

Meghalaya CM Sangma launches CM-Connect Center to boost services

Shillong, Jul 18: In a landmark initiative aimed at strengthening citizen engagement and improving governance, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma today inaugurated the CM-Connect Center in Sohiong. The new facility is designed to serve as a dedicated platform for addressing public grievances, streamlining service delivery, and fostering transparent communication between the government and the people. The CM-Connect Center represents a significant step forward in the state's commitment to responsive governance. Equipped with modern infrastructure and digital support systems, the center will enable citizens to register complaints, seek assistance, and track the progress of their requests in real time. Officials emphasized that the initiative is part of the government's broader vision to make public services



more accessible, accountable, and citizen-friendly. Speaking at the launch, Chief Minister Sangma highlighted the importance of bridging the gap between citizens and administration. "The CM-Connect Center is not just a grievance redressal mechanism; it is a symbol

of our government's resolve to listen, respond, and act swiftly on the concerns of our people. By leveraging technology and dedicated personnel, we aim to ensure that every voice is heard and every issue is addressed with urgency," he said. The Sohiong center will function

as a pilot model, with plans to replicate similar facilities across other districts in Meghalaya. Officials from the Chief Minister's Office noted that the initiative will also integrate with existing e-governance platforms, thereby creating a seamless system for monitoring ser-

vice delivery and ensuring accountability at every level. Community leaders and local residents welcomed the launch, expressing optimism that the CM-Connect Center will reduce bureaucratic delays and provide a direct channel for resolving issues ranging from infrastructure needs to welfare benefits. The event was attended by senior government officials, representatives from civil society, and members of the local community, underscoring the collaborative spirit behind the initiative. The launch of the CM-Connect Center marks a new chapter in Meghalaya's governance journey, reinforcing the state's commitment to participatory democracy and citizen-centric administration. By institutionalizing mechanisms for dialogue and accountability, the government hopes to set a benchmark for innovative public service delivery in the region.

Farmers' welfare, governance reforms key strengths of ZPM government

Aizawl, Jul 18: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma emphasized that the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) government's greatest strengths lie in its commitment to farmers' welfare and the introduction of systemic governance reforms. Speaking at an event in East Lungdar village, he highlighted the administration's efforts to bring extensive changes to the state's administrative framework. "Our government is dedicated to supporting and uplifting farmers, and we have implemented wide-ranging reforms in governance," Lalduhoma stated. He added that those who deny the progress being made are simply unwilling to acknowledge the changes.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the ZPM government's initiatives are aimed at ensuring both social and economic development, with a particular focus on strengthening the agricultural sector and modernizing administrative systems to improve



efficiency and transparency. Equally significant are the governance reforms introduced under the ZPM leadership. Lalduhoma explained that the government has undertaken extensive changes to streamline administrative processes, enhance transparency, and improve efficiency across departments. These reforms are intended to reduce bureaucratic delays, strengthen accountability, and ensure that public services reach citizens more effectively. Observers note that the Chief Minister's remarks reflect the ZPM government's broader vision

of inclusive development, where economic progress is balanced with social equity. By combining farmer-centric policies with governance reforms, the administration aims to create a resilient framework for Mizoram's future. Community members present at the event welcomed the Chief Minister's assurances, expressing optimism that the government's initiatives will bring tangible improvements to their livelihoods. The emphasis on agriculture and governance, they said, resonates strongly with the needs of rural communities.

Manipur Governor Inaugurates Seminar On Criminal Justice Administration

Imphal, July 18: Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalu on Saturday inaugurated a two-day seminar on Criminal Justice Administration at the Manipur State Film Development Society (MSFDS), Imphal, highlighting the need for effective implementation of the country's new criminal laws and a coordinated approach to justice delivery. The seminar is being jointly organised by the Home Department, the Law and Legislative Affairs Department, and the Manipur Judicial Academy to deliberate on the implementation of the new criminal laws and the evolving criminal justice system.

The inaugural function was attended by Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh,



Chief Justice of the High Court of Manipur Justice M. Sundar, High Court Judges Justice A. Bimol Singh and Justice A. Guneshwar Sharma, Advocate General H.

Lenin Singh, senior civil and police officials, members of the judiciary, and the Bar. Addressing the gathering, the Governor said the administration of criminal justice

is a cornerstone of a democratic society, ensuring the protection of citizens' rights, maintaining public order, and strengthening public trust in constitutional institutions.

Two Held For Painting Sonam Wangchuk Mural On Guwahati Public Wall

Itanagar, July 18: Two individuals were detained in Guwahati for allegedly painting murals of activist Sonam Wangchuk on public property near the Jyoti Bishnu Auditorium in Khanapara. Police identified the suspects as Nakul Mili from Dibrugarh and Gaurav Singha from Guwahati. According to officials, a patrolling team caught them attempting to deface a wall late at night. Separate cases have been registered at Dispur and Basistha police stations. DCP (Intelligence) Hiranya Barman stated that the youths admitted they were trying to paint Wangchuk's mural, adding that damaging public property has become a recurring issue and strict action will follow. Meanwhile,



in Delhi, Sonam Wangchuk was taken to Safdarjung Hospital after completing a 20-day hunger strike at Jantar Mantar. Doctors reported that he was stable but suffering from mild dehydration and

weakness due to prolonged fasting. Delhi Police confirmed the move was carried out on medical advice and in compliance with High Court directions, stressing that restraint was ex-

ercised during the operation. Wangchuk's hunger strike was launched to demand the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged irregularities in national examinations, including the NEET paper leak controversy. The police action has sparked criticism from opposition parties such as Congress, Aam Aadmi Party, Samajwadi Party, and Trinamool Congress. Left student organizations also joined the protest organized by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) at Jantar Mantar.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke announced that demonstrations would continue and pledged to carry on an indefinite hunger strike in solidarity with Wangchuk.

