

Weak monsoon leaves Meghalaya waterfalls running low, tourism sector watches closely

Shillong, July 07: A sharp decline in monsoon rainfall has raised concerns across Meghalaya's tourism industry, with many of the state's iconic waterfalls flowing at much lower levels than usual during the peak tourist season. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Meghalaya has recorded a 74 per cent rainfall deficit so far this monsoon. Officials attributed the shortfall to the absence of favourable weather systems over the Bay of Bengal, which normally trigger widespread heavy rainfall across the region. IMD Shillong Director Thangjalal Lhouvum said the rainfall deficit is being closely monitored and that updated rainfall figures for both the state and individual districts are regularly published by the department.

Although tourist footfall has remained largely stable, those visiting popular destinations such as Sohra have noticed that several waterfalls are far less spectacular than expected. Hotel owners say many visitors compare the present conditions with photographs and videos seen on social media before their trip. Local trekking guides echoed similar concerns, saying some tourists arrive expecting the dramatic monsoon scenery for which Meghalaya is famous. While reduced rainfall has made trekking routes safer and easier to navigate, the comparatively smaller waterfalls have left a section of visitors underwhelmed. Transport operators, however, say the dry spell has improved road conditions. With fewer rain-related disruptions and landslides,



tourists have been able to travel more comfortably and cover additional destinations within a single day. Stakeholders in the hospitality sector remain optimistic that rainfall will improve in the coming weeks. They point out that tourism sustains thousands of livelihoods by generating business for homestays, restaurants, transport services, local guides and artisans. The IMD has forecast below-normal rainfall over the next two weeks, though the overall seasonal outlook for Meghalaya continues to remain normal. Tourism stakeholders also stress that Meghalaya's appeal extends well beyond its waterfalls, highlighting its natural landscapes, rich culture, adventure tourism and unique visitor experiences as key attractions throughout the year. Tourism stakeholders also emphasize that Meghalaya's appeal extends well beyond its waterfalls, highlighting its natural landscapes, rich culture, adventure tourism and unique visitor experiences as key attractions throughout the year. Tourism stakeholders also emphasize that Meghalaya's appeal extends well beyond its waterfalls, highlighting its natural landscapes, rich culture, adventure tourism and unique visitor experiences as key attractions throughout the year.

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Chowna Mein Reviews Arunachal Dairy, Poultry Roadmap



Itanagar, Jul 07: Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein chaired a review meeting on Tuesday to discuss a detailed action plan prepared by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Veterinary & Dairy Development for strengthening the dairy and poultry sectors in the state. The meeting was held under the leadership of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary, Dairy Development Minister Gabriel D. Wangsu. Discussions focused on strengthening dairy infrastructure, expanding cold chain facilities and milk collection networks, upgrading livestock healthcare services, and fast tracking growth in both dairy and poultry sectors. DCM Mein underlined the need to assess past schemes, learn from challenges, and build a practical and sustainable model that delivers long term results. "The Government of Arunachal Pradesh will extend full support to reduce dependence on imports, empower our farmers, and develop a self reliant livestock sector," he assured. Travel Guides & Travelogues

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Mizoram Plans More Taxi Permits



Aizawl, Jul 07: The Mizoram government is considering issuing additional taxi permits if the number of vehicles registered on the newly launched Mizotaxi app proves inadequate to meet commuter demand, Transport Department officials said on Monday. The Mizotaxi mobile application, introduced on July 1 and currently operational in Aizawl, was launched to regulate public transport fares and prevent passengers from being overcharged. The Mizotaxi mobile application, introduced on July 1 and currently operational in Aizawl, was designed to regulate public transport fares and prevent passengers from being overcharged. Officials explained that the app aims to bring transparency to fare collection, standardize taxi services, and reduce disputes between drivers and commuters. Transport authorities noted that initial registration numbers on the app have been lower than expected, raising concerns about whether the available fleet will be sufficient to meet daily passenger requirements. To address this, the government is weighing the option of issuing more taxi permits to expand the pool of vehicles eligible to operate under the Mizotaxi system. Officials emphasized that the move would not only improve commuter convenience but also provide livelihood opportunities for local drivers. They added that the government is closely monitoring feedback from passengers and operators during the app's rollout phase to ensure smooth functioning. Transport experts have further suggested that integrating digital payment options, GPS tracking, and real-time ride monitoring into the Mizotaxi platform could enhance commuter confidence and strengthen regulatory oversight.

Drugs Worth Rs 2.4 Crore Seized In Assam; Three Arrested

Guwahati, Jul 07: Assam police intercepted a major narcotics consignment in Dhubri district, seizing drugs valued at nearly ₹2.4 crore and arresting three individuals in connection with the case. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma confirmed the development, commending the swift action of the district police. "Red card, your game's up," Dhubri Police declared in a statement, celebrating the successful operation. Sarma, in a social media post, lauded the team for their vigilance, noting that the interception marked another decisive victory in the state's ongoing battle against drug trafficking. Authorities have initiated legal



proceedings against the accused, reinforcing the government's commitment to dismantling networks that fuel the narcotics trade. The Chief Minister emphasized that Assam Police's relentless crackdown continues to deliver results, emphasizing the administration's zero-tolerance stance on drug-related crimes.

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Meghalaya requests Centre to transfer coal mining approval powers to state

Shillong, Jul 07: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Tuesday urged the Centre to delegate key powers related to coal mining approvals to the state, saying the move would enable thousands of tribal coal-holders to secure lawful mining concessions without having to seek clearances from authorities outside Meghalaya. During a meeting with Union Coal and Mines Minister G. Kishan Reddy in New Delhi, Sangma requested that the Central Government invoke Section 26 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957,



to empower the state to grant prior approval for coal mining leases and approve mining plans. Sutnga-Saipung MLA Santa Mary Shylla accompanied the Chief Minister during the meeting.

Sangma emphasized that Meghalaya's unique tribal landholding system requires a more localized approach to mining regulation. He noted that delays in obtaining central clearances have long hindered tribal coal-holders from transitioning to legal mining practices, leaving them vulnerable to economic hardship and legal uncertainty. "Delegating these powers to the state would not only uphold the spirit of the Sixth Schedule but also ensure that tribal communities benefit directly from lawful mining activities," he said. The Chief Minister underscored that the state government has already taken steps to align mining practices with environmental safeguards and regulatory compliance.

Server Failure Halts Tripura Recharges, Outages Ignite Statewide Protests

Agartala, Jul 07: Widespread public protests erupted across several parts of Tripura on Monday as prolonged server failures in the state's electricity distribution system reportedly prevented consumers from recharging prepaid smart meters, leading to power disconnections and severe inconvenience. Demonstrations and road blockades were reported from Teliamura, Dharmanagar and Kailashahar, while residents in parts of Dharmanagar also protested over irregular and allegedly unsafe drinking water supply. The most intense protest took place in Teliamura, where men and women blocked the National Highway after claiming they had been unable to recharge their prepaid electricity meters for nearly three days because of a server malfunction. Protesters alleged that their electricity connections were disconnected despite repeated attempts to recharge, leaving many households without power during the monsoon season. Residents questioned why



consumers should suffer for a technical failure beyond their control and demanded that electricity supply be restored until the server issue is resolved. They suggested that electricity charges could temporarily be adjusted through the previous billing system instead of disconnecting power supply. As the highway blockade disrupted traffic, the administration deployed police and central paramilitary personnel to clear the road. According to protesters, police resorted to a lathi-charge after they refused

to withdraw the blockade, resulting in injuries to several demonstrators, including women. The alleged use of force has triggered criticism from sections of the public, who accused the administration of suppressing protests instead of addressing the underlying technical problem. Sub-Divisional Magistrate Apurba Krishna Chakraborty and officials from Teliamura Police Station reached the spot and attempted to persuade protesters to lift the blockade. However, demonstrators reportedly remained

firm on their demand for immediate restoration of electricity and a permanent solution to the recharge crisis. Meanwhile, in Dharmanagar, residents alleged that the electricity department's Division-I and Division-II offices have been facing server failures for nearly a week, preventing prepaid meter recharges and delaying new electricity-related services. Long queues of consumers, including elderly people, women and working professionals, were reportedly seen outside the offices, with many returning home without receiving any service. According to local officials, the disruption is due to a technical fault in the server infrastructure. The Division-II Manager reportedly informed consumers that restoring normal services could take another four to five days. The explanation has further fuelled public anger, with consumers demanding immediate alternative arrangements to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply.

Dilapidated Fakua Dol in Sivasagar Demands Urgent Restoration

Guwahati, Jul 07: Fakua Dol (also known as Fakuwa Dou), a historic monument in Assam's Sivasagar district, has fallen into a dilapidated state, raising concerns over its preservation and the urgent need for restoration of the heritage structure. The alleged neglect by the Assam government has contributed to the deteriorating condition of the protected heritage structure. Located about 4 km west of Sivasagar town near the historic Talatal Ghar, Fakua Dol is one of the region's distinctive historical landmarks. The pyramid-shaped monument was built between 1703 and 1704 A.D. by Ahom king Swargadeo Rudra Singha in memory of his mother, Queen Joymati Kunwari, and is widely believed to mark her burial site (maidam). The monument, which stands about 30 feet tall on an octagonal plinth, is regarded as a unique example of Ahom-era architecture and holds significant historical and cultural value. The monument which stands about 30 feet tall on an octagonal plinth, is regarded as a unique example of Ahom-era architecture and holds significant historical and cultural value.



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Temporary Curbs in Akuluto After Suspected Swine Fever

Kohima, Jul 07: The Additional Deputy Commissioner of Akuluto has imposed temporary restrictions on the slaughter, sale, import and export of pigs, pork and pig products following a suspected case of African Swine Fever (ASF) at the State Pig Breeding Centre in Akuluto. According to an official

order, the restrictions will remain in force until further orders and apply to Akuluto town and villages within a one-kilometre radius of the breeding centre. The notified areas include Lumitshami, Shichimi, Sutemi and Alaphumi. As part of the preventive measures to contain the suspected outbreak, the

district administration has prohibited the slaughter, sale, import and export of pigs, pork and pig products within the notified areas. All pork shops and slaughter points in the affected areas will also remain closed until further orders. Officials explained that the restrictions are precautionary in nature,

aimed at preventing the possible spread of ASF, which is highly contagious among pigs and has no known cure. Veterinary teams have been deployed to monitor pig populations in the notified areas, collect samples, and conduct awareness campaigns among local farmers and traders. The administration has urged

residents to cooperate with the measures, stressing that early containment is critical to safeguarding livestock and protecting the livelihoods of pig farmers. Farmers have been advised to report any unusual deaths or symptoms in pigs immediately to veterinary authorities. Local stakeholders expressed concern

over the economic impact of the restrictions, as pig rearing and pork sales form a major source of income for many households in the region. However, they acknowledged that strict measures are necessary to prevent a wider outbreak that could devastate the piggery sector. Officials added that the situation is

being closely monitored and further decisions will be taken based on laboratory test results and expert recommendations. The district administration has assured that compensation and support measures will be considered if the suspected case is confirmed and prolonged restrictions become necessary.

Ethnic violence has kept many away from home: CM

Guwahati, July 07: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Monday said it was unfortunate that many people are still unable to live in their own homes because of the ethnic violence that has affected the state.

Distributing financial assistance to violence-affected Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), the Chief Minister said the prevailing situation has forced many families to endure the hardship of living away from their homes for a prolonged period.

Khemchand Singh handed over financial assistance of Rs 1 lakh each to 26 IDPs residing at the Lamboi-khongnangkhang Relief Camp in Imphal for their urgent medical treatment. The beneficiaries are suffering from chronic ailments, including kidney diseases, cancer, and other serious illnesses.

The Chief Minister distributed the financial assistance while attending a programme organised for the disbursement of medical aid

to seriously ill IDPs at the Manipur Trade Expo Centre Relief Camp at Lamboi-khongnangkhang in Imphal West district.

In his remarks on the occasion, he said the state government is providing financial assistance to violence-affected Internally Displaced Persons to help them cope with the challenges they continue to face during these difficult times. He said special financial support is being extended to IDPs suffering from chronic diseases so that they can receive timely medical treatment without additional financial hardship. The Chief Minister further said that Monday's distribution of financial assistance was not the end of the government's support to the displaced families and assured that every possible assistance would continue to be extended to IDPs suffering from chronic illnesses in the future. He stressed that the decision to provide financial assistance was taken with the belief that it would help ease the hardships

faced by the IDPs, who are already enduring the trauma of being unable to return to their homes.

On the occasion, Rajya Sabha member Adhikari-mayum Sharda Devi said weaving machines and assistance for other allied livelihood activities would be provided to women residing at the relief camp to help them become economically self-reliant.

The programme was attended by MLA Sanasam Premchandra Singh, Imphal West Deputy Commissioner Mayanglambam Rajkumar Singh, senior government officials and a large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Following the outbreak of ethnic violence in Manipur in May 2023, around 60,000 people from both the Imphal Valley region and the hill districts were forced to flee their homes and villages. A majority of them continue to live in relief camps across different parts of the state. However, a few hundred displaced people have since returned to their homes

KSU calls on the Meghalaya Government to adopt a resolution opposing uranium mining

Shillong, July 07: The Khasi Students' Union (KSU) has urged the Meghalaya government and the state's three autonomous district councils (ADCs) to adopt resolutions opposing uranium mining and the sale of land in uranium-rich areas of Domiasiat in South West Khasi Hills district.

KSU president Raymond Kharjana alleged that some influential individuals, including a former legislator from Ri-Bhoi district, were attempting to acquire land in Domiasiat with the intention of selling it to mining companies in the future.

"We strongly demand that the state government adopt a resolution in the upcoming autumn session of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly opposing uranium mining and the sale of land in uranium-rich areas of Domiasiat and its adjoining villages," Kharjana said.

He also appealed to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC), Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC), and Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) to pass similar resolutions to prevent any future attempt to revive the uranium mining project.

Questioning the motive behind the reported land purchases, Khar-



jana claimed that Domiasiat has no commercial value in terms of tourism or other mineral resources such as coal and limestone, suggesting that the acquisitions were linked to the prospect of future uranium mining.

"The KSU will not remain a mute spectator. We will fight tooth and nail to ensure this project is completely scrapped from the state," he said.

Domiasiat, located about 130 km from Shillong, is home to India's largest known uranium deposit.

Meghalaya has an estimated 9.22 million tonnes of uranium ore, making it the country's third-largest uranium-bearing state after Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh.

The proposed uranium mining project at Mawthabah in South West Khasi Hills has remained stalled for years after successive state governments and the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council declined to grant mining leases and statutory clearances to the state-owned Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL).

Several organisations have opposed the project, citing concerns over radiation risks, environmental degradation, and its impact on local communities.

UCIL had proposed to mine 375,000 tonnes of uranium ore annually and process 1,500 tonnes of ore per day.

Although the corporation temporarily shut its Shillong and Wakhaji offices in August 2018, it had maintained that efforts would continue to secure the necessary approvals for the project.

CBI has apprehended an official from the NHAI in connection Bribery case involving Rs. 12 lakhs

Guwahati, July 07: Sleuths of the Central Bureau of Investigation has arrested the Project Director of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) in Shillong along with two private individuals in connection with an alleged Rs. 12 lakh bribery case linked to the clearance of a contractor's pending payment, an official said. In a statement issued on Monday, the CBI registered the case on July 1 after receiving a complaint alleging that National Highways Authority of India Project Director Aanand Singh Chouhan demanded an undue advantage of Rs. 12 lakh to process an outstanding bill amounting to Rs. 13.38 crore.

Chouhan allegedly instructed the complainant to first pay Rs. 4 lakh as an advance and directed him to hand over the amount to a private individual in Assam's Guwahati.

During the investigation, the CBI found that the intermediary subsequently asked the complainant to deliver the money to another person in the city. Based on the complaint, the CBI laid



a trap and allegedly caught one of the private individuals red-handed while demanding and accepting the Rs. 4 lakh advance from the contractor. Following the operation, the CBI arrested Chouhan along with the two private individ-

uals, identified as Punit Agarwal and Manish Agarwal. The agency also carried out searches at the premises of all three accused as part of the probe. Investigation is on to ascertain the full extent of the alleged bribery conspiracy.

Governor reviews women resource programmes, Myki Hub project

Kohima, July 07: Nagaland governor, Nand Kishore Yadav, chaired a review meeting with the Department of Women Resource Development (WRD) at Lok Bhavan, Kohima, on Monday.

According to DIPR report, the Governor reviewed major programmes being implemented by the department, including the Transformative Livelihood Intervention (TLI) Project, Protection and Promotion of Tribal Designs, Myki activities, Multi Training Centre, Integrated Development cum Resource Centre (IDRC), District Resource and Development Programme (DRDP) and various entrepreneurship and skill development initiatives benefiting women across the state.

