methods, India stressed that procedural reforms could not be separated from the wider debate over Security Council reform. Issues including membership categories, regional representation and the veto, it said, needed to be addressed as part of a comprehensive package rather than in isolation. India also questioned the continued provisional status of the Council’s Rules of Procedure more than 80 years after the UN’s creation. Patel argued that the provisional framework should not be treated as an obstacle to expanding membership and itself required updating. A major focus of India’s intervention was the role of elected, non-permanent council members. Patel said all council members should have equal access

to relevant documents, including historical records, rather than allowing such access to remain concentrated among a select group. India also called for greater participation by the wider UN membership in key decisions, including the selection of the secretary-general. On peacekeeping, Patel said troop- and police-contributing countries should have a stronger role in decisions affecting mandates and resources because they are direct stakeholders in UN operations. New Delhi further urged the Council to resolve delays in appointing chairs of its subsidiary bodies. India called for the current year’s appointments to be finalised urgently and proposed amendments to Note 507 establishing a definitive deadline for future appointments.

Patel also pressed for greater transparency in the council’s listing and delis-

ting procedures, warning against decisions driven by narrow political interests. She said terrorist designations and removals should be based on objective criteria and supporting documentation. India concluded by calling for more cooperation between the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, characterizing the Assembly as the UN’s most democratic and global body. It maintained that procedures like the General Assembly’s review of the Council’s annual report need to be real channels for institutional accountability rather than merely formal exercises. Working-method reforms were positioned by India’s intervention as part of a larger effort to change the Security Council itself, with more participation, representation, and transparency being seen as crucial to improving the body’s efficacy and credibility.

New Delhi Removes Encroachments Outside the Pak High Commission in a Tit-For-Tat Move

New Delhi, Aug 20: According to officials on Thursday, a portion of buildings outside the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi were razed after it was determined that they were outside the mission’s authorized boundaries. The agencies in question used a JCB machine to demolish the barriers and structures placed along the route outside the compound, including queue-management equipment close to the visa portion. Traffic bollards and barriers that once surrounded the diplomatic enclave have been removed by authorities as part of the dismantling of the exterior security cordon outside the Pakistan High Commission. The action comes exactly three days after Pakistani authorities reportedly removed protective security barricades stationed outside the Indian High Commission in Islamabad. Visuals from the Pakistan High Commission showed that the demolition left a trail of rubble outside the mission, with broken metal railings and gates, twisted metal frames and chunks of concrete strewn across the paved area. Additionally, visuals from the site showed sections of the outer

structures completely pulled down, including corrugated roofing and white metal fencing. The facade around the service windows appeared damaged, with portions of plaster and masonry broken away. Broken fencing and construction material were also seen lying around the counters. The main entrance of the Pakistan High Commission, with its white walls, domed features and large metal gates bearing the Pakistani emblem, remained intact. Barbed-wire fencing was visible along portions of the compound’s perimeter. On Wednesday, Pakistan raised an issue with the US over the Indian ambassador’s remarks on Kashmir. During a visit to Srinagar, Sergio Gor, the US ambassador to India, had called Jammu and Kashmir “an important part of India” and also praised the security situation in the Valley. The comments rattled Pakistan, which summoned US Charge d’Affaires Natalie Baker in Islamabad to lodge a protest. There is no official word yet on whether the action at the Pakistan High Commission was linked to Islamabad’s reaction to Gor’s comments.