IGDC CREFLAT distributes ₹3.60 crore, licences to 360 youth groups

Agartala, July 18: The Indo-German Development Cooperation (IGDC)-Climate Resilience of Forest Ecosystems, Biodiversity and Adaptive Capacities of Forest-Dependent Communities in Tripura (CREFLAT) Project under the Forest Department, Government of Tripura, distributed seed money to Self-Help Groups (SHGs), revolving fund as-

sistance to Common Interest Groups (CIGs) and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), driving licences to trained youth, and honoured outstanding performers at a programme held at Rabindra Satabarshiki Bhawan in Agartala on Friday. Forest Minister Animesh Debbarma, who attended the programme as the chief guest, distributed financial assistance worth

₹3.60 crore to 360 community groups, including 180 Women SHGs and 180 CIGs/JLGs. The assistance aims to support sustainable livelihood enterprises in agriculture, horticulture, livestock, fisheries, bamboo, non-timber forest produce (NTFP) value addition, food processing, handloom, handicrafts and other locally suitable income-generating activi-

ties. Addressing the gathering, the Minister praised the Forest Department and the IGDC CREFLAT Project for strengthening the socio-economic condition of forest-dependent communities. He said creating sustainable livelihood opportunities would not only improve rural incomes but also encourage greater community participation in forest conservation.

He urged village institutions, especially SHGs, to remain actively involved in plantation drives, forest protection and responsible management of natural resources. He also encouraged the promotion of football and cricket among youth in forest villages to foster leadership and teamwork. The Minister also distributed driving licences to 38

trainees who successfully completed the second batch of the project's Driving Training Programme and formally launched the third batch comprising 40 trainees. The training is being implemented in collaboration with the Tripura Transport Department at the Institute of Driving Training and Research (IDTR), Jirania. Earlier, S. Prabhu, IFS, CEO and

Project Director of the IGDC CREFLAT Project, outlined the project's achievements in promoting climate-resilient livelihoods, community capacity building and participatory management of natural resources. Principal Secretary (Forests), PCCF and HoFF R. K. Shamal, IFS, highlighted the importance of community participation in conserving

Tripura's forests and said the project successfully integrates conservation with livelihood development through agroforestry, fisheries, goat rearing, skill development and other income-generating activities. The programme also recognised the best-performing Village Community Workers, Technical Assistants, SHGs, CIGs/JLGs, VDPIC Presidents.

Sikkim CM Tamang sets up Fan Park, issues FIFA final guidelines

Gangtok, July 18: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang has announced special arrangements for football fans to watch the FIFA World Cup 2026 final, including the setting up of a Chief Minister's Fan Park at MG Marg in Gangtok and extending the operating hours of eateries for the marquee clash between Spain and Argentina on Sunday. In an official statement ahead of Sunday's final at the New York New Jersey Stadium, the Chief Minister said the initiative was aimed at allowing football lovers across the state to enjoy the biggest match in world football in a safe and festive environment.

Emphasising Sikkim's rich football culture, CM Tamang



said, "Football is more than just a sport; it is a passion that

unites people. Sikkim has always been known for its deep

love of football and for producing talented players who

have made our state proud." To mark the occasion, the state government will establish the Chief Minister's Fan Park at MG Marg, where supporters can watch the final live on a giant LED screen. The Chief Minister also announced that restaurants, bakeries and eateries located at MG Marg will be allowed to remain open until 3:30 AM on July 19, subject to compliance with all applicable laws, safety norms and maintenance of public order. To ensure the smooth conduct of the event, the Police Department and other concerned authorities have been directed to make adequate arrangements for security, traffic regulation and crowd management.

Nagaland Police offers ₹50,000 reward in Chümoukedima blast probe

Kohima, July 18: Nagaland Police has announced a cash reward of ₹50,000 for credible information that could lead to the identification and arrest of those behind the July 13 improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Chümoukedima district. The explosion, which occurred along the Chümoukedima (A) village Shokhuvu road, claimed the life of an Assam Rifles jawan and left five others injured, including four security personnel and one civilian.

In a public notice, Commissioner of Police Dimapur, Aotula T Imchen, stated that the Dimapur Police Commissionerate is conducting an intensive investigation to track down all individuals involved in planning, facilitating, executing, or aiding



what has been described as a "heinous terrorist act." Authorities have urged the public to come forward with any credible information that could assist in bringing the perpetrators to justice. This incident has heightened security concerns in the region, with law enforcement agencies intensifying their efforts to prevent further at-

tacks and ensure the safety of civilians and security personnel. Authorities emphasized that the investigation is being pursued with urgency and determination, and that every lead will be thoroughly examined. The police reiterated their commitment to bringing the perpetrators to justice and restoring peace in the district.