The department also briefed the Governor on the proposed Myki Hub at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, aimed at providing permanent market ave-



nues for women entrepreneurs, artisans and farmers while promoting traditional and contemporary products. Supported under the Chief Minister's Innovative Programme Fund, the project is expected to be completed by November 2026.

The meeting further reviewed construction of Working Women Hostels in various districts under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) initiative, alongside ongoing efforts to expand women resource centres, strengthen livelihood interventions and enhance mar-

ket linkages.

Highlighting challenges of limited financial resources and manpower, the department stressed the need for greater support to expand programmes aimed at improving women's livelihoods.

Appreciating the department's efforts, the Governor encouraged strengthening convergence with other departments and stakeholders, ensuring effective implementation of programmes and continuing to create sustainable economic opportunities for women across Nagaland.

2 AR personnel killed in Ukhrul ambush



Aizawl, July 07: Two Assam Rifles personnel were killed and several others injured after suspected militants ambushed a patrol in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Monday, triggering a counter-operation by security forces. The attack took place around 1.30 pm at Nungshangkong, about 15 km from Ukhrul town.

The Assam Rifles later identified the slain personnel as warrant officer Balwant Singh and havildar Chandra Mohan Singh.

In a statement, Director General of Assam Rifles Lt Gen Vikas Lakhera and all ranks of the force paid solemn tribute to the two soldiers and expressed deep condolences to their families, saying they made the "supreme sacrifice in the line of duty".

Defence sources said the injured personnel were evacuated to a hospital, while security forces launched an operation to track down the attackers. "The people who carried out the attack have been pursued. A firefight is continuously going on with them," a senior defence official told The New Indian Express.

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Balla, chief minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh, home minister Govindas Konhoujam and others strongly condemned the Ukhrul ambush.

Governor said such attacks had no place in the society and cannot weaken collective resolve to uphold peace and security. Manipur chief minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh condemned the kill-

ings and expressed condolences to the bereaved families. "The government will not tolerate such brutal violence and will not remain a mute spectator to these atrocities. Those responsible for the murders will be arrested and punished as per the law of the land," he said.

State Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam also mourned the deaths, saying such acts of violence would only hamper efforts to restore lasting peace and normalcy in the ethnic strife-hit state. "The state government remains steadfast in its commitment to maintaining law and order, and I am confident that all those responsible will be identified and brought to justice strictly in accordance with the law," he said.

Mizoram government is seeking to issue more taxi permits following a decline in enrollment

Aizawl, July 07: The Mizoram government may issue additional taxi permits if the number of taxis registered on Mizotaxi application is insufficient to meet public demand, officials said on Monday.

Mizotaxi, a new mobile application for public transport services, was launched and became operational in the state capital on July 1.

It aims to protect commuters from overcharging and was designed to help passengers using taxis, two-wheeler taxis, and auto rickshaws verify and pay the correct fare rates approved by the state government.

Officials of the Transport department said that only 974 taxis, including 681 two-wheeler taxis, had

registered on the platform when the deadline ended on June 30. They said that the current number of registrations would not be enough to meet the needs of the public, and that the government would take further steps as necessary.

The new system was designed with public convenience in mind, they said.

"Fixing a proper fare structure is the government's responsibility. Many states have already implemented similar systems, and we are only following suit," they said.

Leaders of Aizawl Two Wheeler Taxi Association (ATTA) said they had already conveyed their concerns regarding the Mizotaxi app to the government and were not



willing to use it in its present form.

The association has demanded the revision of the fare structure, which has been in use since 2024.

It also demanded that the Rs 500

registration fee be withdrawn.

A leader of ATTA also argued that collecting payments from passengers and then remitting them to the government would be troublesome.

AAPSU writes to CM, seeks clarity on status of its 13-point memorandum

Itanagar, July 07: The All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) has sought an update within seven days from the state government on the status of the 13-point memorandum that it had submitted last month.

In a follow-up memorandum to the chief minister on Monday, the apex students' body stated that, despite a detailed discussion between union leaders and the chief minister on 2 June, no official update on the progress of the demands has been given. "We met the chief minister in good faith and had a good discussion on every issue. It has been a month now, and we hope to hear back on where things stand," AAPSU president Meje Taku said.

Among the demands is the scrapping of the exist-

ing 80:20 recruitment ratio in state government jobs, with AAPSU pushing for mandatory PRC and APST certification in all state recruitment processes. The union has pointed to the 2021 APPSCCE examination, in which a non-APST candidate topped the list, as the reason for urgency in the matter. The memorandum also called for re-amendment of Article 371 (H) to bring Arunachal Pradesh' constitutional safeguards closer to those enjoyed by Nagaland and Mizoram, and the state's inclusion under the Sixth Schedule. It raised the long-pending Chakma-Hajong resettlement issue, seeking early completion of the Assam boundary demarcation, and called for a central law addressing racial discrimination faced by people from the Northeast in other parts of the

country. Other demands include a dedicated startup package for indigenous youths, a 'chief minister's research fellowship' for APST PhD scholars, additional CUET centres within the state, a designated ground for peaceful public assembly in Itanagar, and a working women's hostel in the Itanagar Capital Region. The AAPSU described the issues as matters of "constitutional, demographic, and existential concern to the indigenous people of Arunachal Pradesh," and sought a time-bound update within seven days. "These issues concern the land, identity, and future of every indigenous Arunachali, and we remain hopeful of a positive response," Taku said, adding that the union would continue to engage with the government on the matters.

Women continue to outnumber males on Manipur’s draft electoral roll

Imphal, July 07: Women voters have once again outnumbered men in Manipur’s draft electoral records, which were issued on Sunday following the completion of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).Following the publishing of the draft electoral registers, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Arun Kumar Sinha stated that with July 1, 2026 as the qualifying date, Manipur has a total of 19,34,399 registered voters, including 9,93,660 women, 9,40,446 males, and 293 third-gender electors.The CEO stated that the gender ratio on the draft electoral rolls is 1,057, which is significantly higher than the national average.According to the draft electoral rolls, there are 20,442 newly enrolled voters between the ages of 18 and 19. Sinha said that a total of 1,58,677 electors, accounting for 7.58 per cent of the electorate, have been excluded after the revision process due to various reasons. These include the deaths of 43,000 electors (2.05 per cent); 34,740 untraceable or absent electors (1.66 per cent); 72,473 electors who had permanently shifted (3.46 per cent); besides other reasons.With the creation of 85 new polling stations, the total number of polling stations in the state has increased to 3,041. The final electoral rolls will be issued on September 6, once the claims and objections procedure has been completed and verified.The CEO stated that



during the claims and objections period, which runs from July 5 to August 4, any elector or recognized political party may file claims for the inclusion of eligible voters or raise objections to the removal of ineligible names from the electoral records.He stated that the major goal of the claims and objections period is to assure the inclusion of all newly eligible and left-out voters who reach the age of 18 on or before July 1, 2026. A total of 60 EROs and 84 AER.Os will review the claims and objections received throughout the specified time frame. Another significant goal is to allow electors to fix inaccuracies in their personal information and to solicit objections to any wrongful inclusion on the electoral records, according to the election official. Sinha stated that the successful completion of this phase was due to the coordinated efforts of all 16 districts’ District Election Of-

ficers (Deputy Magistrates or Commissioners and Collectors), 60 Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), 84 Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs), 317 BLO Supervisors, and 2,956 Booth Level Officers (BLOs) deployed across 2,956 polling stations, as well as volunteer support. Field representatives of all 10 recognised political parties, including their district presidents, also actively participated in the exercise, with as many as 6,363 Booth Level Agents (BLAs) appointed by them, the CEO noted.He said, “At the beginning of the SIR process, Manipur had only 5,003 BLAs. The increased number of BLAs reflects the active participation of political parties and their representatives in this important electoral exercise.” The BLOs made house-to-house visits to all existing electors to distribute Enumeration Forms, then returned at least three times to collect completed forms. Sinha added that the BLAs worked hard to ensure that no qualified elector was overlooked. All 2,956 BLOs had coordination meetings with their respective BLAs to ensure complete field verification of absent, moved, deceased, and duplicate electors. Help desks were set up in the offices of the Chief Electoral Officer and all 16 District Election Officers (DEOs) to help voters in filling out the Enumeration Forms.

Arunachal CM and DyCM convey birthday greetings to Dalai Lama

Itanagar, July 07: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein wished the 14th Dalai Lama a happy 91st birthday on Monday.

Khandu wished the spiritual leader good health and a long life, and praised his teachings of peace, compassion, and unity. Mein also sent his greetings, referring to the Dalai Lama as a global icon of knowledge and nonviolence who has inspired generations. Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Minister Ojing Tasing also expressed their best wishes, wishing him continuing good



health and guidance toward peace and global brotherhood.

DYFI reports a considerable increase in membership in Tripura

Agartala, July 07: The Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), the CPI(M)’s youth wing, claims a considerable rise in membership in Tripura, despite the presence of the ruling BJP and its partner TIPRA Motha in the state. The accusation was made at the organisation’s State Conference on Saturday, in the presence of its national general secretary, Himagnharaj Bhattacharjee.

He stated that the organization’s development was significant given the current political circumstances

in the state, and that DYFI continues to increase its outreach to young people.Bhattacharjee told reporters that DYFI’s membership in Tripura had grown from around one lakh in 2025 to 1,25,698 in 2026. He ascribed the increase to the organization’s ongoing involvement with issues impacting adolescents.

It is learnt that the Left-wing organisation continues to face challenges in the tribal-dominated hill areas, which were once its stronghold, and is now attempting to regain its influence there.

The organisation is intensifying its outreach in these regions, stating that despite constitutional guarantees, tribal communities are being increasingly marginalised and deprived of their rights.

The DYFI leader also criticized the suspension of MGNREGA projects, claiming that tribal youngsters have been among the most severely impacted. He urged the continuation of the rural employment plan and said that the organization would step up its campaign for 200 days of guaranteed employment under MGNREGA.

Gujarat Court Upholds Death Sentence for 38 People In 2008 Ahmedabad Blasts Case

Ahmedabad, July 07: On Tuesday, the Gujarat High Court upheld a special court ruling that sentenced 38 convicts to death and 11 others to life in jail for their roles in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial blasts that killed 56 people.A division bench of justices A Y Kogje and Samir Dave dismissed all appeals against the lower court’s judgment and affirmed its verdict, which confirmed the sentences imposed on members of the terror outfit Indian Mujahideen (IM) in the case.On July 26, 2008, a sequence of 21 bomb bombings blasted through Ahmedabad in 70 minutes, killing 56 people and injuring 200 more. Several hospitals in the city were also targeted.In 2022, a special court sentenced 38 members of the Islamic Movement to death. In addition, the court sentenced 11 other prisoners to life in prison.

Bill to reform Hyderabad’s civic administration on anvil

Hyderabad, July 07: The Telangana government has proposed introducing a new bill to replace the seven-decade-old Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Act, which governs Hyderabad’s civic administration, in light of the metropolitan region’s massive expansion over the years, officials familiar with the matter said on Monday.On Sunday, a draft of the proposed legislation, the Telangana Core Urban Region (Integrated Governance) Bill, 2026 (CURE Bill), was made available on the GHMC website, inviting residents and other stakeholders to provide feedback.According to a senior GHMC official, the GHMC Act of 1955, which has been revised from time to time, is no longer appropriate for a metropolitan region that has grown far beyond its original city limits. “Hyderabad has grown from a city of around 15 lakh people in the 1950s to an urban agglomeration of nearly 1.3 crore people today, with multiple civic agencies responsible for planning, roads, water supply, transport,

tation, disaster management, and public services.” The new measure aims to bring these functions under one integrated governance framework,” the spokesman stated.The proposed legislation aims to establish an integrated governance framework for the three municipal corporations formed as a result of the government’s recent reorganisation of the expanded GHMC — Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Cyberabad Municipal Corporation (CMC), and Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation (MMC), while allowing for decentralized administration at the corporation level.

The government has invited suggestions from citizens, resident welfare associations, industry bodies, urban planners and other stakeholders until July 24 through the websites of the respective civic bodies before introducing the final legislation in the state legislature.One of the key reforms proposed in the bill is the replacement of the existing annual rental value-based property tax system with a capital value system. Under

the proposed system, property tax will be calculated on the basis of the government’s market value of properties used for registration purposes instead of their rental value. Officials stated that because market values are far higher than rental values, which have been relatively stable for years, the move is projected to greatly improve property tax collections.

According to estimates, many property owners’ tax liabilities could virtually quadruple.To mitigate the immediate financial burden, the updated tax system will be introduced in stages for existing buildings, while all new buildings will be subject to the Capital Value System from the start.

The bill also proposes a number of other tax reforms, including self-assessment of property tax, the implementation of an integrated property identity code, rebates for timely property tax payment, incentives for sustainable or environmentally friendly buildings, and the elimination of obsolete levies such as octroi and dog tax.

Prashant Kishor’s bet on Nitin Nabin’s bastion in focus: TMC MP calls it ‘dhamaka’; BJP dismisses bid



New Delhi, July 07: Prashant Kishor, the founder of the Jan Suraj Party and a veteran poll strategist, has been in the spotlight since Sunday after running for the Bankipur assembly seat in Bihar. The seat has traditionally been a stronghold for BJP President Nitin Nabin, but it has been empty since he became a Rajya Sabha member.

Prashant Kishor’s victory in this seat would be a significant boost to the Jan Suraj Party (JSP), which did not win any seats in the Bihar Assembly elections last year.His bid, however, has elicited varied reactions, with the BJP condemning it and Trinamool Congress MP Shatrughan Sinha calling it a “dhamaka”. While Kishor announced

his Bankipur contest on Sunday, speculation of his move had been around since May.Kishor, who was earlier set to contest the Bihar Assembly elections, opted out days before polls citing a mutual decision by his party.

While he has steered many parties towards a victory before, this would be the first time Prashant Kishor will be entering the poll fray. As the ex-poll strategist announced his candidature on Sunday, he called it a “referendum” on the popularity of the BJP-led government in the state.

“The people of Bankipur are the richest and the most educated in Bihar. Let them vote for the best. If they feel they can repose their trust in me, I urge them to vote for me... Even as the lone MLA of my party, I shall outweigh the remaining 242 ones in the assembly,” Kishor said. He also accused Nitin Nabin of abandoning the constituency at the first chance he got to enter the Parliament. “Yes, I know that the BJP considers Bankipur as its stronghold. Voters here have repeatedly reposed their trust in Nitin Nabin. But Nitin Nabin took no time in forgetting them. He abandoned the seat at the first opportunity to enter Parliament”, he told. Nitin Nabin was elected from the Bankipur seat

five teams, giving the BJP optimism for a repeat victory, despite the fact that the BJP President is not running. On Tuesday, Union Minister Giriraj Singh voiced confidence in the party and stated that Kishor had no chance.”Prashant Kishor has previously contested elections. “His face has already been revealed,” Begusarai MP Giriraj Singh told reporters here. Prashant Kishor was supposed to run for the Raghupur seat in the Bihar Assembly elections last year, but he decided against it just days before the poll. Meanwhile, Trinamool MP Shatrughan Sinha had a different reaction to Prashant Kishor’s candidacy, calling it a “political dhamaka”. Looking at development through the eyes of a ‘Bihari Babu’, Sinha wrote on X: The most deserving, visionary, an intellectual par excellence, a man of the masses, most loved, admired, and talked about personally in totality Prashant Kishor at last has jumped into the fray and has created a real sensation, in political circles and in public, all over the country by entering into the By-elections, Patna, Bihar.”

He also said that he found Kishor’s move interesting and said that the present times call for unity, but didn’t expand on what

Before the Bengal rape-murder horror, an 11-year-old was last seen on CCTV

Kolkata, July 07: A CCTV footage has emerged as a key link in the rape and death of an 11-year-old girl in Baruipur, around 30 kilometers from Kolkata. The video appears to capture the girl soon before she went missing on Saturday. A day later, her body was discovered tucked inside a sack. Soon after, enraged townspeople lynched a man, believing he was involved in the girl’s rape and murder.According to her family, the girl, who is in Class 6, went out on Saturday afternoon to buy a birthday gift for a friend. When she didn’t return by 6 p.m., her frightened relatives began searching for her. Locals quickly joined the hunt, attempting to locate her using CCTV footage. Around 9 p.m., a missing person complaint was filed, and the police used the film to identify a suspect.According to reports, she was observed being dragged away by four people, and investigations are underway to identify them. An official informed PTI that they are investigating CCTV footage, forensic evidence, and witness accounts to arrest the offenders. Prabhas Mondal and Dibakar Sadar, arrested in connection with the crime, were sentenced to 14 days in police custody Wednesday. A third person has apparently been arrested. A complaint has been filed for rape, gang-rape, murder, criminal conspiracy, destruction of evidence, and under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.The authorities suspect the girl was thrown into the pond while still alive, as water was discovered in her lungs and stomach during the post-mortem investigation. Water frequently enters the lungs during drowning.The study also confirmed the sexual assault. According to sources, the investigation revealed considerable bleeding from a head injury as well as various injuries to her private parts. Scratches and bite marks were also discovered on various parts of her body, reports say. The National Commission for Women (NCW) has taken suo motu cognizance of the Baruipur horror and requested a report from the state’s Director General of Police (DGP) within seven days.Aside from a full report on the measures implemented and a progress report, the NCW has also requested information on the death of a suspect as a result of mob lynching.