The BJP refers to the Congress as a “Muslim League” while the Congress is firm on 2-Stanza Vande Mataram



New Delhi, Aug 20: Despite the government’s attempt to sing the whole National Song Vande Mataram at official ceremonies across the nation, the Congress has come under fire for sticking to only the first two stanzas of the song. Today, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) made the decision to adhere to its 1937 resolution, which stated that party gatherings should only feature the first two stanzas. The opposition party has become a “new Muslim League,” according to the BJP, which had previously accused the Congress of defaming the national anthem. According to

Party Leaders’ Silence on the “Purification” Row: “Hurt” Mallikarjun Kharge

New Delhi, Aug 20: At the party’s working committee meeting in the capital on Wednesday, a “hurt” Mallikarjun Kharge complained to top Congress leaders. According to sources who spoke to the Congress president informed the party officials in attendance that he was “hurt” because many CWC members did not publicly back him by denouncing the “purification” issue. Kharge was alluding to the event in Haldwani, Uttarakhand, when some Hindutva groups “purified” the location after his gathering. Although Kharge did not specifically identify any leaders, reports claim that his body language indicated that he was displeased with some top leaders’ lack of support on the matter. Mallikarjun Kharge addressed the “Vijay Shankhnaad” rally at Haldwani’s Ramlila Maidan on August 8. Two days later, on August 10, a right-wing group, ‘Shri Ram Sena’, performed a ‘shuddhikaran’ (purification) havan at the rally venue. Briefing the media later on the deliberations in the CWC, Venugopal spoke about the ‘purification’ row,



arguing that the incident was “unacceptable” and “condemnable” and alleged that it reflected the mindset of the BJP. The Congress had alleged that those who performed the “purification” ritual had links to the BJP and RSS, claiming that it exposed their “anti-Dalit mindset”. The BJP, on the other hand, had distanced itself from the act of the right-wing organisation and had condemned the “purification ritual”. The Congress chief also raised the issue in Parliament on Thursday, the last day of the Monsoon Session. “I don’t want to make this a political matter. I have never begged in public or disclosed to any-

body that I am Dalit. Please protect me. I am strong enough to fight, and I do. However, I felt the pain of untouchability and was embarrassed by the stage’s cleansing at Haldwani. He stated in Parliament, “I demand that a case be filed under the Untouchability Act against those who purified the stage in Haldwani, and that they be arrested and imprisoned.” Union Minister JP Nadda responded to Kharge in the Rajya Sabha by saying that the event was regrettable and making it clear that BJP members were not participating. He also promised that an investigation will be carried out.

R Praggnanandhaa defeats Maxime Vachier-Lagrave to take a shared lead in the Sinquefeld Cup

Luis: Following the conclusion of the eighth and last round of the Sinquefeld Cup at St. Louis, USA, Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa defeated Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave to take the lead alongside American Wesley So. With the win, Praggnanandhaa now has five points out of eight, guaranteeing the Indian a spot in the Grand Final, which is set for later this year.

Javokhir Sindarov won his third straight game to get within striking distance of the leaders on 4.5 points on a day when Wesley and fellow countryman Sevan Samuels played another draw. Holland’s Jorden van Foreest, who is still behind the field, was on the receiving end. In another big result of the day, German Vincent Keymer put it across top seed Fabiano Caruana of the United States to join Sindarov in third spot. In other game of the day, Dutchman Anish Giri drew with Levon Aronian of the United States. Being his last white game of the day, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave took all the risks against Praggnanandhaa but the tactic boomeranged. The Ruy Lopez was met with another Moller variation by Pragg and an early piece sacrifice by the Frenchman was only optically good. Praggnanandhaa lost three pawns in exchange for the piece but relocated his forces well to win in just 28 moves. Vincent Keymer played his own brand of chess to outwit Caruana with white pieces. It was an irregular queen pawn game wherein the players reached a



dynamic middlegame wherein Keymer’s tactical skills proved superior on this day. As it happened the German knocked down a couple of pawns before forcing resignation in 76 moves. Sindarov appears to have found his rhythm when it counts most after a lackluster start as a world title challenger. In a complex endgame that resulted from a Petrosian version of the Queen’s Indian defense, the Uzbek performed at his peak. Sindarov gained a rook for a little piece after making an early pawn sacrifice, and he continued pressing until Foreest could no longer hold.