NSF urges Centre to expedite Naga peace talks during meeting with MHA advisor

Kohima, July 18: The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) has urged the Central government to move the ongoing Naga peace talks forward with sincerity and work towards an early and logical conclusion, during a meeting with Ajit Lal, Advisor (Northeast) to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), in New Delhi. According to a statement issued by the federation, the meeting was held on Thursday, during which the NSF delegation stressed the importance of bringing the decades-old Naga political issue to an early resolution while ensuring that the aspirations and sentiments of the Naga people remain central to the peace process. The student body said a political settlement is necessary to secure lasting peace and



stability in the region. It reiterated its long-standing demand for an early conclusion of the peace negotiations, stating that a timely resolution would contribute to long-term development and har-

mony across Naga-inhabited areas. During the meeting, the delegation also expressed concern over the prevailing violence and unrest in the region, particularly the ongoing Naga-Kuki

conflict. It urged the Centre to take necessary steps to restore peace and normalcy at the earliest, highlighting the impact of continued tensions on the lives of people in the affected areas. The NSF said the peace process should continue with seriousness and commitment so that a mutually acceptable solution can be reached without further delay. Ajit Lal, who also served as the Special Director of the Intelligence Bureau before taking up his present role, listened to the concerns raised by the delegation during the meeting. According to the federation's statement, he assured the members that the issues placed before him would be examined and given due consideration.

BJP MLA Hek Opposes Religious Shrines

Shillong, July 18: Shillong: BJP MLA Alexander Laloo Hek wants religious structures out of government buildings. He spoke out following the ongoing controversy regarding a temple located inside the CBI office campus at Mawdiangdiang. Hek insists these premises must stay neutral.

"There is no need to build a temple, church, mosque, gurdwara or any other place of worship within government offices," Hek stated. He argues that the focus in these spaces should stay entirely on duty.

Hek currently serves as the Chairman of the State Government Programme Implementation and Monitoring their faith at home or at dedicated religious sites, but Hek maintains that state and central government offices must stay reserved for official work.

Proclaimed Offender, Drug Peddlers and SOREPA Cadre in Multiple Operations

Manipur Police Arrest

Imphal, July 18: Manipur Police and security forces carried out a series of successful operations across the state on Friday, arresting a proclaimed offender wanted in an NCB case, two alleged drug traffickers and an active cadre of the banned outfit SOREPA. In one operation, Manipur Police arrested Mohd. Amir Khan alias Rahaman, a resident of Moijing Wangmataba Chingya Leikai in Thoubal district, who was a proclaimed offender in a Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) case registered under the NDPS Act. The arrest was made following a request from the Additional Director, Delhi Zonal Unit of the NCB. In a separate raid, police apprehended Md. Zakir Hussain (44), alias Tomba, from his residence at Lilong Leihakhong



Leinung Hotel Maning in Thoubal district. Police seized contraband items including Codeine cough syrup, P-NIETRA 10 tablets suspected to be N-10 tablets, and TROSPAS Plus capsules from his possession. Meanwhile, in Jiribam district, Konjeng-

bam Kulla Singh (47) of Lakhipur Chingkhaw Ward No. 9 was arrested from the Lamkhai Bazar area of Jiribam town. During the operation, police recovered approximately 56.8 kg of suspected ganja from his possession. In another operation, security forces

arrested an active cadre of the banned SOREPA outfit, identified as Yumnam Naresh Singh alias Kakpa (26), a resident of Wangjing Sorokhaibam Leikai. He was apprehended from the Thoubal Haokha area under Thoubal Police Station in Thoubal district.

Anti-uranium resolution is insufficient KSU strengthens its position

Shillong, July 18: the Khasi Students' Union expressed its approval of the Meghalaya government's decision to propose a resolution in the State Assembly against uranium mining. However, they emphasized that this action alone would not suffice to permanently prevent any attempts to extract the radioactive mineral from Domiasiat and other uranium-rich regions

In a statement to the press, KSU general secretary Reuben Najiar characterized Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma's announcement as he government's "initial concrete step." "We appreciate the Chief Minister's declaration and commend his responsiveness to the call for a resolution. Nevertheless, a resolution is merely a statement and lacks the strength to permanently halt uranium mining," he stated.

Najiar highlighted recent comments made by Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh, indicating that the issue is still "under



examination," which he argued leaves the possibility open for mining to continue.

"If the matter is still under examination, it implies that there is neither a definitive yes nor no. This suggests that uranium min-

ing could still be a viable option," he asserted, claiming that the lack of a definitive legal stance from the state has enabled the Centre to keep the proposal active.

The Union insisted that the resolution should be accompa-

nied by more robust safeguards. They urged the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo Hills Autonomous District Councils to pass their own resolutions and amend land laws to prevent the sale or transfer of uranium-bearing land for mining purposes.

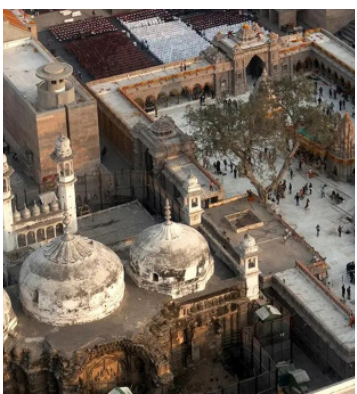
Najiar mentioned that the KSU had already engaged with the KHADC Chief Executive Member, advocating for the inclusion of such prohibitions. He also called for the immediate closure of the Atomic Minerals Directorate office located at Nongmen-song, arguing that its existence is unnecessary if the government is truly against mining.

In a separate event commemorating the 191st death anniversary of Khasi freedom fighter U Tirot Sing Syiem, KSU president Raymond Kharjana issued a more severe warning.

He claimed that powerful individuals have started to acquire land in Domiasiat and nearby villages and were visiting.

Government offices have become akin to places of worship on the CBI temple controversy

Shillong, July 18: BJP MLA and party leader Alexander Laloo Hek has stated that government offices are inherently "places of worship" where employees serve the public, thus negating the necessity for the construction of temples, churches, mosques, gurdwaras, or any other religious edifices within government premises. In response to the controversy surrounding the temple located within the CBI office campus at Mawdiangdiang, Hek asserted that all government offices—whether under the central or state government—should remain devoid of dedicated religious structures. "Every government office is already a place of worship because individuals are



expected to fulfill their duties with integrity and commitment," he remarked.