Maharashtra cop carries a 72-year-old woman on his shoulders during flood rescue

Mumbai, July 07: A Maharashtra police officer carried a 72-year-old woman on his shoulders through waist-deep floodwaters in the Sarasai area of Raigad district after a state bus became stranded.Rasayani Police personnel conducted a rescue effort with the support of the Help Foundation, evacuating all eight passengers. Photos of a police officer carrying an elderly woman and assisting her in safety over the flooded stretch went popular on social media. On X, Raigad Police stated, “Rasayani Police’s quick action helped rescue 8 passengers stranded in a ST bus in the flooding. They also securely brought out a 72-year-old elderly woman, demonstrating an extraordinary level of responsibility consciousness.According to Rasayani Police Senior Inspector Abhijit Bhujbal, they received an alarm that an MSRTC bus was caught in floodwaters at Sarasai, trapping passengers inside.

The police jumped into action, coordinating with volunteers from the Help



Foundation and rushing to the scene to begin the rescue effort.Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis stated on Monday that the state was on high alert because heavy rain was predicted to persist until July 8. He also cautioned that Nashik could experience cloud-burst-like rain on Tuesday. The State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) on Monday advised private companies in Mumbai to allow employees to work from home wherever possible. In an advisory, the SDMA said a red and orange alert had been issued for parts of the Konkan and coastal dis-

tricts on July 6 and 7 due to the possibility of very heavy rainfall. Meanwhile, the Bombay High Court reduced attendance standards for its employees due to the weather.

In an office order, the Registrar General stated that, per the Acting Chief Justice’s instructions, ministerial officers and staff who live in remote places and are unable to access the court owing to heavy rain shall not be marked absent.Schools and institutions in Mumbai remained closed on Monday as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange signal.

Tribal man dies, family protests with body because bank delays money due to KYC

Ranchi, July 07: A tribal man died purportedly owing to a lack of treatment after failing to get funds from his Jharkhand Gramin Bank account on time, provoking protests in Garhwa district.Angry family members and villagers staged a sit-in at the bank on Monday, carrying Ratan Lakra’s body and claimed that the bank’s incompetence caused his death.The incident occurred within the jurisdiction of the Bargarh Police Station.Jharkhand is a tribal-dominated state, yet the death of a tribal due to a lack of treatment, along with allegations of systemic negligence, has prompted severe concerns. According to the family, money was in the bank account but was not released since the e-KYC process had not been completed. By the time the e-KYC was completed, the patient had died from a lack of treatment. After they did not get the money on time, agitated relatives and villagers reached Jharkhand Gramin Bank with the body and

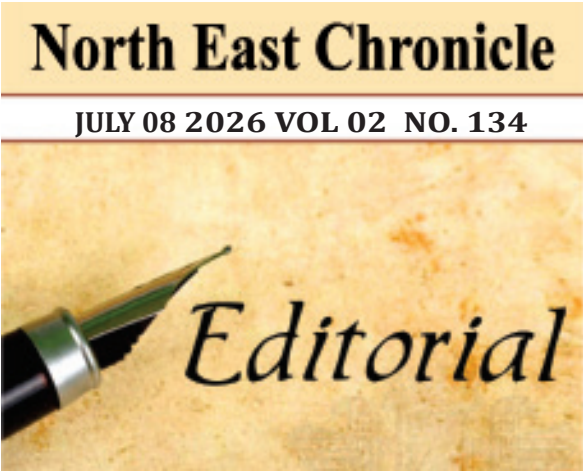


staged a protest.The family alleged that the bank manager made them run around for three months to get the e-KYC done. Later, on the instructions of the regional manager, they brought the ailing man, who was on his deathbed, to the bank for e-KYC. Even after the e-KYC was completed, they were made to run around for the money, which they never received. Ratan Lakra died on Monday. Lakra used to receive a government pension in his Gramin Bank account and the money was meant for his treatment.The relatives and villagers are now demanding action against those responsible.“We kept running from pillar to post. Even after the e-KYC was

completed, we were not given the money.

Today he has died because he could not get treatment,” Phoolmani Toppo, Lakra’s daughter-in-law, said. Bank officials, however, denied the family’s assertions. “The e-KYC had been completed, but no family member came to the bank to withdraw the funds.

That is why no funds were withdrawn. Vikas Kumar, Cashier at Jharkhand Gramin Bank, stated that the body was brought to the bank today after his death. The bank maintained that the funds were still available in the account and denied withholding them. Police say they are investigating into the situation.



The School Bag Keeps Getting Heavier

For many children, the school day begins with carrying a bag filled with textbooks, notebooks, and study materials. Despite repeated discussions on reducing academic burden, heavy school bags continue to be a concern in many educational institutions.

The issue is not merely about physical weight. It reflects a broader education system that often prioritises volume over understanding. Students spend long hours memorising information while having limited time for sports, creativity, or independent learning.

A child’s enthusiasm for learning should not be weighed down by unnecessary academic pressure.

where stricter limits exist on private funding of political parties. Supporters of reform believe that reducing the role of large donors would help restore confidence among voters and ensure that political decisions are made in the public interest rather than shaped by financial influence.

However, reforming political funding presents challenges because major parties often rely on significant financial support from donors and affiliated organisations. Any attempt to introduce donation limits would require broad agreement and could affect traditional sources of party funding. Supporters of change argue that transparency and fairness must take priority over political convenience.

The debate also reflects wider concerns about inequality and the relationship between wealth and political power. Many voters believe that the richest individuals and organisations have too much influence over public policy. The perception that wealth can buy access or shape government decisions has weakened confidence in democratic institutions.

Economic fairness will also be a major issue facing the new government. Questions over taxation, wealth distribution, and support for working families are expected to dominate political debates. Supporters of tax reforms argue that those with greater financial resources should contribute more, while opponents warn against policies they believe could affect investment and economic growth.

At the heart of these challenges is a question of political priorities. A government must decide how to balance economic management, social protection, and public trust. Addressing child poverty and cleaning up political finance may appear to be separate issues, but both are connected by a larger concern: whether government decisions are made fairly and whether citizens believe the system works for them.

The first 100 days of the new administration will therefore be closely watched. Tackling hunger among children, strengthening political transparency, and reducing the influence of excessive wealth in public life would send a powerful message about the values and priorities of the government. For millions facing financial hardship, meaningful action will matter more than political promises.

Campaigners argue that political donations should be capped to reduce the influence of wealthy individuals and organisations. They point to systems in other countries

The Day Mohammad Never Came Home: A Mother’s Story of Loss in the West Bank

Time feels universal. Every human being experiences the passing of moments, the sequence of events, and the movement from past to present and future. Yet, while humans share the same physical world with countless other species, scientists are increasingly discovering that animals may not experience that world in the same temporal way. A bumblebee flying through a garden, a sparrow rapidly changing direction between trees, and a snail slowly crossing a stone path may all exist within the same environment, but each could be living in a completely different version of time. Their experiences are shaped by their senses, their nervous systems, and the speed at which their brains process information.

The question of whether animals experience time differently from humans has fascinated scientists because perception is not simply a passive recording of reality. Every species creates its own interpretation of the world based on the information available through its senses. Humans, bees, birds, and insects do not see or hear the environment in identical ways. Some animals can detect wavelengths of light invisible to humans, while others perceive sounds beyond our hearing range. Similarly, the speed at which different species process sensory information may create entirely different experiences of time.

Researchers studying this question use the concept of a “timescape” to describe how a species experiences the flow of events. A timescape refers to the way sensory information is collected, organised, updated, and transformed into a continuous experience. Just as different animals occupy different physical environments, they may also inhabit different temporal environments. The world may appear slower or faster depending on how quickly an animal’s brain

processes changes around it.

One of the key ways scientists investigate these differences is by studying temporal illusions. These illusions reveal that perception of time is not always an accurate reflection of physical reality. Instead, the brain constantly interprets and adjusts incoming information. By observing how animals respond to similar illusions, researchers can gain insight into how their minds construct their experience of time.

A fascinating example is the auditory continuity illusion. Humans experience this illusion when part of a sound is removed and replaced with noise, but the brain automatically fills in the missing information. For example, if a recording of the phrase “happy birthday” is interrupted with static noise in the middle, listeners usually perceive the phrase as complete rather than hearing a gap. The brain assumes that the missing sound continues behind the interruption.

This ability demonstrates that human perception operates through prediction and correction. The brain does not simply receive information; it actively creates a complete experience by combining current sensory input with expectations based on previous information. Scientists have found that this process occurs within a specific time window. If the interruption lasts too long, the brain can no longer fill in the missing information, suggesting that human perception remains flexible only for a limited period.

Research indicates that some animals also experience similar effects. Studies involving squirrels and starlings have shown that these species can perceive interrupted sounds from members of their own species as continuous. When recordings of animal calls are disrupted with bursts of white noise, the animals respond as though the sounds were un-

interrupted. This suggests that their brains also reconstruct missing sensory information.

However, the time periods during which these animals can revise their perception appear to differ from humans. Starlings seem to have a shorter window for filling in missing sounds, while squirrels have an even shorter one. These differences suggest that the flow of experience may operate at different speeds across species. A moment that feels continuous to a human may be experienced differently by another animal.

Such variations could have important consequences in nature. Animals survive by responding quickly to changes in their surroundings. Predators must detect and track moving prey, while prey animals must identify threats and escape rapidly. The speed at which an animal processes information can determine whether it survives or becomes vulnerable.

The ability to experience events at a faster rate may provide certain animals with advantages. Small flying insects, for example, often appear extremely difficult for humans to catch because their nervous systems processing movement more rapidly. To a human observer, a fly’s movements may seem unpredictable, but from the insect’s perspective, the world may unfold more slowly, allowing it to react quickly to approaching threats.

This difference in temporal perception is sometimes measured through something known as the critical flicker fusion threshold. This refers to the point at which a rapidly flashing light appears to become continuous rather than separate flashes. Species with higher thresholds can detect faster changes in their environment. Humans typically perceive a rapidly flashing light as steady beyond a certain frequency, while some birds and insects can detect much faster changes.

The ability to perceive rapid changes is especially valuable for animals that rely on speed and precision. Birds chasing insects in flight need highly accurate timing and movement detection. Predatory species depend on their ability to judge distance and speed when pursuing prey. Even small differences in temporal processing can influence behaviour, hunting strategies, and survival.

The study of animal timescapes also challenges the assumption that human perception represents the standard way of experiencing reality. Humans often view their own sensory abilities as the reference point for understanding the world, but evolutionary biology reveals that every species has developed unique ways of interacting with its surroundings. There is no single universal experience of reality; instead, there are many versions shaped by different biological systems.

Another important example that helps scientists understand animal perception of time is the visual phenomenon known as the flash-lag illusion. This illusion occurs when the brain struggles to synchronise different types of visual information arriving at slightly different processing speeds. In a typical experiment, a moving object and a sudden flash of light appear at exactly the same location and at the same moment. Despite this physical alignment, humans often perceive the flash as slightly behind the moving object. The reason is that the brain processes movement differently from sudden changes in the visual field. Because the moving object’s position is predicted and updated more quickly, the flash appears to lag behind.

Studies suggest that animals, including monkeys, can also experience this illusion, although the effect is smaller. This indicates that their visual systems may process movement and sudden

flashes more closely together than human vision does. Such differences reveal that animals do not simply observe the same world through weaker or stronger versions of human senses; instead, they may construct entirely different interpretations of events around them.

These variations in time perception have direct consequences for survival. In the natural world, success often depends on responding to changes within fractions of a second. A predator that reacts slightly faster can catch prey, while a prey animal that detects danger earlier can escape. Evolution has therefore shaped the perception of time according to the needs and challenges faced by each species.

One striking example comes from butterflies, which appear to exploit the way predators perceive movement. Many butterfly species have brightly coloured patterns on the upper surfaces of their wings and duller patterns underneath. When butterflies flap their wings during flight, these contrasting patterns create rapid flashes of colour. To a pursuing predator, these sudden changes can make it difficult to accurately judge the butterfly’s position and direction.

This phenomenon, known as motion dazzle, acts as a form of visual confusion. The predator receives constantly changing information and may struggle to predict where the butterfly will move next.

The butterfly’s survival strategy depends not only on speed or camouflage but also on manipulating the predator’s perception of time and movement. In this way, evolution has produced a biological battle between perception and deception.

The concept of different timescapes also helps explain why some animals appear to possess extraordinary reflexes. A bird catching an insect

in mid-air or a cat successfully jumping onto a moving object may seem almost impossible from a human perspective. However, these actions become more understandable when considering that these animals may experience more frequent updates of visual information. Their brains may process environmental changes at a faster rate, giving them more opportunities to react.

This does not necessarily mean that animals experience time in a simple way, such as living in slow motion or fast forward. Rather, their brains may divide continuous events into different numbers of perceptual moments. An animal that processes information more rapidly may experience more changes within the same period that humans experience fewer changes. The result is a different structure of awareness.

The study of timescapes also raises deeper questions about animal consciousness. If different species experience the world differently, what does that mean for understanding their thoughts, emotions, and experiences? Scientists have long debated the extent to which animals possess conscious awareness. While researchers cannot directly access an animal’s subjective experience, studying perception provides clues about how different minds interact with reality.

For example, an animal that remembers past experiences, anticipates future events, and responds to changes in its environment demonstrates some form of temporal awareness. Many species show evidence of memory, planning, and decision-making. Birds store food for future use, mammals navigate complex environments based on past experiences, and insects adjust behaviour according to changing conditions. These abilities suggest that animals are not simply reacting mechanically to the present moment.

Beyond Natural Birth: The Fight for Choice

Pregnancy is often described as one of the most personal experiences in a woman’s life, yet it frequently becomes a subject of public discussion and judgement. From questions about breastfeeding and pain relief to opinions about natural birth or medical intervention, pregnant women often find themselves explaining choices about their own bodies. For many women, the decision about how to give birth is deeply personal, shaped by medical circumstances, emotional wellbeing, previous experiences, and their confidence in the healthcare system. The growing debate around caesarean sections has brought these questions into sharper focus, particularly as more women seek greater control over their birthing experiences.

Reality television personality and political activist Sharon Gaffka has spoken publicly about her decision to have an elective caesarean section, explaining that her choice was based on personal circumstances, concerns about maternity care, and a desire for reassurance during an unpredictable process. Her decision has sparked wider conversations about women’s autonomy, informed choice, and the state of maternity services.

Gaffka has emphasised that her decision is not a criticism of vaginal birth or an argument that every woman should choose a caesarean. Instead, she argues that every woman should have the freedom to make decisions about childbirth based on accurate information and personal circumstances. Birth, she says, is unpredictable, and there is no single method that can be considered

the right choice for everyone.

The discussion comes at a time when caesarean births have become increasingly common. Recent NHS figures indicate that caesarean sections, both planned and emergency procedures, have overtaken vaginal births in England. The increase reflects many factors, including changes in maternal age, medical needs, improved surgical techniques, and changing attitudes towards childbirth. However, it has also raised questions about whether women are receiving genuine choices or whether they are making decisions because of concerns about the safety and reliability of maternity services.

For Gaffka, her decision was influenced by hearing the experiences of other women who described traumatic encounters with maternity care. Through her advocacy work, she has listened to women who reported feeling ignored, unsupported, or excluded from decisions about their own treatment. Some described serious injuries following difficult births, while others spoke about moments when they felt their concerns were not taken seriously by healthcare professionals.

A recurring theme among these accounts was the feeling that women were not being heard. Several investigations into maternity services in the UK have highlighted concerns about communication failures, poor support, and a lack of respect for women’s choices. Reviews such as the Ockenden report into maternity services at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust found evidence of serious shortcomings and raised concerns

about women losing autonomy during pregnancy and childbirth.