There were 56 movements in the game. Praggnanandhaa will now play as white against Giri in the last round, and Sindarov while Wesley So have another intriguing matchup scheduled. Keymer faces Foreest as well, and if the former prevails, he may tie for first place.

Lionel Messi Scores His First Goal Since Father's Death in a Promising Comeback

Chester: On Wednesday nite, Inter Miami and the Philadelphia Union drew 2-2 thanks to goals and assists from Lionel Messi. Luis Suarez headed Messi’s cross into striker Daniel Pinter’s path for Inter Miami’s opening goal in the twenty-first minute. Messi’s first goal since returning to action after his father’s death came in the 26th minute when he cut inside to his favored left foot from 12 yards out and

curled a shot into the corner of the net. In 17 MLS games this season, Messi has nine assists and 13 goals. In six games in all competitions versus the Union, he has six goals and four assists. Indiana Vassilev scored on a volley in the first half to give the Union the lead, then 18-year-old defender Neil Pierre headed home his third goal in five games this season in the 58th minute to tie the score. Cavan Sulli-

van, the Union’s 16-year-old midfielder, was credited with his seventh assist of the season on Vassilev’s goal. Union forward Milan Iloski appeared to put the Union ahead in the 62nd minute, but the goal was reviewed and waved off with Pierre offside in the buildup. The game ended with a pair of red cards in stoppage time to Yannick Bright and Sullivan for a scuffle off the ball.

BWF World Championships: India's Stars Face Tough Challenges in Round of 16 Matches

New Delhi : India face their toughest test yet, as several top players take to the court at the Badminton World Championships on August 20, Thursday. The hosts endured a heartbreaking outing on August 19, when two of India's best players, Lakshya Sen and Unnati Hooda, were knocked out of the tournament. Both Lakshya and Unnati were stretched to gruelling three-game matches at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi, and ended up going down against USA's Garret Tan and Canada's Michelle Li respectively. While Lakshya and Unnati were knocked out, India had favourable results from Ayush Shetty and PV Sindhu, who marched their way into the third round of the competition. They face their toughest test yet in the tournament, as



they take on two of the top players on the badminton circuit. India have to punch much above their weight today. Every single Indian player, barring the men's doubles team of Satwik-Chirag, are playing higher-ranked opponents. The day will start with the women's doubles event featuring Treasa/Gopichand, who will be facing Japan's World No. 7 Rin/Kie. In contrast, Tree-

sa and Gayatri are ranked 39th in the world. Having said that, the Indian duo were sensational in their last game and produced some powerful attacking play, which will give them a lot of confidence going into the Round of 16 (pre-quarterfinals). Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, India's only mixed doubles line-up today, face China's World No. 6 Guo/Chen in the

only Court 2 event today. All other India matches are on Court 1. India have a block of matches in the second half of the event, in Court 1, where Ayush Shetty, PV Sindhu and Satwik-Chirag play back-to-back matches. India's only men's singles player remaining in the competition, Ayush Shetty, will face the tricky Alwi Farhan. Alwi is ranked 12th in the world, 10 positions above Ayush, and the Indonesian leads Ayush 4-3 in their head-to-head clashes. The two players have faced each other three times this year, with Alwi leading 2-1 against Ayush. The Indian, however, beat him in the most recent competition, in July, when they met at the China Open. Ayush started by winning the first game 21-17, lost the second terribly 5-21, and then staged a against Alwi.

Manav Suthar Reminds India of the Timeless Art and Craft of Classical Spin Bowling