Drawing from his experience as a minister and as the Chairman of the State Government Programme Implementation and Monitoring Committee (SGPI&MC), Hek expressed that he considers his own office at the Meghalaya Secretariat to be his place of worship, as it is where he undertakes his responsibility of serving the populace.

He added that government employees are welcome to practice their faith at home or in their re-

spective places of worship, but there is no rationale for erecting religious structures within office campuses.

"There is no necessity to construct a temple, church, mosque, gurdwara, or any other place of worship within government offices. Such facilities are intended for public service and should not be utilized for any particular religious purpose," Hek emphasized. He reiterated that both central and state government office premises should be exclusively reserved for official duties and public service.

Meghalaya Honors Freedom Fighter U Tirot Sing

Shillong, July 18: Meghalaya paused to remember U Tirot Sing on Friday. The state marked the 191st death anniversary of the Khasi freedom fighter. Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma led the tributes across Shillong. He urged citizens to embody the leader's bravery and selfless service.

Sangma praised the martyr in a post on X. He wrote, "The iconic leader's commitment to protecting his people and homeland remains deeply relevant even today." He wants the youth to uphold the values of unity and justice that Sing championed.

The Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha also held a commemorative event in the city. The group announced its new Shillong City team during the ceremony. They

held an online reel-making contest with the theme, 'Inspiration of U Tirot Sing to Youths in Taking Up the Nation First Policy'. The contest drew over 100 entries. Ri-shotbaskhem Kharlyngdoh took first prize. Lasanshwa Rani and Kamwadathrang Rabon followed in second and third place. Dr. Bernard Lyngdoh, a neurosurgeon, attended as the chief guest.

Meanwhile, the Raid Laban Sports Social and Cultural Organisation gathered at the Warriors Memorial Garden. Local MLA Sanbor Shullai laid wreaths at the bust of the hero. The group provided meals to the public. They also handed out food packets to children and residents living in the South Shillong constituency.

Meghalaya Project: Inside the Rs 35-Crore Tamil Nadu Bribery Plot

Shillong, July 18: A shady bribery scandal in Tamil Nadu now bears the name Meghalaya Project. Investigators say the scheme aimed to pay off 15 legislators from the ruling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam to flip their votes. The goal was simple: force them to vote against the government during a no-confidence motion against the Assembly Speaker. They wanted the current administration to fall.

The plot surfaced after TVK MLA N. Elaiyara-ja filed a complaint. He accused Arumbakkam YouTuber and IPDS opinion-poll head Thirunavukkarasu of offering him Rs 35 crore. Elaiyara-ja rejected the bribe. He and his family faced criminal intimidation afterward. Digital evidence pulled from the investigation connects

Vijayan, a senior news editor at Puthiya Thalaimurai Television, to the operation. Police claim Vijayan exchanged objectionable electronic communications with Thirunavukkarasu

The Chennai Press Club blasted the police probe. They demanded that Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay step in to stop what they view as a targeted attack on the press. The group



throughout the conspiracy. Authorities questioned Vijayan for two days on July 15 and 16, seized his phone, and sent it to cyber forensic experts. He must remain available for further questioning.

issued a statement saying, "The Chennai Press Club condemned the action as oppressive and an attack on freedom of expression." Officials continue to track the reach of the alleged conspiracy.

Meghalaya Farmers Give Away Cabbage After Prices Crash

Shillong, July 18: Shillong: Meghalaya farmers are reeling after cabbage wholesale prices crashed to Rs 2 per kg. This rate falls far below the Rs 10 per kg production cost, leaving cultivators with massive debts. On Thursday, the Hills Farmers' Union (HFU) distributed six tonnes of free cabbage at the State Central Library in Shillong. Three pickup trucks delivered the produce from villages including Mawpyrshong, Thynroit, Mawlali, and Thangsning. Scores of residents collected the vegetables as the HFU highlighted the disparity between farm-gate prices and the Rs 30 to Rs 40 consumers pay at retail. HFU general secretary Alfondbirth Kharsyntiew noted the futility of selling at current market rates. "When farmers receive only Rs 2 per kg, there is no point in selling because it does not even cover the cost of cultivation," he said. The union reported that a 100-terrace yield of 6,000

kg now results in a Rs 48,000 loss per season. Farmers face mounting pressure from agricultural loans, labor costs, and rising school fees. Beyond the Rs 2 wholesale price, growers must pay for transport and a Rs 40 market fee per sack. HFU president Commander Shangpliang proposed a Minimum Input Price based on production costs. The union is currently demanding a rate of at least Rs 11 per kg and calling for a Market Intervention Scheme similar to past aid provided for broomstick crops.

The protest drew support from the Voice of the People Party Youth and Women's wings. East Khasi Hills Deputy Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal will meet with stakeholders on July 24 to examine the price collapse. Meanwhile, the HFU is testing alternative markets in Jowai and Ri-Bhoi. They also monitor regional supply chains that reach Silchar, Barpeta, Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, and Siliguri.

Lack of International Airport Stalls Investment Ranking



Shillong, July 18: Meghalaya landed 23rd out of 36 states in the NITI Aayog Investment Friendliness Index 2026. The state scored 43 out of 100. This places it fifth among the 12 hilly and northeastern regions. It now sits in the emerging performers category. The state lacks an international airport. This void hampers logistics and scares off big investors. The report notes: "Investors have identified poor air connectivity as a clear constraint that limits the state's ability to attract larger investments and improve logistics, despite other positives."