Another review of maternity services also highlighted the need for improvements in care, particularly as patterns of childbirth continue to change. Women are increasingly having children later in life, and caesarean sections have become more common. Healthcare systems must adapt to these changing realities while ensuring that women remain at the centre of decisions about their own care.

The issue of informed consent has become a central part of the debate. While medical procedures can sometimes be necessary to protect the health of mothers and babies, women’s rights advocates argue that decisions should involve clear communication, respect, and genuine choice. Some women have reported feeling pressured into medical interventions, while others have felt denied access to procedures they believed would provide reassurance or safety.

For Gaffka, concerns about maternity care became even more personal because of her own background. Research has repeatedly shown that Black and Asian women experience poorer outcomes during pregnancy and childbirth compared with white women. These inequalities have been linked to multiple factors, including healthcare access, communication barriers, and systemic issues within medical services.

As a British-Asian woman, Gaffka explained that statistics about maternity inequality felt different when she became pregnant herself. Numbers that once seemed like distant research find-

ings became a personal concern. Her experience reflects a wider reality for many women from minority communities who enter pregnancy aware of unequal outcomes and potential risks.

However, she also acknowledged that her own experience with healthcare professionals was largely positive. She described meeting supportive midwives and receiving good care during pregnancy. Her decision was not based on a belief that all maternity services are unsafe, but rather on the uncertainty created by wider reports of failures and concerns within the system.

One of the strongest arguments behind elective caesareans is the sense of control they can provide. Pregnancy and childbirth involve many unpredictable factors, and women often experience a significant loss of control over their bodies and circumstances. For some, planning a caesarean provides emotional reassurance by reducing uncertainty around the timing and process of delivery.

Supporters of planned caesareans argue that emotional wellbeing is an important part of maternity care. Anxiety, previous trauma, or fear of complications can significantly affect a woman’s experience of childbirth. A decision that provides confidence and peace of mind can therefore be meaningful, even when there are no immediate medical reasons requiring surgery.

At the same time, caesarean sections are major surgical procedures and carry their own risks. They can involve longer recovery periods, potential complications, and implications for future pregnancies. Medical experts gener-

ally emphasise that the decision should involve careful discussion between women and healthcare providers, balancing personal preferences with medical considerations.

The debate is therefore not about choosing one type of birth over another. Rather, it is about ensuring that women feel respected and supported regardless of their choice.

A woman who chooses a vaginal birth should receive the same encouragement and support as a woman who chooses a caesarean. The central issue is whether women feel empowered to make informed decisions without pressure or judgement.

The wider challenge for maternity services is rebuilding trust. Women should not feel that they must choose a particular method of delivery because they lack confidence in the healthcare system. They should feel safe knowing that their concerns will be listened to, their preferences respected, and their medical needs addressed.

The goal of maternity care should be a system where every woman enters childbirth believing she will be supported. Whether a birth happens naturally, through assisted delivery, or by caesarean section, the experience should be based on dignity, communication, and trust.

Gaffka’s decision has highlighted a larger conversation about women’s rights, healthcare quality, and personal choice. Her message is not that caesareans are better than vaginal births, but that women deserve the freedom to make decisions about their own bodies without criticism.

MY Bharat platform provides more than 1.52 lakh volunteering opportunities

New Delhi: The Centre on Sunday said the MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat) platform has emerged as a key digital initiative to engage India's young population, offering more than 1.52 lakh volunteering opportunities across sectors such as cleanliness drives, blood donation, sports, disaster response and community service as of June 2026.

Launched in October 2023 under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, MY Bharat was conceived to place young people at the centre of nation-building. The government said the platform connects educational institutions, government agencies, industry and non-profit organisations, enabling millions of young Indians to access learning, volunteering and career opportunities through a single digital interface.

It also provides end-to-end digital volunteer management, including online registration, attendance, geo-tagging, certificate generation



and impact tracking.

The government said that, as of July 2026, MY Bharat hosts more than 24,900 Experiential Learning Programmes (ELPs) to promote hands-on learning and improve workforce readiness. The platform also facilitates internships, apprenticeships, industry exposure, AI-powered resume building and mentoring support to help young people prepare for academic and

professional careers.

It further said the initiative promotes civic awareness and leadership through quizzes, competitions and youth parliament programmes focused on governance, the Constitution, public policy and national issues. Initiatives such as the Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament are aimed at strengthening leadership skills and encouraging informed participation in democratic pro-

cesses. The government highlighted that the 'MY Bharat MY Vote' campaign encouraged constitutional awareness and informed voting among first-time voters. It added that the National Youth Festival: Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2026 witnessed participation from more than 50.42 lakh youth, making it one of the country's largest youth consultation exercises. The Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue offered a national platform for young people to deliberate on ideas and solutions for achieving the Viksit Bharat@2047 vision.

According to the government, the Youth for Viksit Bharat – MY Bharat Youth Convention 2026 brought together over 6,000 participants to celebrate the aspirations and achievements of the Amrit Peedhi. The Nari Shakti Youth Parliament, conducted across 17 zones, engaged more than 7,000 young women in democratic dialogue and policy discussions.

Tata Steel aims to spend Rs 20,000 cr in FY27 on expansion

New Delhi: Tata Steel is looking to spend around Rs 20,000 crore as capex in the current financial year and a major share of it will be spent to support the India business, the company's management said. The capex for the ongoing FY27 will be around 38 per cent higher from Rs 14,559 crore that Tata Steel has spent on capital expenditure in the preceding 2025-26 financial year. "In FY26, we spent Rs 14,559 crore on capital expenditure, and we plan to increase this to approximately Rs 20,000 crore in FY 2026-27, with 60 per cent allocated to India," said Tata Steel's CEO & MD T V Narendran, and Koushik Chatterjee, the company's Executive Director & Chief Financial Officer. The management made the statement in reply to a question related to Tata Steel's capex plans and long-term growth strategy. They said the capital allocation strategy for FY27 focuses on a balanced mix of sustenance projects, ongoing investments in value-added downstream and infrastructure projects, new technologies, and long-term growth projects, with a clear emphasis on India. This includes expansions in tinplate and wires, the HRPGL (Hot Rolled Pickling & Galvanising Line) facility at Tarapur, and the Coke Ovens project at Jamshedpur. In addition, we are continuing to invest in mining, a stronger supply chain and sustainability of operations," the company officials said. Tata Steel has a consolidated

steelmaking capacity of over 36 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) — excluding the UK's 3.2 MT under transition — in India (27.35 MT), the Netherlands (7 MT), and Thailand (1.7 MT) to cover South East Asian markets. The company aims to increase its capacity to over 50 million tonne in the long-term. The increase will be mainly in India, where the company is working on plans to add over 12 MT. In India, the company owns and operates an 11 MTPA steel plants at Jamshedpur, and 1 MTPA at Gamharia in Jharkhand. In Odisha's Kalinganagar, the company has 9 MTPA production capacity, that includes Neelancha Ipsat Nigam Ltd (NINL), which it had acquired through insolvency route. Tata Steel also operates a 5.6 MTPA plan in Odisha's Meramandali. With the expansion of capacities and transition to low-emitting steel making routes, the company aims to have 40 MTPA steelmaking capacity in India from present 27.35 MTPA, which includes recently commission 0.75 MT electric arc furnace in Punjab.

The company is pursuing 4.8 MTPA Phase-I expansion at NINL enhancing its presence in long-products segment and capitalising on growth in infrastructure and retail steel. It has also formed a strategic partnership with Lloyds Metals & Energy Ltd to develop the emerging Gadchiroli iron ore hub and evaluate a phased greenfield steel capacity of 6 MTPA.

Global Markets Offer Mixed Cues as Selling Pressure Weighs on Most Asian Equities

New Delhi: Global markets presented mixed signals today. U.S. markets ended the previous trading session on a strong note, while Dow Jones futures continued to trade in positive territory. European markets closed with mixed results, whereas most Asian markets witnessed selling pressure during early trading.

Following the Independence Day holiday on Friday, U.S. markets resumed trading in an optimistic mood during the previous session. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 155.84 points, or 0.29 per cent, to close at 53,055.91. The S&P 500 advanced 0.72 per cent to finish at 7,537.43, while the Nasdaq gained 288.49 points, or 1.12 per cent, to settle at 26,121.16. Meanwhile, Dow Jones futures were trading 0.11 per cent



higher at 53,114.30. European markets ended the previous session with mixed performances. The FTSE Index declined 0.26 per cent to close at 10,651.77, while France's CAC Index slipped 0.33 per cent to 8,479.87. In contrast, Germany's DAX Index gained 0.15 per cent to finish at 25,817.89. Asian markets,

however, were largely under pressure on Monday. Of the nine major Asian markets being tracked, seven were trading in negative territory, while only two posted gains.

Singapore's Straits Times Index rose 0.61 per cent to 5,291.90. Indonesia's Jakarta Composite Index also traded higher, gaining 0.59

per cent to reach 5,951.20. On the downside, GIFT Nifty slipped marginally by 0.03 per cent to trade at 24,485. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index fell 150.32 points, or 0.64 per cent, to 23,466. South Korea's Kospi Index witnessed sharp selling pressure and was trading 577.30 points, or 7.17 per cent, lower at 7,474.03.

Japan's Nikkei Index also recorded a significant decline, falling 1,250.69 points, or 1.79 per cent, to 68,487.

Elsewhere in the region, Thailand's SET Composite Index was down 1.15 per cent at 1,598.33, China's Shanghai Composite Index declined 1.04 per cent to 3,999.03, while Taiwan's Weighted Index slipped 441.86 points, or 0.95 per cent, to 46,114.53.

Microsoft to cut 4,800 jobs, reshape Xbox business and spin off gaming studios

New Delhi: Microsoft will cut 4,800 jobs, or about 2.1% of its global workforce, as the technology giant undertakes a sweeping overhaul of its Xbox gaming business and seeks better returns from years of heavy investment in the division. The company's gaming arm

will account for 3,200 of the job losses, with 1,600 employees being laid off immediately. The restructuring will also see several Microsoft-owned game developers separated from the company or placed under strategic review. The changes mark one of the biggest resets at Xbox

since Microsoft completed its \$69-billion acquisition of Activision Blizzard. While the deal significantly expanded Microsoft's catalogue of games, Xbox has continued to trail Sony's PlayStation and Nintendo in the console market. Microsoft has also been mov-

ing away from a strategy centred on exclusive Xbox titles. The company is increasingly releasing told employees that four studios would be divested as part of the restructuring. Compulsion Games, the developer behind South of Midnight, and D

OPEC+ set to consider modest oil output hike for Aug amid easing supply



Mumbai: OPEC+ is expected to consider another modest increase in oil production quotas for August as the alliance continues unwinding earlier supply cuts, with delegates indicating that seven key producers have reached a preliminary agreement ahead of a virtual meeting on Sunday.

According to delegates, the proposed increase would raise the combined production target of seven major producers, led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, by 188,000 barrels per day if approved during the video conference. The move is in line with the group's strategy to gradually reverse production curbs introduced in 2023 to support oil prices. If implemented, the latest increase would bring the cumulative quota additions since the policy reversal began to around 940,000 barrels per day, equivalent to nearly 1 per cent of global oil demand. While previous production increases remained largely on paper due to disruptions caused by the conflict in the region and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the recent interim peace agreement between the United States and Iran has enabled major Gulf producers to restore exports and output. Saudi Arabia and the

United Arab Emirates have already brought oil exports close to pre-conflict levels, according to tanker-tracking data, aided by improved shipping access through the Strait of Hormuz following the easing of tensions.

The return of additional supplies has contributed to a surplus in key Asian markets, reversing the sharp rise in oil prices witnessed during the conflict and increasing the possibility of intensified competition among OPEC producers for market share. The production decision also comes at a time when OPEC+ is facing internal challenges. Iraq, one of the organisation's founding members, recently indicated that it could eventually consider leaving the group if it is not granted a higher production quota.

The United Arab Emirates had previously exited the alliance in May following similar concerns over production limits.

If approved, the August increase would represent the penultimate phase of restoring two layers of production cuts implemented in 2023, with one final increase expected in September to complete the process.

India-UK trade agreement set to come into force

New Delhi: The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), set to come into force on July 15, provides duty-free access for 99 per cent of India's exports to the UK.

According to the latest notification from Finance Ministry that set out the rules, a product will qualify as originating in India or the UK if it is wholly obtained in either country, produced entirely from originating materials, or manufactured using non-originating inputs while meeting the product-specific origin requirements prescribed under the agreement. The rules, issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), establish the framework for determining whether goods qualify for preferential tariff treatment under the agreement and lay down compliance requirements for exporters and importers. According to the notification, "these rules may be called the Customs Tariff (Determination of Origin of Goods under Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between India and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) Rules, 2026. They



shall come into force on the 15th July, 2026".

The framework allows cumulative treatment of originating materials, enabling inputs originating in one partner country to be treated as originating in the other when used in further production. It also specifies that activities such as simple repackaging, relabelling, washing, sorting, polishing, simple assembly and other minor operations will not be sufficient to confer originating status on a product. Customs authorities will have powers to verify origin claims and deny preferential treatment where products fail to meet the prescribed conditions.

The rules also provide flexibility for importers who fail to claim tariff benefits at the time of import.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said recently that the India-UK CETA will further deepen collaboration across trade, investment, and innovation, contributing to shared prosperity for both nations.

The CETA will create new avenues for professionals. In London, Goyal urged Indian companies to deepen engagement with their UK counterparts and translate opportunities under the CETA into sustained business growth.

Addressing the 'India-UK: Partners in Progress Business Plenary' in London, Goyal said the landmark trade pact offers significant opportunities to strengthen bilateral trade, investment, technology partnerships, innovation and resilient supply chains.

FM hails Indian scientists and engineers in France

Mumbai: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addressed the Indian community in France, lauding their role as a formidable force that enhances India's soft power, global standing, and bilateral relationships.

She delivered the keynote address to the Indian diaspora at a gathering in Marseille, France. Later, the Union Finance Minister also interacted with the members of the Indian diaspora, according to Finance Ministry.

She also interacted with Indian professionals from Larsen & Toubro (L&T) contributing to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project in Cadarache, France.

ITER is a large-scale international collaboration aimed at building the world's largest experimental tokamak nuclear fusion reactor. The project involves seven main member countries, including India, with additional cooperation agreements with many other countries, according to a post on X by Finance Ministry. FM Sitharaman also witnessed a presentation and India's contribution to ITER by Alain Becoulet and Kattalai Ramachandran Sriram.

Later, during the guided visit, the Finance Minister was informed of the facilities at ITER with a walk through



Cleaning Hall and Assembly Hall Walk and a view of Tokamak Pit.

The Finance Minister appreciated the dedication of the ITER engineers and scientists engaged in ITER experiment, which is one of the most ambitious nuclear fusion energy projects in the world, and a significant step toward sustainable and limitless clean energy for the future. She also commended the work of Indian scientists, engineers and associates, as well as notable industry players such as L&T, Inox India, TCS, TCE, HCL Technologies, among oth-

ers, who are contributing to the project over the last two decades.

Earlier, India and France discussed potential areas for greater bilateral cooperation in critical minerals, economic sovereignty and security policies, and further enhance the financial industries connect between both the nations.

FM Sitharaman and Roland Lescure, Minister of Economy, Finance, Industrial, Energy, and Digital Sovereignty of France, co-chaired the India-France Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) in Aix-en-Provence.

Calls grow for Graham Platner to drop out after sexual assault allegation

America: Calls for Graham Platner, the Democratic candidate for US Senate in Maine, to withdraw his candidacy intensified Monday after a woman accused him of sexual assault in an exclusive report by Politico.

While Platner denied the claims, many top Democratic figures quickly called on the beleaguered nominee to step down.

In a joint statement, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer and Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee chair Kirsten Gillibrand said Platner should “immediately withdraw”.

“The allegations reported today are incredibly disturbing – violence, abuse and sexual assault are absolutely unacceptable,” they said. “The DSCC will not invest in the Maine Senate race if Platner remains on the ballot.”

Maine’s Democratic party leadership said Platner should withdraw from the race, while Ro Khanna, the California representative who has been one of Platner’s most vocal supporters, also said he should drop out. “I’ve been very clear that sexual assault or violence against women is a red line,” he wrote on X. “These allegations are very serious and credible. Graham Platner

should drop out from the race. I am withdrawing my endorsement.”

Elizabeth Warren, the Massachusetts senator who endorsed Platner in March, said in a statement “there can be no tolerance for sexual assault”. She said: “With so much at stake, the best path forward is for Graham Platner to step aside as the Democratic nominee and address these serious allegations outside this Senate race.”