Mumbai : For all the uncertainty around India's red-ball cricket lately, Manav Suthar's performance in Galle offered a timely reminder of what India can get from a classical left-arm spinner. The 24-year-old was central to India's 165-run win over Sri Lanka, finishing with match figures of 10/131. Suthar became only the seventh Indian spinner to take 10 wickets in an away Test, joining Ravichandran Ashwin, Bishan Singh Bedi, Erapalli Prasanna, Bhagwat Chandrasekhar, Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh. The numbers tell one part of the story. Suthar's method tells the other. He bowled with control, used the wind to create drift, changed his pace without altering his action and kept returning to the same areas. There was no rush to force the game. Suthar kept

the pressure on, waited for batters to make mistakes and continued to bring different modes of dismissal into play. In Galle, that old-fashioned approach worked beautifully. India explored left-arm spin through Axar Patel, but he has not established himself as a Test mainstay. Suthar represents a different proposition. His round-arm action and emphasis on overspin allow him to extract dip and bounce while retaining the ability to turn the ball. Rather than relying on the arm ball, Suthar's stock delivery itself creates uncertainty. This is spin built on traditional foundations, where basics are refined rather than shortcuts chased. That was evident from the first ball at Galle. Dinesh Chandimal nicked it behind after Suthar drifted, turned and bounced it sharply. His second-innings



spell illustrated his full range. Pathum Sooriyabandara was trapped lbw. Sonal Dinusha was caught at leg slip. Prabath Jayasuriya was caught behind. Lahiru Kumara edged through to Rishabh Pant. Keshara Nuwantha was bowled. Five wickets. Five different dismissals. That variety is not accident KL Rahul believes Manav Suthar's biggest strength is his ability to vary his pace without changing his action,

making him difficult for batters to read. "It's the subtle variations from the same action, from the same angle," Rahul said. "Without changing his arm speed he's able to bowl slower and quicker as well." al. It is deliberate skill and craft. Suthar also used the Galle conditions smartly, with Rahul pointing to his ability to work with the wind and generate drift before getting the ball to straighten or come back in.

Robinson, Tongue Split Match Ball After Five-Wicket Hauls in Pakistan Rout

Leeds: Ollie Robinson and Josh Tongue found an unusual solution to a very old cricketing tradition at Headingley. After both England pacers took five-wicket hauls against Pakistan, they decided to split the match ball in half so each could keep a piece. The unusual souvenir came after England's bowlers dismissed Pakistan for 171 on the opening day of the first Test. Robinson finished with 5/51 and Tongue took 5/46, becoming the first pair of England bowlers to claim five-wicket hauls in the same Test innings since Steve Harmison and Monty Panesar against Pakistan at Old Trafford in 2006. "Robbo said we can split the ball in half," Tongue told Test Match Special. "The groundstaff have kindly done that." "It's the first time I've seen that happen. I'm sure I'll be putting that up somewhere," Robinson later showed his half of the ball to reporters and explained that the idea came



as the two bowlers walked off the field after Pakistan were bowled out. "Josh said it and I said we actually should do that, it would be quite cool," Robinson said. "You don't really have too many halves of a cricket ball, so it would be something that we never forget." England team manager Wayne Bentley then took the ball to the groundstaff, who cut it in half and returned it within five minutes. The split ball followed an excellent day for England's pace attack. Robinson struck with the first delivery of the Test to remove

Azan Awais and soon added Shan Masood, while Tongue later worked through Pakistan's middle and lower order. Pakistan lost their final eight wickets for 74 runs and were bowled out inside 49 overs. Robinson and Tongue became only the second England pair in 20 years to take five wickets apiece in the same Test innings. Their figures also helped Joe Root make a strong start to his second stint as England Test captain. England reached 112/2 by stumps, leaving them 59 runs behind Pakistan's first-innings score.

ISL Set for October Start With 13 Teams After Diamond Harbour Deadline Miss

New Delhi: The upcoming season of the Indian Super League (ISL), which was earlier scheduled to kick off on September 4, is set to be postponed by more than a month and will start only after October 6. The ISL will start only after the FIFA international match window, which runs from September 21 to October 6. The top-tier league will also go ahead with 13 teams after the Indian Football League 2025-26 champions, Diamond Harbour FC failed to pay the participation fee second installment amounting to Rs 55 lakh by the Wednesday deadline. Diamond Harbour were earlier promoted to the ISL by virtue of winning the Indian Football League 2025-26. "The ISL is likely to start only in October after the FIFA window," a



top official of the All India Football Federation (AIFF) told PTI. "We are going with 13 teams in the ISL," the official added. All the 14 clubs were to pay the

second installment of the total Rs 1.1 crore participation fee to the AIFF by the August 14 deadline, which was extended for Diamond Harbour till Wednesday.