Financial metrics show a mixed bag. The state per capita income is Rs 95,525. GSDP growth stuck at 3.6 percent over five years. This lags behind the 4.8 percent cross-state average. Banking is also thin with only 13 active branches per lakh residents. The category average sits at 19. Exports bring in a modest 9 to 11 million dollars annually. These flows rely mostly on agricultural goods. FDI equity flows remain minimal. Investors want better internal roads and upgraded industrial parks. They also demand faster grievance redressal mechanisms.

The state finds support in the Meghalaya Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy 2024. This policy boosts single-window clearances and construction permits. Strong power supply and digital infrastructure help. The environment is stable with low cyclone risks and clean air. Meghalaya trails Uttarakhand, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, and Tripura. It leads Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir. Improving connectivity and financial depth will be key to moving up the ranks.

The Krishna Janmabhumi-Shahi Idgah Mosque dispute hearing has been adjourned by the court

New Delhi, July 18: The hearing in the Mathura Krishna Janmabhumi-Shahi Idgah mosque dispute case was postponed to August 25 by the Allahabad High Court on Friday. The parties jointly requested the adjournment because the district court in Mathura has begun mediation processes.

“It is jointly submitted that the mediation proceedings are continuing before the District Court, Mathura in accordance with the directives of the hon’ble Supreme Court,” said Justice Avnish Saxena.

The Supreme court has scheduled the next Lok Adalat on August 21–23, 2026. The lawsuit is therefore postponed as requested. One of the plaintiffs filed an application asking the state government and administration to forbid anyone or any group from entering the suit property for a meeting, karya seva, or to host any



event that would disturb the calm. If the parties had any objections to the application, the court requested that they submit them.

The Hindu side of the conflict has filed eighteen lawsuits seeking land control, the demolition of the Shahi Idgah mas-

jid, the “restoration” of the temple, and a permanent injunction. The Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura, which some claim was constructed after demolishing a temple near Lord Krishna’s birthplace, is the subject of controversy. It was built during the reign of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

Chief Space Regulator Regarding Skyroot’s Historic Vikram-1 Launch

New Delhi, July 18: One of the most important events in the history of India’s commercial space industry is taking place as Vikram-1 is prepared on the launch pad at Sriharikota. Not only is the launch of a new rocket noteworthy, but so is the amazing backstory. Two former ISRO engineers turned a startup into a business that could construct and launch an orbital rocket in just eight years. That journey may be summed up in three words for India’s space regulator, IN-SPACe: Zero to Hero. Chairman Dr. Pawan Goenka called Vikram-1 a milestone for Skyroot Aerospace as well as for India and the international space sector. Dr. Pawan Goenka described Skyroot’s achievements as a significant milestone for the company, India, and the global space industry. Founded in 2018 by former ISRO scientists Pawan Kumar Chandana and Naga Bharath Daka, Skyroot developed the Vikram-1 rocket in a remarkably short timeframe, undergoing rigorous evaluation processes comparable to those of ISRO. Despite the inherent challenges of spaceflight, Dr. Goenka expressed confidence in the readiness of

Vikram-1, emphasizing the high standards met during development. Vikram-1 symbolizes a larger ambition for India to establish itself as a global hub for launching small satellites.

This requires not just rocket technology but also comprehensive infrastructure, including satellite manufacturers and regulatory support. The government is constructing a dedicated launch facility in Tamil Nadu, with plans for private industry involvement, while fostering a complementary ecosystem of Indian startups capable of building small satellites. Dr. Goenka addressed concerns about talent migration from ISRO, asserting that the growth of the private space sector benefits both ISRO and new companies.

Celebrating the achievements of Skyroot’s young team, he acknowledged that the journey toward commercial success is just beginning, reiterating ISRO’s ongoing support as a crucial advantage. Ultimately, Vikram-1 represents not merely a launch vehicle but a testament to the emergence of India’s private space revolution, encapsulating a true “Zero to Hero” story.

SC will investigate accessible, reasonably priced cancer medications

New Delhi, July 18: Concerned that a breast cancer patient’s petition was still pending before the Kerala high court despite being listed 57 times prior to her death, the Supreme Court said on Friday that it will look into the more general issues of affordable access to life-saving cancer medications and judicial delays in cases involving the right to health.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant issued notice in a suo motu case, stating that the top court intervened due to repeated listings without a meaningful hearing. The bench, which also included Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, stated, “At first, we were reluctant to take it up suo motu, but then we noticed reports that it was listed for 57 times but was not being decided... that concerned us.” The Supreme Court started the case based on a letter requesting reasonably priced access to breast cancer medications. Speaking on behalf of the Kerala government, advocate Aljo Joseph claimed that the patient had died and that the state had ultimately supplied the drug. In an attempt to support the court, senior lawyer Anand Grover stated that he had been representing the de-



ceased patient’s husband in the Kerala high court, but he requested the Supreme Court to broaden the proceedings’ reach across the country. Grover, representing the deceased’s husband, called for the high court to consider the issue of access to patented cancer drugs from a national perspective, highlighting an affordability crisis. He noted that although most new cancer drugs are patented and unaffordable, only one compulsory license has been issued since 2005. Joseph pointed out that the high court has transformed the case into a suo motu public interest litigation (PIL) and is actively monitoring it. The Chief Justice of India stressed that the Supreme Court is concerned with the delay in the original petition rather than the high

Fuel prices won’t drop due to ethanol blending: former HPCL chief dispels myth

New Delhi, July 18: The introduction and use of E20 fuel, which is gasoline mixed with 20% ethanol, has sparked a national discussion in India and prompted responses from a number of well-known individuals. According to reports, MK Surana, the former chairman and managing director of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), has provided clarification regarding the cost of petrol combined with ethanol. During a panel discussion, Surana refuted the “myth” that fuel prices will drop as a result of ethanol blending. He emphasized that the ex-refinery price of petrol is approximately ₹53 per litre, whereas the price of ethanol ranges from ₹56.71 to roughly ₹71 per litre. He stated, “As far as the oil marketing companies are concerned, the answer is no,



because ethanol is costlier than petrol for them.” The debate has also gained political traction. Earlier, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal sought an appointment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss concerns over E20 petrol. In his letter, the AAP leader said there was “a huge public outcry” over the use of E20 petrol in vehicles that are not compliant with the fuel standard, according to news agency .