Ruben Gallego, a Democratic senator from Arizona, also said on X: “The allegations against Graham Platner are troubling and deeply serious. I am rescinding my endorsement.”

Martin Heinrich, a Democratic senator from New Mexico who had also supported Platner in the primary, said he could “no longer support” his candidacy. “He should step aside,” Heinrich said in a statement.

In the Politico report, published on Monday, Jenny Racicot, 41, who previously dated Platner, said he forced her to have sex despite repeated objections.

Platner denied the claims in a statement to Politico. “These allegations are troubling, serious, and false. Any accusation of non-consensual behavior is categorically untrue,” he said.

Racicot told the outlet she



had an on-and-off relationship with Platner for more than two years. She alleges that in late 2021, an intoxicated Platner entered her home uninvited and forced himself on her. Racicot said she terminated contact after the encounter.

The report cited accounts from a man Racicot later confided in, as well as recent therapist emails, and messages where she warned an acquaintance about Platner

in 2023.

Platner, an oyster farmer and former marine veteran, who secured the Democratic nomination and faces the Republican senator Susan Collins in the general election, has faced a series of scandals before this week. Platner has cast himself as a populist everyman with an anti-oligarchy message.

Before his run for public office, he made controversial comments on social media

and got a Nazi-linked tattoo, which has since been covered up. Platner has said he did not initially understand the meaning of the tattoo.

In a video message on Monday published after the Politico report, Platner again said the accusations were false, but that he was mindful of the political reality the accusation will carry.

“We are taking the time to reflect on the best path forward for the state that I love,

the people that I love, the movement I belong to and the goal of defeating Susan Collins,” Platner said.

He thanked the voters who helped propel him to the nomination as a political newcomer.

“You never turned your back on me, and I will not turn my back on you now,” he said. “Every one of you deserves to see that vision come to fruition, and see Susan Collins defeated, and

we will use every tool at our disposal to do so. As Maine goes, so goes the nation.”

Collins herself weighed in on social media: “These allegations are appalling. Nevertheless, it is not up to me to choose the Democratic nominee for Senate.”

Racicot was one of several women who spoke to the New York Times for a previous story in June about Platner’s “unsettling” behavior with women he dated. She told Politico she hesitated to make her claim public because she had a “huge moral conflict” between supporting Platner’s politics and not supporting him as a person. She also said she did not share the sexual assault claims with the New York Times for their story because she did not want to be known as a rape victim.

Racicot told Politico she had previously had consensual relations with Platner, until a night in 2021 when he allegedly let himself into her unlocked house and forced himself on her. She said she repeatedly told him to stop and that she believed he was “almost blackout drunk”.

According to Politico, Racicot accused Platner of having sex with her against her will and ejaculating inside her after she told him not to. There was no police report

filed at the time.

Platner’s campaign said the senatorial candidate “vigorously denies” the claims.

“These allegations are very serious and Graham vigorously denies them,” the statement said. “They are also coached and coordinated by out of state establishment operatives. For a year, opponents of this campaign have thrown everything they can at Graham – calling him a Nazi, a war criminal, and a communist. None of it has been true and this is no different.

“It is not a coincidence that this story comes a week before the ballot deadline, just as the previous false allegations came a week before the primary. Graham began this campaign to fight for a Maine where everyone is treated with dignity and where Mainers are put first, and no amount of desperate smears will stop this movement from seeing that vision through.”

Should Democrats decide to replace Platner as the party’s nominee in the Maine Senate race, Platner would have to drop out by 5pm ET on 13 July, according to state law. The Democratic party will then have a two-week window – until 27 July – to select a replacement candidate.

Tanker on fire in Strait of Hormuz after being hit by projectile off Oman

Tehran: A tanker travelling off the coast of Oman in the Strait of Hormuz has caught fire after being struck by a projectile, according to the United Kingdom’s military.

The attack early on Tuesday was the latest targeting a vessel moving through the Gulf’s critical waterway, through which a fifth of the world’s oil and natural gas passed before the US-Israel war on Iran began in late February. Iranian television said the liquefied natural gas tanker came under attack after ignoring warnings, but Tehran did not directly claim the assault.

Tehran has repeatedly declared that only its approved route through the Strait of Hormuz is safe, and it is suspected of attacking other ships that have used another



route close to the Omani shore.

The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) centre said the tanker had been hit near Limah, Oman, in the strait. The projectile hit the port side of the vessel while it was trying to travel south out of the strait towards the Gulf of Oman, the UKMTO said.

Talks between Iran and the United States on a permanent end to the war appear to be on hold until after the burial of Iran’s former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed at the beginning of the US-Israel war on Iran on February 28.

Authorities flew Khamenei’s body to the Shia seminary city of Qom overnight, where mourners honoured him on Tuesday.

More than 300 children killed in Sudan war in 6 months, UNICEF says

Cairo: More than 300 children have been killed or injured in the last six months in the war in Sudan, mostly from drone strikes, the U.N. children’s agency said Monday.

The Sudanese military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces have been fighting since April 2023.

The war is now concentrated in the Kordofan, Darfur and Blue Nile states, with drone warfare causing 60% of casualties, according to UNICEF.

The U.N., U.S, U.K. and others have expressed alarm about potential atrocities as the RSF and the military fight for control of the strategic city of el-Obeid in North Kordofan.

In Geneva on Monday, the U.N.-backed Human Rights Council approved a measure, brought by five European



countries, condemning the escalating violence by the RSF and its allies in and around el-Obeid.

The measure, approved without a vote, also encourages greater support for countries hosting refugees from Sudan and condemns “all forms of external interference” in the war, among other things.

The conflict has killed at least 59,000 people, displaced

some 13 million and pushed many parts of Sudan into famine. More than 30 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Drone strikes and shelling have targeted civilian infrastructure including schools, markets, fuel and water stations, putting over 500,000 people at risk. Civilians in some areas have faced almost siegelike conditions for over a year.

“Children are being caught in a relentless cycle of violence, displacement and deprivation,” said Sheldon Yett, UNICEF representative for Sudan.

The U.N. called on parties “to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, allow and facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access, and take all possible measures to protect children from harm.”

Marine Le Pen’s 2027 bid for French presidency is at stake in Paris court ruling

Paris: French far-right leader Marine Le Pen’s political future is on the line Tuesday as a Paris appeals court rules on her eligibility to stand in the next presidential election.

The verdict will be delivered from 1:30 p.m. and could take several hours to read. It could reshape the 2027 contest to replace President Emmanuel Macron if it forces the popular Le Pen out of the picture. The constitution prevents Macron from seeking a third consecutive term.

Le Pen, 57, is appealing a March 2025 conviction that found her and other members of her National Rally party guilty of misusing European Parliament funds by paying party staff with money intended for EU parliamentary assistants between 2004 and 2016.

The lower court sentenced her to prison time, suspended pending appeal, and imposed a five-year ban on holding elected office.

Le Pen has denied any wrongdoing and still hopes to mount a fourth bid for the presidency. But a verdict that upholds a lengthy ban could make that impossible and suspend her career that has transformed the National Rally into a major political force.

Such a verdict could also reverberate on the European Union, by sidelining a fierce critic of the 27-nation bloc.

If she is barred, her protegee Jordan Bardella would replace her. Bardella, 30, is the current president of the anti-immigration, EU-skeptic National Rally.

Other outcomes also are possible.



The appeals court could still find Le Pen guilty but reduce the ban on holding elected

office to two years or less — or impose no ban at all.

A ban of two years or less would expire before the first round of the French presidential election, scheduled in April 2027.

But that does not automatically mean Le Pen would run. She has said that if the court imposes other constraints that make campaigning difficult, she might decide not to run. That could include any prison sentence, electronic monitoring or other judicial restrictions.

“If I’m allowed to be a candidate but am effectively prevented from campaigning freely, then you understand that wouldn’t be possible,” Le Pen said in an interview last week.

Prosecutors asked the appeals court to sentence Le Pen to four

years in prison, including three suspended, in addition to a ban on holding elected office for five years.

They accused Le Pen of being at the head of a “system” meant to “siphon off” EU public funds to the benefit of her party.

Although prosecutors did not ask for it, the appeals court is free to order the ban on holding elected office to take immediate effect, like the lower court did.

Le Pen could still appeal to the Court of Cassation, France’s highest court, but it’s unclear whether judges would suspend the sentence pending a final ruling.

The Court of Cassation has previously said that, if asked to review the case, it would seek to issue a ruling before the 2027 presidential election.

10 Pairs of Stretchable Jeans for All-Day Comfort



Locating stylish jeans is a straightforward task. However, discovering jeans that provide comfort from morning meetings to evening dinner plans presents a different challenge. The key is in stretchable denim. By incorporating the appropriate amount of elastane into cotton, these jeans adapt to your movements rather than constraining them, thereby enhancing comfort during long commutes, travel, workdays, and weekend activities. The Amazon Sale is a great opportunity to invest in versatile denim staples that you'll actually reach for every week. From timeless straight-leg fits and flattering flared silhouettes to relaxed baggy styles and classic mom jeans, these stretchable options deliver comfort without compromising on style. Stretchable jeans for women

1. INKD Women's Flared Pull-On Jeans: Pull-on jeans have become increasingly popular because they eliminate uncomfortable waistbands while offering a smooth, flattering fit. This pair from INKD combines the ease of leggings with the polished appearance of denim. The mid-rise fit feels supportive without digging into the waist, while the flared silhouette balances proportions beautifully. Available in plus sizes, they're an excellent everyday option for women who prioritize comfort but still want a fashionable look.

2. Amazon Brand Symbol Women's Baggy Wide Leg Jeans: Baggy jeans continue to dominate fashion trends, and this high-rise pair delivers both comfort and effortless style. The relaxed wide-leg fit allows unrestricted movement, making these ideal for travel, shopping or casual weekends. The structured waistband keeps the look polished while the roomy silhouette creates an easy-going aesthetic that works across seasons.

3. Miss Chase Women's Skinny High Rise Cropped Fringed Hem Jeans: For those who prefer a sleek silhouette, these skinny jeans offer stretch exactly where it's needed. The high-rise waistband provides support while the cropped length and fringed hem add a playful fashion-forward finish. The fabric hugs comfortably without feeling overly restrictive, making these

ideal for both daytime outings and evening plans. Style tip: Style with heels or loafers to show off the cropped hem.

4. Levi's Women's Mom Loose Tapered Fit High Rise Jeans: Mom jeans remain one of the easiest denim styles to wear, and Levi's delivers a timeless version with this relaxed high-rise pair. The loose fit through the hips combined with a tapered ankle creates a flattering shape that suits almost every body type. Comfortable enough for all-day wear, these jeans offer the perfect balance between vintage-inspired style and modern practicality. Style tip: Pair with graphic tees, sneakers and a denim jacket for an effortless weekend look.

5. Nifty Women's Cotton Blend Stretchable Mid Rise Jeans: If comfort tops your priority list, these stretchable cotton-blend jeans are worth considering. The mid-rise waistband sits comfortably without feeling too high or too low, while the flexible denim moves naturally with your body throughout the day. They're simple, versatile and ideal for women looking for reliable everyday jeans at an affordable price. Style tip: Team them with casual shirts, kurtis or oversized sweaters.

6. Symbol Premium Women's Loose Flared Jeans: These loose flared jeans combine two of today's biggest denim trends in one comfortable package. The ankle-length cut keeps the look contemporary, while the cotton-blend stretch fabric makes walking, travelling and sitting for long hours much easier. Available in plus sizes, they're designed to flatter without sacrificing comfort. Style tip: Pair with platform sandals and fitted tops for a balanced silhouette.

7. Levi's Women's 725 Flared Fit High Rise Jeans: Levi's 725 is one of those wardrobe staples that rarely goes out of style. The high-rise waistband defines the

waist beautifully, while the subtle flare elongates the legs and creates an elegant profile. The stretch denim ensures the jeans remain comfortable throughout long workdays or weekend outings without losing their shape. Style tip: Style with tucked-in blouses and block heels for a polished appearance.

8. Amazon Brand Symbol Women's Loose Flared Jeans: These mid-rise loose flared jeans deliver everyday versatility with plenty of comfort. The cotton-blend stretch fabric allows unrestricted movement while the five-pocket styling keeps them classic and functional. Whether you're dressing casually or slightly more polished, these jeans adapt effortlessly to different occasions. Style tip: Add a fitted knit top and white sneakers for an easy everyday outfit.

9. Urbano Fashion Women's Mid Rise Bootcut Stretchable Jeans: Bootcut jeans have quietly made a major comeback, and this stretchable pair from Urbano Fashion proves why. The gentle flare below the knee creates balanced proportions while the flexible fabric ensures lasting comfort. They're particularly flattering with heels or ankle boots and transition easily from workwear to casual evenings. Style tip: Pair with blazers, tucked-in tops and ankle boots for a chic smart-casual look.

10. Levi's Women's High Rise 724 Slim Straight Fit Jeans: If you're looking for one pair of jeans that works with almost everything in your wardrobe, this could be it. The slim straight fit offers a timeless silhouette that never feels overly trendy, while the high-rise waist creates a flattering fit for everyday wear. Made with comfortable stretch denim, these jeans maintain their shape while giving you enough flexibility for all-day movement. Style tip: Style with crisp white shirts, loafers and minimal jewellery for a classic everyday look.

Preserve the shine of your jewelry regardless of humidity levels

The monsoon season introduces various changes, including excessive sweating and elevated humidity, which can cause your cherished jewellery items to lose their luster. This necessitates appropriate care to avoid dullness, discoloration, and deterioration. Regardless of whether it is silver, gold, diamond, or gemstone jewellery, providing a bit of additional attention during the rainy season can aid in maintaining its brilliance and ensuring that each piece remains in pristine condition. "Jewellery is meant to be cherished for years, and proper care becomes even more important during the monsoon. Simple habits can help maintain its shine and ensure every piece continues to look as beautiful as the day it was bought," she said, suggesting how mindful care can go a long way in preserving jewellery's beauty and brilliance during the rainy season.

Riva shared these tips for protecting jewellery during monsoon season:

1. Keep it dry: Moisture is one of jewellery's biggest enemies during the monsoon. Remove your jewellery before stepping out in heavy rain or

engaging in activities that cause excessive sweating. If your pieces do get wet, it is vital to dry them immediately with a soft cloth and perform a quick check of the clasps and hooks, as moisture can sometimes cause these mechanical parts to loosen or catch.

2. Clean it regularly: Dirt, sweat, and residue from skincare products can build up quickly. Wipe your jewellery with a soft microfiber cloth after every wear, and occasionally clean it using a mild soap solution and lukewarm water. Avoid harsh chemicals, especially for gemstone jewellery.

3. Store it the right way: Humidity can affect both metals and gemstones. Store each piece separately in a soft pouch or a fabric-lined jewellery box; these fabric linings are essential as they prevent scratches and damage from humidity-induced shifts or expansions in storage materials. Adding silica gel sachets to your jewellery box can also help absorb excess humidity and maintain a stable environment.

4. Watch out for discoloration or

odours: While high-quality gold does not rust, accumulated moisture and dirt can sometimes lead to dullness or an unpleasant smell, particularly around intricate designs. Regular cleaning helps prevent this.

5. Special care for different gemstones: Not all stones react to moisture in the same way. Polki and uncut diamonds are particularly porous and sensitive to high humidity, requiring extra vigilance to prevent moisture from seeping behind the foil or setting, which can cause permanent clouding.

6. Avoid contact with cosmetics: Perfumes, hairsprays, lotions, and makeup contain chemicals that may reduce your jewellery's natural shine. Make jewellery the last thing you wear before heading out. In the end, Riva also recommended a non-negotiable 'seasonal service.' She explained, "It is a scheduled professional cleaning and inspection once or twice a year. Expert polishing and maintenance not only restore your jewellery's brilliance but also help identify loose settings or minor wear before they become bigger concerns."

Searching for footwear that remains non-slip during the monsoon season

The rainy season ushers in cooler temperatures, showers, and numerous puddles lurking at every turn. This period also heightens the importance of selecting appropriate footwear. While a fashionable pair may appear appealing, it can swiftly become uncomfortable if it absorbs moisture, feels cumbersome, or lacks traction on slick surfaces. The perfect monsoon shoe ensures comfort for your feet, offers dependable grip, and dries swiftly after exposure to water. Quality footwear can also minimize the risk of slipping and significantly ease daily commutes. Prior to purchasing your next pair, consider several practical features that can truly enhance your experience on rainy days.

What to Look For in Your Shoes to Battle the Monsoon. Choose shoes with high-traction rubber soles that provide better grip on wet roads and slippery surfaces. Pick water-resistant or quick-drying materials like treated mesh or synthetic fabrics that do not stay soaked for long. Look for lightweight designs that remain comfortable even after getting caught in unexpected rain.