Churchill Brothers paid, on August 14, the full Rs 1.1 crore fee to feature in the upcoming ISL after Jamshedpur Football Club sold its entire stake to the Goan

side. Jamshedpur FC had pulled out of the ISL and disbanded the first team on July 31, hours after the deadline for paying the first instalment of participation fee amounting to Rs 55 lakh. Meanwhile, the AIFF condemned what it called "incorrect claims that its decision not to participate in the FIFA ASEAN Cup 2026 has resulted in a pre-determined financial penalty or fine." "The AIFF is also concerned about the public circulation of unverified figures and claims regarding its finances without any supporting basis or documentation," it said in a release. Earlier last week, India withdrew from the inaugural FIFA ASEAN Cup, opting to prioritise their high-profile international friendly against five-time world champions Brazil.

Hockey World Cup: Can Indian Women Make History and Finish Top of Pool D? India's Group Fate Hangs in Balance

New Delhi: "Whether anyone expects us or not, we have high expectations for ourselves. Even before the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, no one imagined we would finish fourth. This time, in the World Cup, we want to go one step further and finish on the podium so that Indian women's hockey has a rich legacy, just like men's hockey." These words from Savita Punia, as quoted by PTI, will strike a chord with most Indian hockey fans who have seen the women's team evolve over the years. They have often been left in the shadow of the men's team, who have the legacy of having eight Olympic gold medals to their name. For the women's team, a fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics felt like a huge achievement. But since then, they have been searching for that one moment that sparks a revolution for them on the big stage. Coaches came and went, and so did some of the senior players. Sjoerd Marijne came back, and this time he had a deeper pool of talent to use. One that has quality and depth. It was evident when the women's team went toe-to-toe with Olympic silver medallists China and when they brushed aside the challenge from South Africa. For the women's team now, history beckons. Their best performance in the World Cup was a fourth-place finish in the 1974 edition, when they reached the semi-finals. The Indian team has already started to change the course of their own history with the 6-1 win against South Africa. It was their biggest margin of win in the World Cup. Now, they have another crack at



destiny with a chance to win their pool. This is something they have never done before, and if they get a win against England on Thursday, August 20, For India to finish top of the group, they will need to beat England. A draw will be enough for them to make it to the next round, but if China does beat South Africa, then they will finish second. One thing India will need to avoid is suffer a loss against England. If they end up losing and China gets a draw or a win against South Africa, then India will end up failing to make it to the second round of the competition altogether and will have to compete for the 9th-16th rankings. India and England have faced off 11 times so far. England have been able to beat India five times during this time, with three of them ending in draws. India have beaten England three times, with their last win coming during the 2025 Pro League. India were actually beaten by England during the FIH World Cup 2026 qualifiers

earlier in the year in Hyderabad. This means that they will need to be wary of the threat posed by them in the upcoming fixture. "We shouldn't rest easy after holding China to a draw and defeating South Africa. England are a very good team and gave China a tough challenge. They are ranked higher than us and have already defeated us this year, so we need to play cautiously," Marijne said. While many may feel that the result against South Africa was perfect. However, there were many areas that India needs to improve on. For one, there was a lot of space that was given to South Africa while they were on the counter. Often during counter-attacks, it almost felt like India were going to concede a goal that was going to peg them back. While the quality of play and finishing from South Africa let India off the hook, you cannot expect the same from higher-ranked sides. If India make it to the next round, they will be facing hosts and Olympic champions Netherlands and Australia.