The AAP supremo also said the party had started an online petition for

citizens to share their experiences with E20 petrol. Notably, Kejriwal said his two key demands were that petrol stations should provide both pure petrol and E20 fuel options so that vehicle owners could make a choice, and that the price of the blended fuel should be reduced. According to a July 10 press statement from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, ethanol procurement costs are set at fair levels to benefit farmers, so E20 isn’t always less expensive than regular gasoline. It emphasized that lowering India’s reliance on imported crude was the goal. Therefore, ethanol blending is not about lowering the price of gasoline on a given day. According to the announcement, the goal is to lessen India’s reliance on imported crude oil.

Highest cutoff in re-NEET, second-lowest attendance

New Delhi, July 18: The NEET-UG 2026 re-examination, held on June 21 after the May 3 exam was cancelled due to an alleged paper leak, saw an attendance rate of 87.72%, the lowest for a non-pandemic year. This marked a drop from 96.72% in May, with over 205,000 fewer candidates. Attendance disparities affected genders differently, with male attendance down to 89.54% and female attendance to 86.44%. The qualifying cut-off rose sharply to 213 marks, the highest since 2019, al-



though the qualification rate remained consistent at around 56%. Factors for the increased cut-off included more preparation time and an easier Biology section, while the overall

number of qualifiers fell to 1.121 million, influenced primarily by reduced attendance. Uttar Pradesh produced the most qualifiers, while the top 17 candidates all scored above 705.

Vijay’s TVK and Stalin’s DMK band together to reject the bill and oppose delimitation

New Delhi, July 18: Even though the Center’s agenda for the monsoon session starting on July 20 does not include the “delimitation package,” of which the Nari Shakti Adhiniyam, or women’s reservation Bill, is a major component, the DMK and the ruling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) have declared they will oppose any move to implement the delimitation exercise in Tamil Nadu if a related bill is introduced in Parliament. The matter was a major topic of discussion during the DMK’s July 16 meeting of MPs, where party head M K Stalin gave them instructions to behave as a “constructive opposition” while opposing policies that would jeopardize Tamil Nadu’s interests. Speaking to reporters on Friday, DMK spokesperson Saravanan Annadurai stated that the party would fight any new laws introduced by the BJP government at the national level if they violate the Indian Constitution or state rights. “Our leader, M K Stalin, met with the DMK’s MPs and gave them instructions to fight this delimitation bill, which will be against the interests of the states, particularly Tamil Nadu, in a constructive manner. If the bill is enacted like it was the last time, we stand to lose out,” he stated. Annadurai stated that the BJP had suggested holding an all-party conference to discuss the matter, but that the party would hold off on making a decision until it had more information. He stated, “We will have to wait and see what comes out of that all-party meeting and what the

BJP is going to propose.” He drew attention to the fact that the legislation slated for the monsoon session does not include a delimitation measure. The delimitation law is not included in the list of bills that the Parliamentary ministry has provided, so we will have to see. All of these elements are present, so we need to see if they plan to bring it and whether an all-party meeting will take place,” he stated. The idea for delimitation has been strongly opposed by the DMK. Stalin burned a representative copy of the draft bill in public on April 16 of this year, calling it a “black law” and claiming that Tamil people will suffer as a result. After failing to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority, the proposed law and related constitutional amendments were rejected in Parliament the next day. CM C Joseph Vijay, the head of TVK, has also objected to the practice. Vijay called the proposed delimitation process a “biased” action by the Union government prior to the Assembly elections. On July 10, he visited Karur after taking office and reaffirmed his position. The Central government is starting to discuss the introduction of delimitation. Tamil Nadu will vehemently oppose it, regardless of who proposes it. Vijay stated, “We must not allow our rightful representation to be taken away, and we will make sure it is not taken.” On the other hand, the BJP supported the exercise. “Delimitation has to happen, it should have happened in the year 2000 itself,” stated party spokesperson Narayanan Thirupathy.

Sonam Wangchuk’s Hunger Strike Timeline: His Removal From Jantar Mantar

New Delhi, July 18: Sonam Wangchuk, an educator and activist, has been taken from the protest site at Delhi’s famous Jantar Mantar after going on a hunger fast over the suspected NEET paper leak. He was taken to a hospital early in the morning by the police, who also asked the demonstrators to leave. For almost a month, Wangchuk and his supporters had been demonstrating against Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in an effort to raise awareness of the predicament faced by millions of students who want to be accepted into India’s best medical schools. On June 28, he began his hunger strike in support of the satirical group Cockroach Janta Party at the famous protest spot in the center of Delhi. The government was previously mandated by the Delhi High Court to take “anything and everything” to save Wangchuk’s life. A day after his physicians declared his health an emergency and expressed concern that his organs



would fail, the cops took action.