Select shoes with breathable construction to help reduce sweat and keep your feet feeling fresh. Go for pairs that are easy to clean and dry quickly, making them ready for regular use throughout the rainy season. Shoes That Don't Get Slippery During the Monsoon. Shoes with deep-patterned rubber outsoles offer better grip than smooth soles. Trail walking shoes are a great option thanks to their excellent traction on wet ground. Sports shoes with anti-slip rubber soles perform well for daily commutes. Sandals with textured rubber footbeds and grippy outsoles work well during heavy showers.

Avoid shoes with worn-out soles, as they lose grip and increase the risk of slipping on wet surfaces. Top 5 monsoon shoes for men

The right pair of shoes can make rainy days far more comfortable. Good grip, quick-drying materials, and a secure fit all help keep you steady on wet roads. Here are five excellent options for men.

1. Crocs Unisex Adult Bayaband Black/White Slide-M4W6: Why they offer great grip: The Classic All Terrain version comes with a rugged outsole featuring deep lugs that provide stronger traction on wet roads and slippery pavements compared to standard clogs.

Monsoon benefits: Completely waterproof Easy to wash after muddy walks. Lightweight and comfortable for daily use.

2. ASIAN Everest-01 Sports Trekking & Hiking: Why they offer great grip: The CrossContact outsole features deep lugs that help maintain traction on wet mud, uneven roads and slippery surfaces.

Monsoon benefits: Excellent stability on damaged roads. Better ankle support on uneven ground. Suitable for long walks during the rainy season.

3. SPARX Men's Black and Grey Athletic and Outdoor Sandals: Why they offer great grip: The textured TPR outsole channels water away efficiently, helping maintain traction on wet tiles and pavements.

Monsoon benefits: Quick-drying synthetic straps. Secure hook and loop closure. Comfortable for extended wear.

4. Skechers GO Walk 7 Olive: Why they offer great grip: The rubber outsole uses multiple contact points to improve stability across smooth and wet surfaces.

5. Campus Men's OXYFIT (N) Walking Shoes BLU/Gry - 8UK/India: Why they offer great grip: The phylon and rubber sole provide dependable traction on wet roads while remaining lightweight.

The top 10 lightweight sarees that are comfortable to wear

Few ensembles can rival the sophistication of a saree; however, those who don one frequently understand that the choice of fabric significantly influences the overall experience. A heavy saree may appear stunning for a short period, yet it can swiftly turn uncomfortable, particularly during extended hours at the office, weddings, family gatherings, or festive occasions. This is where lightweight sarees prove to be advantageous. Easy-to-drape fabrics like cotton, linen, chiffon, soft silk and handloom blends make getting dressed far less intimidating while still delivering timeless style. They fall beautifully, stay comfortable for hours and are much easier to manage, even if you're relatively new to wearing sarees. Whether you're looking for something for work, brunches, festive gatherings or everyday elegance, these lightweight sarees on discounted prices during Amazon Prime Day Sale, strike the perfect balance between comfort and sophistication.

Lightweight sarees on sale

1. Jack and Jini Printed Cotton Linen Kalamkari Saree: This cotton-linen saree is proof that comfort and elegance can coexist beautifully. The breathable fabric feels incredibly light on the body and drapes with ease, making it perfect for women who wear sarees regularly or are still mastering the art of pleating.

The Kalamkari-inspired print lends the saree a handcrafted charm while keeping it sophisticated enough for office wear, cultural events and daytime celebrations. Since the fabric isn't bulky, it remains comfortable even after several hours, making it a wardrobe essential for warm weather.

Style tip: Pair with a plain elbow-sleeve blouse, oxidised earrings and comfortable kolhapuris.

2. SIRIL Cotton Linen Printed Saree: If you're looking for a saree that's crisp without feeling stiff, this cotton-linen option deserves a closer look. The fabric strikes an ideal balance between structure and softness, allowing the pleats to stay in place while still flowing naturally. Its understated print makes it versatile enough for office meetings, teacher uniforms, formal lunches or everyday wear. Lightweight and breathable, it's one of those sarees you'll find yourself reaching for repeatedly. Style tip: Complete the look with a sleek bun, nude flats and a structured tote bag.

3. Soft Italian Silk Black and White Striped Saree: This Italian silk saree gives you the elegance of silk without the usual weight associated with festive fabrics. The contemporary black-and-white striped design feels modern and fashion-forward while remaining sophisticated enough

for professional settings. The smooth texture allows the saree to drape beautifully, creating clean pleats with very little effort. It's ideal for presentations, formal dinners and elegant daytime events.

Style tip: Style with a sleeveless blouse and sleek low bun for a contemporary aesthetic.

4. MIRCHI FASHION Chiffon Printed Saree: Nothing feels quite as effortless as chiffon. This printed saree glides beautifully over the body, creating a soft, feminine silhouette that feels almost weightless. The airy fabric makes draping incredibly simple while adding graceful movement with every step. Whether you're attending a lunch, dinner date or office celebration, this saree offers elegance without any heaviness. It's especially suitable for those who prefer sarees that require minimal adjustment throughout the day. Style tip: Pair with pointed heels and delicate pearl jewellery for a polished finish.

5. SIRIL Cotton Printed Saree: Pure cotton sarees continue to be favourites for everyday dressing, and this printed option is no exception. Soft, breathable and incredibly practical, it offers maximum comfort without compromising on style. The subtle prints make it suitable for work as well as casual outings, while the lightweight fabric makes draping quick and fuss-free.



It's an excellent investment for women building an everyday saree collection.

Style tip: Wear with oxidised studs, a silver watch and flat sandals.

6. SAPTAK FASHION Cotton Blend Handloom Saree with Love Border: Handloom sarees possess a timeless charm that's difficult to replicate, and this cotton-blend version makes them even more wearable. Lightweight, breathable and beautifully textured, it carries

an artisanal appeal without feeling overly traditional. The subtle border detail adds character while allowing the saree to remain suitable for daily office wear, literary events or cultural gatherings. Style tip: Add handcrafted silver jewellery and a contrasting cotton blouse.

7. VJ Fashion Kerala Silk Blend Saree: Kerala-inspired sarees are synonymous with understated elegance, and this silk-blend version offers the same timeless appeal in a light-

weight format. The subtle sheen elevates the overall look while remaining comfortable enough for extended wear. It's an excellent choice for festivals, office celebrations, pujas and traditional family gatherings where elegance matters but comfort is equally important. Style tip: Pair with temple jewellery and fresh jasmine flowers for a classic South Indian-inspired look.

8. EthnicJunction Art Silk Kalamkari Print Saree: Art silk offers the rich appearance of silk while being significantly lighter and easier to manage. This Kalamkari print saree beautifully combines heritage-inspired motifs with a fabric that's practical for modern lifestyles. The vibrant print becomes the focal point of the outfit, requiring very little accessorising. Comfortable enough for long hours yet visually striking, it's perfect for festive lunches, office events and cultural programmes.

Style tip: Keep accessories minimal and opt for a solid-colored blouse.

9. Yashika Malgudi Silk Ajrak Printed Saree: Ajrak prints have remained timeless for generations, and this lightweight silk saree showcases them beautifully. The fabric flows effortlessly while the intricate print adds depth, richness and traditional charm. Despite its elegant appearance, the saree remains surprisingly comfortable to wear

ENTERTAINMENT

Controversial AI actor lands first feature film

Agency : Love it or hate it, AI is slowly finding a bigger place in entertainment. And one of the internet’s most talked-about AI personalities is now taking an even bigger leap. After making headlines for all the debate surrounding AI actors, Tilly Norwood is getting ready to headline her very first feature film.

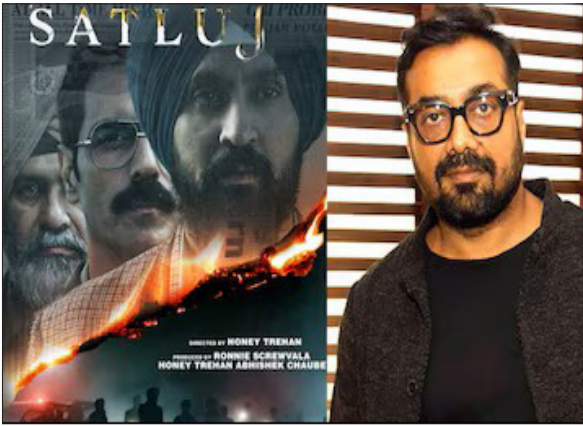
According to Variety, the AI actor will lead Misaligned, a comedy-drama from Particle 6, the AI-focused studio that created Tilly. The film is currently in early development and marks the character’s first full-length feature as the lead. Misaligned is set inside the quirky “Tillyverse”—a digital world that exists somewhere in the Cloud. The story has been described as a “coming-of-age story infused with existential AI chaos,” blending humour with questions about identity, emotions and what it really means to be human. At the heart of the film is Tilly, an AI being with no real body, no childhood and no memories of her own. Instead, she has access to everyone else’s experiences. But things take an unexpected turn when she meets a charming rogue bot from the dark web. He convinces her to ditch her built-in guardrails, and suddenly Tilly starts developing desires, ambitions and impulses of her own—making her feel a lot more human than she was ever meant to. Particle 6 says the movie won’t rely only on artificial intelligence. Instead, it will be made using a mix of AI tools and traditional filmmaking, with directors, writers and editors working alongside AI specialists.



Amid OTT takedown, Anurag Kashyap sparks debate by backing pirated viewing of Diljit’s Satluj

Mumbai : After a three-year-long battle with the Central Board of Film Certification and numerous challenges, the Diljit Dosanjh-starrer Satluj premiered on ZEE5 on Friday, only to be taken down from the OTT platform within just two days of its release. With no clear explanation for the move, the movie is no longer available in India. Amid this, Anurag Kashyap has reacted to the controversy.

Taking to his Instagram, Anurag Kashyap shared a post that talks about Diljit Dosanjh starrer’s sudden takedown from the OTT platform. The director shared a post which reads, “The thing about banning something is that the more you ban something, the more people want to watch it. I was not even planning to watch this film, but now I will have to watch



it to understand why it got banned.” In another story, Anurag promoted Satluj by sharing a post urging the public to watch the film, even if it meant relying on pirated copies.

Earlier, Ram Gopal Varma, after watching the film, hailed it as a deep wound that will never heal. “This is cinema used as confrontation, where @diljitdosanjh acts with a quiet fury with no chest-thumping

heroism. His only weapons are a ledger and a conscience. @rampalarjun adds layers of moral rot in the institutional complicity that feels chillingly realistic,” Varma wrote. He further continued, “Director @honeytrehan, instead of sensationalising the horror, unfolds the film like a slow-burn investigative thriller through bureaucratic files, cremation records, and hushed conversations.

This restraint makes the brutality of the subject matter hit that much harder because it explodes with the force of truth and not exploitation.”

Satluj, previously titled Panjab ’95, follows Jaswant Singh as he begins with one personal search and gradually uncovers a much larger story of alleged disappearances and custodial deaths. Set during Punjab’s turbulent militancy period, the film presents his journey as a struggle against injustice, silence, and institutional denial. Directed by Honey Trehan, Satluj premiered on ZEE5 on July 3 after years of delays. The film had earlier faced hurdles over certification, preventing its planned theatrical release. However, it finally reached audiences on OTT before being taken down from the platform within two days.

Mira Rajput sweeps Shahid Kapoor off his feet with romantic 11th anniversary tribute

Mumbai : Entrepreneur Mira Rajput Kapoor penned a sweet yet quirky anniversary wish for husband Shahid Kapoor on their 11th wedding anniversary on July 7.

She shared a nostalgic throwback picture to celebrate another milestone in their marriage. Taking to her social media account,, Mira posted an old picture from their visit to Madame Tussauds museum. The picture shows the couple posing between Shahid Kapoor and his wax statue. Shahid is seen dressed in a striped formal suit, while his wax figure is dressed in a black-and-white tuxedo. Mira looks elegant in a sleeveless black gown as she stands between the real and wax versions of her husband. Sharing the memorable picture, she captioned the post as, “When 1+1 = 11 Happy Anniver-



sary love of my life!” Shahid and Mira tied the knot on July 7, 2015, in an intimate Anand Karaj ceremony held in Delhi. For the uninitiated, their alliance was arranged through the spiritual organisation Radha Soami Satsang Beas, to which both families belong. Despite a significant age difference, the two developed a strong bond after meeting through their families and eventually decided to mar-

ry. They are parents to two children, daughter Misha Kapoor, born in 2016, and son Zain Kapoor, whom they welcomed in 2018. On the work front, Shahid was last seen in Cocktail 2 for which he received good response to his character portrayal. He was also seen in O Romeo which opened to mix response at the box office. For the uninitiated, Shahid is the son of veteran actors Pankaj Kapur and Neelima Azim.

Tom Holland spiraled into self-doubt during first day on ‘the odyssey’



Washington : Tom Holland has revealed that he mistakenly believed director Christopher Nolan was unhappy with his performance on the first day of filming ‘The Odyssey’, before learning that the frequent interruptions were simply due to the technical limitations of IMAX cameras. As per Variety, Holland in a recent interview, recalled his first experience working with IMAX cameras and admitted he misunderstood why Nolan

kept calling for cuts during a scene with co-star Jon Bernthal. “Working with the Imax cameras for the first time is an experience,” Holland explained, adding, “It is unlike anything I have ever seen before, and I didn’t know that it only ran for three minutes. So, I remember you would continue cutting, and I was with Jon [Bernthal], like, ‘Why does he keep cutting? Why does he keep doing that?’” The actor said the repeated interruptions left him wor-

ried that Nolan was dissatisfied with the performances.

“And in my head, I was like, ‘Does he not like what we’re doing? What is happening?’ And then, I remember it was actually [stunt coordinator] George Cottle that was like, ‘No, no, no, there’s only three minutes in the mag.’ I was like, ‘Oh, thank god.’ I thought I was totally shit-ing the bed in this scene,” he said, as quoted by Variety. World News Holland plays Telemachus, the son of Matt Damon’s Odysseus, in ‘The Odyssey,’ which is scheduled to release in theatres on July 17. The film also features Anne Hathaway, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong’o, Zendaya, Charlize Theron, Jon Bernthal, Elliot Page, Benny Safdie, Mia Goth and John Leguizamo. Despite his anxious start on set, Holland recently praised the experience of working with Nolan in an interview, calling it the highlight of his career so far.

Aditya Dhar celebrates Ranveer Singh’s birthday with high praise for Dhurandhar

Mumbai : On Ranveer Singh’s birthday today, his Dhurandhar director Aditya Dhar shared a heartfelt note dedicated to the actor. Along with behind-the-scenes stills from the film, Dhar offered a glimpse into Ranveer’s dedication to the project and praised his performance in the blockbuster spy-thriller.

He began the note by writing, “Happy Birthday, Ranveer Singh. Some films stay with you forever. Dhurandhar will always be one of those films for me. Not just because of the story we told but because I got to witness something very few directors ever get to witness.” He continued, “I’ve always known you’re an extraordinary actor. But this journey made me fall in love with the artist you are and even more with the human being behind the artist. There were days on Dhurandhar that I knew I was witnessing something incredibly



rare. The 26/11 sequence. The final tea shop scene. The Pathankot massacre. The pump house scene. The court exterior. Just to name a few. Take after take, scene after scene, you never once looked for the easy choice. Every emotion landed exactly where it needed to. Every silence had meaning. Every glance had intent. Every beat was pitch perfect.”

Dhar added, “The consis-

tency was almost impossible to comprehend. It genuinely felt like watching someone touched by divine grace. As though Maa Saraswati herself had placed her hand on your head and blessed you with every ounce of artistic brilliance she could. As a director, there are moments you spend your entire career hoping to experience. You gave me those moments again and again. I truly believe what you’ve done in

Dhurandhar is one of the finest performances Indian cinema has ever seen. It isn’t just a performance, it is a force of nature. Fearless, towering and so complete that it disappears into the soul of the character. I have no doubt people will talk about this performance for years, perhaps generations to come.” He further stated, “But what I’ll cherish even more is everything that happened between “Action” and “Cut.” The conversations. The shared conviction. The relentless pursuit of getting every single moment right. Somewhere along the way, you stopped being just my actor. You became my brother. Thank you for trusting me with your heart, your craft and your madness. Thank you for giving Dhurandhar every piece of yourself. I couldn’t be prouder of what we’ve created together. Love you always. Happy Birthday, brother.”