BWF Worlds: Lakshya Stunned by No. 92, Ayush and Sindhu Advance

New Delhi: A mixed day for India at the BWF World Championships left them with just four entries in the pre-quarterfinals. Asian Badminton Championships silver medallist Ayush Shetty and two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu marched into the Round of 16, but 2021 bronze medallist Lakshya Sen was sent packing after a thrilling second-round battle against 18-year-old American Garret Tan, World No. 92, at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi on Tuesday. Day 3 Highlights For PV Sindhu and Ayush Shetty, Wednesday was a comfortable workout ahead of bigger tests on Thursday. Sindhu will face familiar foe Wang Zhi Yi of China, whom she beat at last year's World Championships, while Ayush takes on Indonesia's Alwi Farhan, one of the tour's most promising young shuttlers. The day for India began brightly, with 15th seeds Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto seeing off Macau's Leong Lok Chong and Ng Weng Chi in just 30 minutes. But things soon turned topsy-turvy, much like the Delhi weather, bright sunshine in the morning, brooding clouds in the afternoon, forever threatening rain but never quite committing to it. Lakshya was not the only Indian to bow out. The fast-rising MR Arjun and Hariharan Amsakarunan were knocked out in men's doubles, while teenager Unnati Hooda's campaign ended in the women's



singles. Meanwhile, Satwik-sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty are still waiting to get their campaign underway. The fifth seeds received a walkover from Scotland's Alexander Dunn and Adam Pringle in the second round and, having also received a first-round bye, are yet to hit a shuttle in competition at their home World Championships. They could finally take the court on Thursday against 12th seeds Raymond Indra and Nikolaus Jaquin of Indonesia. After two rounds without a match, the big question will be whether the fifth seeds can shake off the rust when their campaign finally begins. Lakshya Sen had the crowd behind him. Garret Tan had the belief. For much of a gripping second-round contest, neither was willing to give an inch. Lakshya took the opening game 21-19, but the 18-year-old American, ranked 92nd in the world, responded by taking the second 21-19 and then held his nerve to win the decider

21-17. It was not easy for Lakshya, especially against a relatively unheralded shuttler like Garret Tan, who caught him off guard with an all-round game that few saw coming. The American, who trains on his own in California, laid down a marker in Delhi, announcing himself as a player who could be the next big thing in men's singles. Tan admitted the home support briefly got into his head. Leading 8-2 early in the third, he suddenly found the volume rising around him. "It got to me at one point in the third set, at the beginning, where I was leading 8-2 and then the crowd started to really cheer, and it kind of got to me," he said. But he found his way through, leaving himself almost unable to process what he had just done. "I'm still speechless right now. I just... I can't believe I'm playing tomorrow." Lakshya, meanwhile, was exhausted and disappointed, but generous in defeat. "I gave it my all, whatever I had in the tank," he said,

admitting that he was physically spent towards the end of the third. He also gave credit to Tan for playing "a very solid game." The defeat will sting, he knows. "It's probably going to hurt a little bit more," Lakshya said. PV Sindhu did what experienced players often do at the World Championships: she made a potentially tricky match look relatively straightforward. The ninth seed moved past Zhang Wen Yu 21-16, 21-17 to reach the pre-quarterfinals, never allowing the Canadian to turn the contest into the kind of prolonged scrap that can drain energy at a major tournament. The reward is a familiar opponent and a considerably bigger test. Sindhu will face China's Wang Zhi Yi on Thursday, a player she beat at last year's World Championships. Familiarity, however, does not make the challenge any easier. "It will be difficult. There are no easy matches at the World Championships," Sindhu said. The two know each other well, she added, but that only makes preparation more important. "I will try to be at my best tomorrow." After the drama of knocking out world No. 1 Shi Yuqi, Ayush Shetty had a rather more routine Wednesday. The 21-year-old barely broke stride against Sri Lanka's Dumindu Abeywickrama, racing through the first game 21-8 before wrapping up the second 21-10 to move into the pre-quarterfinals on his World Championships debut.