On June 28, Wangchuk commenced a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, focusing on education and Ladakh-related issues, supported predominantly by students. The protest initially attracted small crowds, but Wangchuk effectively used video messages to demand transparency and accountability in competitive testing frameworks. By July 3, he acknowledged government efforts to address con-

cerns in Ladakh but remained resolute in his hunger strike, advocating for broader educational accountability. As the hunger strike progressed, alarming medical updates emerged, revealing rapid weight loss and health deterioration; by July 6, he had lost nearly 7 kg, with a low blood glucose level. Political attention intensified, and on July 15, a public interest litigation was filed in the Delhi High Court, which subsequently mandated the government to ensure Wangchuk’s health was monitored. On July 16, the court compelled the government to act to save his life as Wangchuk entered Day 19 of his fast, yet his health continued to decline.

By July 20, as he prepared to lead a peaceful march to Parliament, medical warnings about potential organ damage heightened concerns. Early on July 18, authorities intervened, removing Wangchuk to a hospital for “essential medical care” as protestors were urged to leave the site.

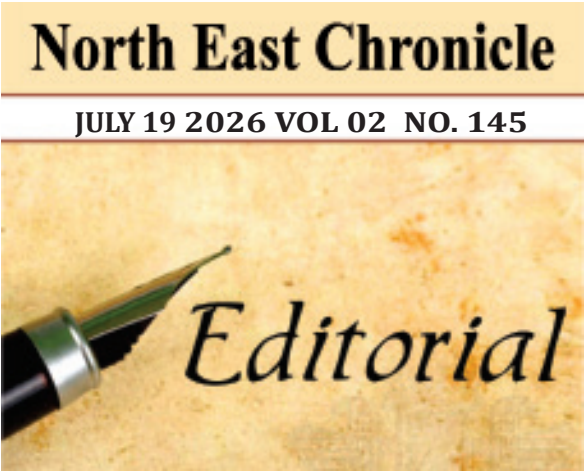
India is in communication with US officials due to issues with updated visa requirements

New Delhi, July 18: In order to minimize any potential issues that Indian people may have as a result of updated US visa regulations, India has declared that it is actively corresponding with US officials. The demographic of Indian students and academic visitors is expected to be significantly impacted by the regulation changes that prohibit foreign scholars and exchange visitors from staying in the United States for an extended period of time. Randhir Jaiswal, a spokeswoman for the External Affairs Ministry, responded to questions about the changes made by the US Department of Homeland Security during a media briefing on Friday. “Reports about the visa regulations have surfaced. Any state has sovereign authority over immigration issues, visa regulations, and visa functions, according to Jaiswal. The spokesperson went on to elaborate on New Delhi’s diplomatic strategy for protecting its residents, empha-



sizing that the administration keeps a close eye on the issue.” But having said that, let me tell you that as and when there are issues of difficulties, which are brought to our attention, in regard to genuine travellers [and] students, among others, who seek support from the US, we take up those issues with the US side so as to minimise the difficulties that our people face,” Jaiswal said. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has effectively dismantled a long-standing

historical protocol that allowed foreign students, exchange visitors, and journalists to live inside the United States indefinitely without ongoing federal oversight by implementing these stricter guidelines. The revised framework imposes a strictly limited duration of stay for non-immigrant visa holders classified under F, J, and I classifications, according to an official statement issued by the DHS on Thursday. According to this operational matrix, exchange visitors are covered by J category codes, working media professionals are covered by I category codes, and students are specifically designated for F category visas. The revised mandate significantly reduces the grace period granted to F visa holders to successfully leave the country, transfer to another educational institution, or change their legal status after graduation—from the customary 60 days to just 30 days—compounding the administrative changes.



The Importance of a Place to Sit

A simple seat can determine whether a public space is truly accessible. At bus stops, markets, hospitals, parks, and government offices, the absence of adequate seating can make ordinary activities difficult for elderly people, pregnant women, patients, and those with disabilities.

Such facilities are often overlooked because they appear insignificant in large development plans. Yet public comfort is built through these small details. A well-designed public space does not merely help people move; it also gives them a place to pause.

Beyond the Stereotype: Parisian Service Explained

Parisian waiters have long carried an unfair reputation among international visitors. The image of the unfriendly French server — impatient, dismissive, and judging every customer's choice — has become one of the most familiar travel stereotypes associated with Paris. Tourists often describe restaurant staff as cold or arrogant, reinforcing the idea that dining in the French capital comes with an unavoidable dose of hostility. But for many people who have lived in Paris for years, this reputation does not match reality. The problem, they argue, is not rudeness but a clash of cultural expectations.

Parisian waiters are professionals who take pride in their work. They may appear more direct or formal compared with service workers in some other countries, but this does not necessarily mean they are unfriendly. Like many aspects of French culture, interactions in restaurants are shaped by traditions of politeness and social etiquette that visitors may not immediately understand.

One of the most important rules is the simple greeting: “bonjour”. In France, acknowledging someone before making a request is considered essential manners. Entering a shop, café, or restaurant without saying hello can be viewed as disrespectful. For visitors unfamiliar with this custom, failing to greet staff may seem like a small mistake, but from a French perspective it can create a negative first impression.

This cultural difference often explains why some tourists feel they receive a cold response. A waiter who appears distant may simply be reacting to what they perceive as a lack of basic courtesy. In busy tourist areas, restaurant workers may experience this situation hundreds of times a day, with customers expecting immediate service without the formal exchange that French social etiquette requires.

The misunderstanding goes beyond greetings. French restaurant culture also differs from that of many other countries. In France, being a waiter is often considered a skilled profession rather than a temporary job. Many servers receive training, develop expertise, and view their role as part of the wider tradition of French cuisine. Their confidence in recommending dishes, correct-

ing choices, or explaining how food should be enjoyed can sometimes be interpreted by visitors as arrogance.