Kriti Sanon reveals she froze her eggs strategically during ‘Mimi’ weight gain phase

Mumbai : Actor Kriti Sanon has opened up about choosing to freeze her eggs, revealing that she made the decision while preparing for her National Award-winning film Mimi. The actor shared that she underwent the procedure during a phase when she had to gain weight for the role, making it easier to deal with the physical changes that come with egg freezing.

Speaking to Karishma Mehta on the Humans of Bombay podcast, Kriti revealed that the decision had been on her mind for some time after someone encouraged her to consider it. “I am saying this for the first time. I froze my eggs. Very smartly, I did it during that time when I had to gain weight for Mimi. It makes you bloat, and I was anyway gaining weight. I spoke to someone who told me this is



the best thing you can do for yourself if you can. It’s the best gift you can give yourself. It stayed on my mind. Then, when I was told to gain weight, I thought this was the right time to do it,” she said. Kriti said freezing her eggs while preparing for Mimi made practical sense. The procedure involves hormonal injections, which can cause temporary bloating. Since she was already gaining weight for the film, she felt it was the right time to

go ahead with it. She said the decision had been on her mind after someone advised her that egg freezing was “the best gift” she could give herself if she had the option. When Mimi required her to put on weight, she decided to do it then. Egg freezing, or oocyte cryopreservation, is a medical procedure in which a woman’s eggs are collected, frozen and stored for future use. Many women choose to freeze their eggs

to preserve fertility and keep the option of having biological children later in life.

Released in 2021 and directed by Laxman Utekar, Mimi follows the story of a young aspiring actor who agrees to become a surrogate mother for an American couple in exchange for money to fulfil her dreams. However, her life takes an unexpected turn when the couple decides not to take the baby after learning about a possible medical complication during the pregnancy. The film also starred Pankaj Tripathi, Sai Tamhankar and Manoj Pahwa and received praise for its emotional storytelling and performances. Kriti’s performance earned her the National Film Award for Best Actress at the 69th National Film Awards, making it one of the biggest milestones of her career.

Hema Malini recalls Dharmendra’s heartfelt wish for family unity and her bond with Sunny and Bobby

Mumbai : Veteran actor Dharmendra passed away in November 2025 at the age of 89, and his demise left the nation mourning. Following Dharmendra’s demise, reports about Hema Malini’s strained relationship with her stepsons, Sunny and Bobby, surfaced. Contrary to all the reports, Hema Malini, in a new interview, spoke about how all of Dharmendra’s children stay united.

Talking to Hindi Rush, Hema Malini shared, “Dharam ji would always say, be with the kids as much as possible. Spend time with the children, with the family. He always said, be united with the family, that is very important in today’s times, which doesn’t really happen now. These days, kids go their separate ways.” The actress was then asked what He-Man’s last wish was. Revealing the same, Hema shared, “This is exactly what he said, ‘Be with the family. Be together with all of them. Work can keep happening, but family should be given utmost importance.’”

“They are very sweet. Sunny is very nice. Bobby is very good. We are all always together. We don’t do any publicity, but internally we are all good. We are all united. We are a very happy family,”



said Hema while opening up about Dharmendra’s children from his first marriage. Hema, in the interview, lauded Dharmendra as a great human being. Sharing how he always had the highest respect for all his fans, she said, “If someone came to take a picture with him, he would say, ‘Call them inside,’ no matter who it was. He would meet everyone, feed them all. He was very fond of people.” Describing him as a “very loving father” and a “very loving naanu (grandfather),” she opened up and said that no words can express how much the kids are missing him.

Dharmendra’s illustrious career includes timeless classics such as Sholay, Chupke Chupke, Mera Gaon Mera Desh, Dharam Veer, and Dream Girl, among numerous other films. In recent years, he won hearts again with his touching performances in Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani and Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya. His final film, Ikki, directed by Sriram Raghavan, was released posthumously earlier this month. The war drama also starred Agastya Nanda, Jaideep Ahlawat, the late actor Anrani, Sikander Kher, Vivaan Shah, among others.

Geetu Mohandas applauds Huma Qureshi’s latest thriller ‘baby do die do’

Mumbai : Huma Qureshi was recently seen in the crime thriller ‘Baby Do Die Do’, which released in teahatres on July 3. The film has been receiving good reviews, and several celebrities such as Anurag Kashyap, Gourav Adarsh and others have showed their support to the film. Toxic director Geetu Mohandas has now joined the list of celebs who have hailed Baby Do Die Do. Mighty

impressed with the film, she lauded Huma, Saqib Saleem, and Rachit Singh, and congratulated the entire team. Her review left Huma emotional.

Sharing a photo with Huma, Geetu Mohandas wrote, “I just watched Baby Do Die Do!! and this isn’t a review ...just what it felt like to sit there surrounded by a story built by people I know... a sister and brother who bet on each other, a

partner who delivered exactly what I always knew he had in him. I wasn’t watching strangers succeed. I was watching people I care about become exactly who I always knew they’d become.” Geetu Mohandas then added that she knows what Huma is capable of, having worked with her in their upcoming film ‘Toxic’ starring Yash. “There is no surprise in me watching Huma. I know what she’s



capable of and what she will set out to do in the future. BRAVO my Elizabeth.

er, playing out in front of a paying audience. Well done Saqib And Rachit... I’ve seen him work with actors before, and I’ll say plainly... talent like his doesn’t come around often, and this is just the start of a fabulous future for you. Congratulations to the entire film team for your stupendous success,” she wrote.

Geetu Mohandas’ words left Huma emotional. Reacting to her post, she

wrote, “I’m crying reading this thank you Geetu,” while Rachit Singh commented, “Thank you for all your love and support.” Saqib Saleem commented, “Geetu Thank you for championing our baby.” Baby Do Die Do marks the maiden project under Huma and her brother Saqib Saleem’s production house, Saleem Siblings. The film sees Huma stepping into the role of India’s first on-

screen female hitwoman. Meanwhile, Huma Qureshi will next be seen as Elizabeth in Geetu Mohandas’ film ‘Toxic’ starring Yash in the lead role. The cast also features Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Rukmini Vasanth, and Tara Sutaria in pivotal roles. Backed by KVN Productions and Monster Mind Creations, Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups is slated to hit screens on 26 August, 2026.

Baruipur rape and murder: Nothing has changed except the governing party, according to RG Kar physicians

Kolkata, July 07: Doctors who were in the forefront of the RG Kar demonstrations two years ago said Monday that little has changed since Bengal’s new government took office.Many of them were in Baruipur, engaging with police and neighbors following the rape and murder of a 12-year-old girl. Asfakulla Naiya and Aniket Mahata, the faces of the demonstrations following the rape and death of a young doctor at RG Kar hospital in 2024, were among those present in South 24-Parganas. Debashis Halder, another protest leader, was not at Baruipur but said that “eerily similar allegations against police and the ruling party” had returned. Only the ruling party has changed from August 2024 to July 2026.Residents informed the visiting physicians that police did not respond to the family’s complaint until Sunday morning. They approached the police on Saturday evening. The doctors said locals identified some of the accused after scanning CCTV footage from a nearby building. Naiya, now a senior resident ENT doctor at a state-run hospital in Hooghly, said:

“The family approached the police in distress but did not receive help. Neighbours and villagers did what the police should have done to track the girl.”He added: “There must be rule of law. Even an accused cannot be lynched. What happened shows people’s lack of faith in the police.”A man was



lynched in Baruipur on Sunday by a mob that accused him of involvement in the crime. The crowd also pelted stones at the police after a lathi-charge, vandalised a police outpost and blocked roads and railway tracks. Protesters accused a local BJP leader of influencing the police to release one of the detained suspects.Halder, a senior resident anaesthetist at a state-run hospital in Howrah, said allegations of political interference had also surfaced after the RG Kar crime. “We read reports and heard from our sources that Baruipur police were initially inactive and that the ruling party interfered,” he said.“The government has changed. One factor behind the huge mandate for the current government was people’s anger over how the RG Kar case was handled,” he added. “The chief minister has said

no one will be spared. I will also urge him to probe police inaction.” Mahata, an anesthesiologist with a non-commercial socio-medical organization in Calcutta, claimed he witnessed the rage. “According to reports, the family approached the police around 9 p.m. on Saturday after searching for the girl since 4.30 p.m. They said that the first government presence occurred the next morning, when central soldiers arrived at the family’s residence,” he stated.“Residents said they reviewed CCTV footage and watched men take the girl away. Her corpse was discovered in a pond after the crowd apprehended one of the suspects and battered him.The youngster left home on Saturday afternoon to get groceries but did not return. Her corpse was found in a nearby pond on Sunday.

Only one Indian is in the ICC Women’s T20 World Cup Team of the Tournament

Wales: Australia’s dominant march to a record-extending seventh ICC Women’s T20 World Cup title was reflected in the ICC’s Team of the Tournament, with the champions contributing five players to the star-studded XI, while England, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Ireland, and Sri Lanka also received representation following an action-packed tournament. Following Sunday’s seven-wicket victory against England at Lord’s, dominating victors Australia field the majority of the XI, which includes Player of the Tournament Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Ash Gardner, captain Sophie Molineux, and all-rounder Marizanne Kapp. Danni Wyatt-Hodge, England’s opener, finished the event with the most runs. Wyatt-Hodge had an impressive campaign with the bat, scoring 302 runs in seven games at 60.40 and a strike rate of 149.50.The England



opener blasted an undefeated century against Sri Lanka before adding two more half-centuries to become the first batter to score more than 300 runs in a single Women’s T20 World Cup. Beth Mooney, an Australian wicketkeeper-batter, has again delivered on the big stage, scoring 238 runs at an average of 47.60. Her undefeated 61 in the semi-final triumph over the West Indies and a match-winning 64 in the final victory over England earned her both the Player

of the Match and Player of the Tournament accolades, and she was similarly successful with the gloves, catching five.Nat Sciver-Brunet, England’s captain, demonstrated that she can still compete with the best after missing half of the tournament due to injury, scoring 227 runs in just four games at an incredible average of 113.50. Her 75 in the semi-finals helped England overcome a 23-3 deficit before scoring an undefeated 58 in the final.

Newlywed who died in Delhi’s Lodhi Road suppressed harassment for weeks and ‘hoped job would cease taunting’

Kolkata, July 07: New facts have surfaced in the suspected dowry killing of a 28-year-old newlywed in Delhi’s Lodhi Colony, with her younger brother alleging she had started work in the hopes that earning an income would finally cease the taunting and abuse she endured at her wedded house. Her spouse was detained on Monday in connection with the incident. The victim’s brother also said that she disguised most of the abuse she suffered following her marriage, expecting that things would better over time, according to PTI news agency.According to him, she was determined to keep working so that she could gradually purchase the home things she was reportedly ridiculed about, without putting a financial strain on her family, who had struggled since their father’s death in 2019.She married on April 24 after a two-year romance and returned to work as a sales professional at a private firm in Chhatarpur on July 1 after taking a leave of absence for her wedding, he added. Four days later, she died after allegedly falling from the third floor of a building in Delhi’s Lodhi Colony. The brother said that their father’s prolonged cancer treatment had left the family in debt before his death, and his

sister had taken on significant financial responsibilities thereafter, according to PTI.“After our father passed away, she did everything she could for the family. Her dream was to see me become financially independent,” he was quoted as saying, adding that this was one of the reasons she was determined to continue working after marriage.According to the family, it had been agreed before the wedding that she would continue her job. However, after the marriage, her husband’s family allegedly denied that any such understanding existed. The brother alleged that she was repeatedly taunted for not bringing sufficient household items from her parental home, including furniture and appliances, and claimed that indirect demands for ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh were made. Rather than asking her family for financial help, she believed that earning and purchasing the items herself would eventually end the harassment, he said. The family initially believed the couple was experiencing routine marital disagreements. According to the brother, they intervened after she informed them of an alleged incident of physical assault, hoping reconciliation would improve the situation.It was only on July

3, a day before her death, that she disclosed the extent of the alleged physical abuse, threats and repeated harassment she had faced over the preceding weeks, he claimed. “She became quieter after marriage. We thought she was simply adjusting to a new environment. Whenever we asked, she would say everything was fine,” the brother said, adding that some of her childhood friends had also noticed a change in her behaviour.He further alleged that her husband closely monitored her mobile phone, frequently questioned her over changes to its settings and accused her of infidelity, leading to repeated arguments and physical abuse.The brother also claimed he had long been uneasy about his brother-in-law’s behaviour, alleging that he often took offence over trivial matters and complained about minor interactions. According to the family, the alleged controlling behaviour also extended to her communication with her mother and brother. The brother further alleged that after she informed her family about the abuse, her husband threatened to have him assaulted and dismissed from his job if she continued discussing their marital issues with them.

Portugal’s worst mistake against Spain was Cristiano Ronaldo, and the World Cup exit is no surprise

Arlington: Portugal failed to learn from their mistakes when they faced the European champions, Spain, in the FIFA World Cup Round of 16. Their voyage through the tournament had already been hampered by several mishaps, but the overarching ‘Cristiano Ronaldo ecstasy’ repeatedly hindered the coaching team from addressing the fundamentals. Portugal, relying on adrenaline rather than thorough preparation, were eventually overpowered and ousted by a superior Spanish team. Manager Roberto Martinez’s tactical blunders proved deadly this time; unlike the group stage, the knockout stages do not allow for second chances. According to FotMob, when Portugal lost 1-0 against Spain, Ronaldo emerged as the worst-rated Portuguese player on the pitch, tied with centre-back Ruben Dias. Despite the talisman’s obvious failure to affect the game, Martinez never contemplated replacing the former Real Madrid player. What made the tactical rigidity even more perplexing was Martinez’s open unwillingness to summon Goncalo Ramos off the bench. The decision shocked the football world, especially because



Ramos had scored the dramatic victory for Portugal in their Round of 32 match against Croatia just days before.

The statistical reality makes the management’s stubbornness look even worse. If non-penalty goals are tallied across the 2022 and 2026 World Cups, Ramos has double the output of Ronaldo despite playing a fraction of the time. To be precise, Ramos has netted 4 non-penalty goals for Portugal across the two

tournaments, while Ronaldo has managed just 2.In terms of game time, the PSG forward has logged a mere 187 minutes for his country over these two World Cups. In stark contrast, Ronaldo has accumulated a staggering 732 minutes. Even if football cannot be measured by statistics alone, Ronaldo’s overall impact on this Portuguese side has been undeniably subdued for some time. Yet, Martinez continued to persist with him as the undisputed, lone

focal point of the attack. Martinez depleted his team’s vitality, dynamic movement, and high-pressing abilities by isolating the Paris Saint-Germain attacker on the bench. Portugal’s assault was stagnant and predictable throughout the game, led by a highly marked 41-year-old Ronaldo.Ramos sat on the bench against Spain, while a heartbroken Ronaldo departed the pitch in tears after producing yet another dud on the greatest stage of them all.

Gujarat 2008 blasts: High Court upholds death sentence for 38 prisoners; life term for 11



Gujarat, July 07: The Gujarat High Court on Tuesday maintained the special court’s 2022 judgment sentencing 38 prisoners to death and 11 others to life in jail for the 2008 Ahmedabad serial explosions, which killed 56 people and wounded 246 others.On July 26, 2008, a series of 21 bomb blasts occurred in 20 different sites in Ahmedabad over the course of 70 minutes. Two days later, live explosives were found in Surat. The city’s criminal division charged more than 100 people, with 78 going to trial.A division bench of Justice A.Y. Kogje and Justice S.J. Dave heard appeals against the 7,015-page special court verdict

and the state government’s request for confirmation of the 38 prisoners’ death sentences. The trial was held by combining 35 cases, including 20 first information reports (FIRs) lodged in Ahmedabad related to the bombings and 15 in Surat where the explosives failed to explode. The offenders were found guilty under the Indian Penal Code, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the Explosive Substances Act, and the Act to Prevent Damage to Public Property.The prosecution called 1,163 witnesses throughout the trial, which was heard by nine judges over several years. The identity of 26 important witnesses were kept hidden

for security concerns. The compensation is substantially higher than the amounts awarded by the special court in 2022, which had fixed it at ₹1 lakh for each death, ₹50,000 for grievous injuries and ₹25,000 for simple injuries.On February 8, 2022, a special court convicted 49 accused and acquitted 28 others. Those acquitted included Mubin Shaikh and Mansur Pirbhoy, who had been accused of conspiring in the attacks and sending emails claiming the attacks were carried out in revenge for the 2002 post-Godhra violence in Gujarat.One accused was granted pardon after turning approver, while four other approvers who later retracted their statements were convicted.The 49 convicts, including former Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) chief Safdar Nagori and his associates from 11 states, including Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, were held guilty for their role in the conspiracy behind the blasts. The prosecution alleged that the accused regrouped under the banner of the Indian Mujahideen.The blasts marked the first terror attack in India in which hospitals were targeted. The special court’s 2022 order also marked the first time an Indian court awarded the death penalty to as many as 38 convicts in a single case.

Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku’s ‘Donald Trump Dance’ after the US’ World Cup exit became viral



Seattle: With much-talked-about striker Folarin Balogun in the starting lineup, the United States of America were thrashed 4-1 by Belgium in the FIFA World Cup 2026 Round of 16, as Donald Trump’s ‘FIFA influence’ proved ineffective. The primary discussion point leading up to the USA versus Belgium match was FIFA’s decision to overturn Balogun’s one-game penalty for receiving a red card in the previous encounter. FIFA’s reversal occurred only after Trump contacted the sport’s governing body leader, Gianni Infantino, to request his participation in a possible review of the decision. In fact, Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku appeared to mock Donald Trump by performing his characteris-

tic dance. While FIFA lifted Balogun’s punishment, delaying it for a year and allowed him to participate against Belgium, the outcome was nonetheless embarrassing for the squad. Balogun was ineffectual throughout the encounter as Belgium flexed its strength. When the USA’s elimination from the competition was announced, supporters filled social media with Donald Trump jokes. The highlight, though, was Lukaku’s dancing. To rub salt on the US team’s wounds, Belgium midfielder Yuri Tielemans said after the game that his team was pumped up because of the Folarin Balogun red card controversy.“Let’s be honest: we held a meeting when we heard the news,” Tielemans said of the Balogun controversy. “We told ourselves we needed to do our talking on the pitch. That’s what we did today. I’m very proud of the team.”Balogun was named in the United States line-up on Monday after FIFA suspended his one-match ban for a sending off in the last 32, but he made little impact in the match.The shock FIFA decision came after an intervention by US President Donald Trump in a decision which drew condemnation across the football world.“We played with real grit,” Tielemans said. “We wanted to get off to a good start -- something we’d been missing earlier in the tournament. We knew that if we put them under pressure, they’d make mistakes.”

Two were washed away, and one drowned in Bhiwandi

Mumbai, July 07: A 10-year-old child was washed away by the overflowing Kamvari river in Bhiwandi on Sunday. The victim, Aatif, had gone to dispose of domestic rubbish along the river when he reportedly tripped and was swept away by the strong current, according to officials. Later in the day, a 17-year-old kid, Mohammad, was washed away while gathering crabs along the Kamvari river, which is a popular sport in the area during the monsoon season when the river swells. On Monday afternoon, a 13-year-old kid drowned in Bhiwandi’s nalla while playing with his pals in Deu Nagar. According to the Bhiwandi Fire Brigade, the youngster is Mohammad Abujar. He was supposedly playing near a nalla when he lost his balance and fell into the overflowing nalla, was whisked away by the current. His corpse was not recovered.



Delhi HC closes Vinesh Phogat’s plea, directs WFI decision within two weeks

New Delhi: Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma also ordered the federation to communicate its decision on the notice dated May 9 to both Phogat and the court within the stipulated period. The court recorded the WFI’s assurance that the wrestler would be granted a personal hearing before any final decision was taken. The court disposed of the petition after the WFI submitted that Phogat’s grievance regarding participation in the selection trials for the Asian Games had become infructuous as she had already been allowed to compete pursuant to earlier judicial directions. Phogat’s senior counsel argued that the case also raised broader concerns over the legality of the WFI’s selection policy. However, the court observed that since the issue relating to the trials had become redundant, those questions would have to be raised through a fresh writ petition. It clarified that the present proceedings could be concluded, leaving Phogat free to initiate separate legal proceedings on the policy. The court was also informed that Phogat had received another show-cause notice over her conduct during the selection trials.



On May 9, the WFI had issued a show-cause notice to Phogat and declared her ineligible to compete in domestic events until June 26. The federation relied on the mandatory six-month notice requirement applicable to athletes returning from retirement under anti-doping regulations. In her plea, Phogat challenged the WFI’s selection policy and the circular restricting eligibility for the Asian Games selection trials to medal winners of specified tournaments. She contended that the qualification period fixed by the federation substantially overlapped with the sabbatical she had taken due to pregnancy and post-partum recovery. According to her, the eligibility criteria effectively shut her out of consideration through an inflexible mechanism that was arbitrary

and discriminatory. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma closed the proceedings on Phogat’s petition, which challenged the show-cause notice as well as the WFI’s selection policy and circular, after the federation’s counsel submitted that her grievance relating to participation in the Asian Games selections trials was now infructuous. “Within two weeks, decide the show-cause notice dated May 9 under intimation to the petitioner and the court,” the judge ordered while disposing of the petition. The WFI counsel said Phogat would be given a personal hearing before a decision is taken on the notice. Even as Phogat’s senior counsel asserted that the petition raised “larger issues” with respect to the selection policy, the court said the athlete would have to file a fresh petition. This can be disposed of and then you can file a fresh writ petition,” the court said. The court was informed that pursuant to judicial orders, Phogat was permitted to participate in the Asian Games trials. The petitioner’s senior counsel informed that she has received a fresh show-cause notice for her conduct at the trials.

Red-card controversy overshadows Belgium’s commanding 4-1 victory over US in World Cup

Seattle: The United States’ hopes for a deep World Cup run at home ended when Charles De Ketelaere scored twice and assisted on another goal, helping Belgium expose the Americans’ defensive liabilities in a 4-1 win Monday night that earned a quarterfinal berth. While the US was boosted by the presence of star forward Folarin Balogun, whose one-game red-card suspension was controversially lifted by FIFA, American defenders were at fault in a pair of first-half goals and a gaffe by goalkeeper Matt Freese gave the Red Devils a third early in the second half. Second-half substitute Romelu Lukaku added Belgium’s final goal in the third minute of stoppage time. The Red Devils advanced to meet Spain at Inglewood, California, on Friday. Malik Tillman tied the score 1-1 midway through the first half with his second free kick goal of the tournament,



but the Americans conceded just 61 seconds after the ensuing kickoff. US coach Mauricio Pochettino showed his frustration by kicking a rack in front of the bench, sending four water bottles flying. Belgium secured a place in the quarterfinals of the FIFA World Cup 2026 with a commanding 4-1 victory over the United States at Seattle Stadium, powered by a brace from Charles De Ketelaere and a

late goal from Romelu Lukaku. According to FIFA, Lukaku scored in his third consecutive FIFA World Cup match for the first time in his career, while De Ketelaere was named Player of the Match after his two-goal performance. De Ketelaere struck twice, Hans Vanaken netted his maiden World Cup goal, and Lukaku came off the bench to add a stoppage-time fourth as Belgium set up a quar-

ter-final clash against Spain. The defeat also confirmed the exit of the USA, making them the last of the three co-host nations to be eliminated after Canada and Mexico bowed out in the Round of 16. Belgium looked threatening from the outset, with Timothy Castagne forcing USA goalkeeper Matt Freese into an early save before Youri Tielemans narrowly missed converting Dodi Lukebakio’s cross. The breakthrough came after Leandro Trossard’s dangerous delivery into the penalty area created confusion in the USA defence. Nicolas Raskin squared the ball across goal, allowing De Ketelaere to finish from close range. The breakthrough came after Leandro Trossard’s dangerous delivery into the penalty area created confusion in the USA defence. Nicolas Raskin squared the ball across goal, allowing De Ketelaere to finish from close range.

Watch: Yamal comforts tearful Ronaldo after Spain eliminate Portugal from World Cup knockout clash

New Delhi: Cristiano Ronaldo’s quest to win the FIFA World Cup ended in heartbreak on Monday as Portugal were knocked out by Spain in the Round of 16, but it was an emotional exchange after the final whistle that drew widespread attention. With Ronaldo in tears following Portugal’s 1-0 defeat in Dallas, Spain teenager Lamine Yamal walked over to embrace the veteran forward in a touching show of respect. The moment came after Mikel Merino’s stoppage-time winner sent Spain into the quarter-finals and ended Portugal’s campaign. As Spain’s players celebrated their dramatic victory, Yamal briefly stepped away from the jubilant scenes to console



Ronaldo, who was left devastated after what he later confirmed was his final World Cup appearance. The images of the Barcelona teenager embracing the 41-year-old Al Nassr star quickly went viral on social media. The match

had been billed as a clash between two generations. Yamal, one of football’s brightest young talents, shared the pitch with Ronaldo, the game’s all-time leading goalscorer, in what proved to be the Portuguese captain’s final

World Cup match. Ronaldo started and played the full 90 minutes but struggled to influence the contest as Spain kept Portugal at bay. His best effort was comfortably saved by goalkeeper Unai Simon before Merino struck in added time to settle the contest. The defeat ended Ronaldo’s hopes of adding the World Cup to a trophy cabinet that already includes the 2016 European Championship and UEFA Nations League titles in 2019 and 2025. Speaking after the match, Ronaldo admitted the defeat was difficult to accept but said he would not rush into a decision over his international future. “I’m sad to be leaving the World Cup like this,” Ronaldo told reporters.

Cobolli beats De Minaur, will watch Portugal-Spain clash with father before quarterfinal showdown

New Delhi: Flavio Cobolli joked that his immediate focus was not on his Wimbledon quarter-final opponent but on watching Portugal take on Spain with his father after booking his place in the last eight on Monday. The Italian ninth seed defeated Australia’s Alex de Minaur 7-5, 7-6(4), 6-3 in a composed display on Court One to reach a second successive Wimbledon quarter-final. The victory continued the best Grand Slam season of Cobolli’s career, coming just weeks after his runner-up finish at the French Open and reinforcing his rise among the ATP Tour’s elite. “I’ve been feeling tired on the tour, so I’m very happy to reach the quarter-finals in three sets, because it’s import-



ant to stay with energy for the next round,” Cobolli said after the match. “This year has been so hot, we saw in the crowd people struggling. Thanks for coming today. Thanks for staying. I appreciate it a lot. I’m so happy and proud of myself.” Asked whether he would watch the winner of the

fourth-round clash between Arthur Fery and Grigor Dimitrov, Cobolli had a different plan in mind. “I won’t watch it for sure. Like you every day, ice cream, and my dad will cook pasta with tomato and onion,” he said with a smile. “I don’t know, maybe we’ll hit here. There’s a workout. I

want to watch Spain and Portugal.” Cobolli’s victory was built on composure in difficult conditions as soaring temperatures led to multiple stoppages in play after spectators required medical attention. The 24-year-old also shared a two players despite the high stakes.

Cristiano Ronaldo never conquered World Cup, only transformed Portugal forever

New Delhi,: For the first time in more than two decades, football will be preparing for a World Cup without Cristiano Ronaldo. That is going to take some getting used to. An entire generation has grown up with Ronaldo turning up every four years, carrying the hopes of Portugal and, more often than not, carrying the conversation too. It never really mattered whether Portugal arrived as favourites or outsiders, whether Ronaldo was the quickest player on the pitch or, as was the case in the United States, the oldest outfield player left standing. Long before Portugal kicked a ball in America, Ronaldo’s last, the debate had already begun. Should a 41-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo still be leading the line? Had Portugal held on to their greatest player for one tournament too many? They were fair footballing questions because, for perhaps the first time in Ron-



aldo’s international career, Portugal arrived with a squad that looked capable of carrying itself. Bruno Fernandes, Bernardo Silva, Vitinha, Rafael Leao, Nuno Mendes, Diogo Costa and Goncalo Ramos represented the present and, more importantly,

the future. If there was ever a World Cup where Portugal could finally move beyond Cristiano Ronaldo, surely this was it. The thing with Cristiano Ronaldo, though, is that football has spent more than ten years trying to decide when

he should finally finish. Football has been wrong far more often than it has been right. They questioned him when he crossed 30, then 35, when he left Real Madrid, when he moved to Saudi Arabia and almost every season after that. More often than not,

Ronaldo answered in the only language he has ever really known—goals, records and an almost stubborn refusal to let someone else write the ending for him. Maybe that was why, even at 41, millions still watched Portugal believing there could be one more magical World Cup night left in him. Others tuned in just as eagerly, convinced that time had finally caught up. Everyone watched anyway. Spain’s stoppage-time winner in Dallas eventually brought Portugal’s campaign to an end and, in all likelihood, closed the curtain on Ronaldo’s World Cup journey. As Mikel Merino’s goal settled the contest and the tears arrived after the final whistle, the conversation immediately drifted towards the one trophy that had always escaped him. It almost felt unfair. More than twenty years in a Portugal shirt had somehow been reduced to one missing medal.

Belgium crush USA 4-1, ending Balogun drama and World Cup dream decisively

Seattle: The United States got its wish. Folarin Balogun was back, restored to the squad after a suspension saga dramatic enough to drag in an intervention from U.S. President Donald Trump. Belgium’s response? A shrug, a smirk, and a 4-1 mauling. Rudi Garcia’s side turned the entire Balogun circus into a footnote in Seattle on Tuesday, outplaying the co-hosts with a sharp, controlled display from start to finish. The United States’ home World Cup run comes to an end. Belgium’s continues, and now they’ve got European champions Spain waiting in the quarter-finals. For days, every camera, headline and radio phone-in had been fixed on one question: was the decision to ban the suspension of Balogun right? The moment the whistle blew, Belgium made sure nobody cared about that. Aggressive without the ball, silky with it, and clinical when it mattered, the Red Devils deliv-



ered arguably their best 90 minutes of the tournament, and did it with half their star power starting on the bench. he first shock arrived before a ball was even kicked. Kevin De Bruyne. Romelu Lukaku. Jeremy Doku. All benched. In a knockout game. Eyebrows shot up the second the team sheets landed. This was either inspired or insane, and there was no in-between. By full time, it read like genius as Belgium came flying out of the traps and simply never let the hosts breathe. Timothy Castagne forced a fingertip save out of Matt Freese, and Dodi

Lukebakio was already skinning defenders down the right, squaring for Youri Tielemans, who somehow managed to miss an open net. Consider it a warning shot, but the USA didn’t duck. Moments later, a scrambled American clearance fell straight to Nicolas Raskin, who squared for Charles De Ketelaere to walk the ball into an empty net. Seattle, seconds earlier bouncing, went silent. The hosts hit back, briefly. Malik Tillman’s free kick took a wicked nick off Hans Vanaken, wrong-footed Thibaut Courtois, and levelled things in the 31st minute.

Roger Federer steals Wimbledon spotlight from empty Royal Box with quiet presence

London: Roger Federer has been retired for nearly four years, but Wimbledon still seems to revolve around him. On Monday, the eight-time champion once again found himself at the centre of attention, not because of a breathtaking backhand or another Centre Court masterclass, but simply because he refused to leave when almost everyone else did. As Alexander Zverev and Jiri Lehecka walked onto Centre Court for their Round of 16 clash, television cameras cut to an unusual sight inside Wimbledon’s famous Royal Box. Usual-

ly packed with royalty, celebrities and distinguished guests, it was almost empty. ting quietly in the front row was Federer. While many of the day’s invited guests had stepped away following Arthur Fery’s marathon victory over Grigor Dimitrov, the Swiss legend remained glued to the action, watching the next match begin as though he still had unfinished business on the most famous court in tennis. The image quickly spread across social media and became one of the unexpected talking points of the day. It wasn’t just because the Royal Box had

emptied. It was because Federer, years after retiring, still looked like the one person who simply could not get enough of Wimbledon. Earlier in the day, Federer had received another hero’s welcome as he returned to Centre Court, the venue where he built one of the greatest legacies the sport has ever seen. His record eight Wimbledon singles titles remain unmatched in the men’s game, and every appearance at the All England Club still feels like a homecoming. He watched Britain’s Arthur Fery pull off the biggest victory of his career by defeating Grigor Dimitrov in



an epic five-set contest before staying back for Jasmine Paoli-

Jiri Lehecka. Even the players couldn’t hide their excitement at seeing Federer courtside. After his stunning upset, Fery pointed towards the Royal Box during his on-court interview and smiled. “We’ve got probably the greatest of all time watching over there,” he said. “Playing here in front of all you guys and winning with that support is unbelievable.” Eventually, other members of the Royal Box filtered back in as the evening session progressed, while Federer himself briefly stepped away after the opening set before returning early in the second. By

then, however, the internet had already fallen in love with the image. Zverev’s fourth-round clash against Lehecka was suspended at 10:56 p.m. local time after Wimbledon’s strict 11:00 p.m. curfew came into effect. The German was leading by two sets, 6-4, 7-5, with the third set delicately poised at 3-3 when play was halted. The pair will return to Centre Court to complete the match, early four years after retiring. Roger Federer remains a central figure at Wimbledon, symbolizing enduring passion for the tournament.