A waiter advising against ordering a well-done steak, for example, may not be trying to criticise a customer's preference. Instead, they may believe they are protecting the quality of the meal and ensuring that the customer experiences the dish as intended. French dining culture places strong importance on preparation, balance, and tradition, and servers often see themselves as guides rather than simply order-takers.

Of course, customers remain free to make their own choices. A polite but confident response usually creates a better interaction. Like many social situations in France, respectful disagreement is often accepted when it is expressed clearly and courteously. Visitors who engage with the culture rather than approaching it with assumptions may find that the supposedly unfriendly waiter becomes much more welcoming.

There is also another side of Parisian service that often goes unnoticed. Behind the formal exterior, many waiters show warmth and generosity, particularly when they see genuine effort from customers. Families with children, for example, often experience a different side of restaurant culture. Many servers are patient and helpful, offering small gestures of kindness that challenge the stereotype of Parisian coldness.

Simple acts — providing crayons for children, helping parents manage meals, or offering assistance during difficult moments — reveal a level of care that is rarely included in tourist complaints. These moments suggest that the issue is not a lack of friendliness but a different understanding of how friendliness is expressed.

The stereotype of the rude Parisian waiter survives because visitors often judge French service through expectations shaped by their own cultures. In some countries, especially where customer service is built around constant friendliness and personal attention, a quieter and more formal approach can seem unfriendly. In France, professionalism and respect may be expressed through efficiency, knowledge, and proper etiquette rather than exaggerated enthusiasm.

Strait of Hormuz, Global Stakes: The Conflict That Could Shake the World Economy

The escalating confrontation between the United States and Iran has once again placed the Middle East at the centre of a major international crisis, raising questions about military strategy, diplomatic failures, and the consequences of prolonged conflict. With American forces carrying out strikes against Iranian targets and Tehran responding with attacks on US-linked interests across the region, fears are growing that the confrontation could expand beyond a direct military exchange into a wider regional crisis affecting energy markets, global security, and international relations.

Critics of US President Donald Trump's approach argue that the conflict reflects a pattern of aggressive decision-making without a clear long-term strategy. They say Washington's military actions have increased instability rather than achieving lasting security objectives.

Supporters of the administration, however, maintain that pressure on Iran is necessary to prevent threats against US allies, limit Tehran's military capabilities, and protect American interests in the region. The debate has intensified as both sides struggle to define their goals and determine a possible path toward de-escalation.

The immediate focus of the crisis has been the strategic Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important maritime routes for energy transportation. Any disruption in the waterway has the potential to affect global oil supplies and increase economic uncertainty. The confrontation has raised concerns among governments and international organisations

that continued military action could trigger wider instability, particularly at a time when global economies remain sensitive to energy price fluctuations.

The conflict has also highlighted the difficulty of achieving political objectives through military force. The United States and its allies have expressed concerns over Iran's nuclear programme, regional influence, and support for armed groups in neighbouring countries. However, efforts to address these issues through military pressure have repeatedly produced complicated outcomes, with critics arguing that bombing campaigns alone rarely eliminate political conflicts and may instead strengthen hardline positions within targeted countries.

The latest escalation follows a long history of tensions between Washington and Tehran. Relations between the two countries have been marked by decades of mistrust, sanctions, diplomatic breakdowns, and periods of military confrontation. The 2015 nuclear agreement temporarily created a framework for negotiations, but the situation deteriorated after the United States withdrew from the deal and imposed renewed sanctions on Iran. Since then, both sides have struggled to find a sustainable diplomatic arrangement.

Analysts examining the current crisis point to the challenge of balancing military pressure with diplomatic engagement. While governments often use force to demonstrate strength, prolonged conflicts can create unintended consequences, including humanitarian suffering, economic disruption,

and political instability. The experience of previous Middle Eastern conflicts has shown that military victories do not always translate into long-term political solutions.

One of the major criticisms directed at the Trump administration is the absence of a clearly defined end goal. Opponents argue that launching military operations without a realistic political strategy risks creating an open-ended confrontation. They compare the situation with previous US interventions in the region, where initial military successes were followed by years of political uncertainty and security challenges.

The administration's supporters reject this criticism, arguing that deterrence requires a willingness to use force when necessary. They maintain that Iran's regional activities, missile development, and support for allied armed groups pose serious security concerns.

According to this view, failing to respond strongly could encourage further challenges from Tehran and weaken American influence in the region.

The humanitarian consequences of the conflict remain a major concern. Military strikes have raised fears about civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure. Previous conflicts in the region have demonstrated that ordinary citizens often bear the greatest burden during prolonged confrontations. Damage to power networks, transportation systems, and essential services can create long-lasting difficulties for communities far beyond the immediate battlefield.

Economic consequences have also become increas-

ingly significant. Rising tensions in the Gulf region have affected energy markets, with concerns that instability could contribute to higher oil prices and increased inflation worldwide. Developing economies, which are often more vulnerable to energy shocks, could face additional pressure if disruptions continue.

The crisis has also tested relationships between the United States and its international partners. European governments have generally called for restraint and diplomatic engagement, warning that uncontrolled escalation could undermine regional security. Some allies have expressed concern that military confrontation could create wider consequences, including increased migration pressures, economic instability, and the expansion of extremist movements.

Beyond the immediate conflict, the confrontation has become part of a broader debate about America's role in global affairs. Critics argue that repeated military interventions have damaged US credibility and created perceptions of inconsistency in foreign policy. Supporters counter that American leadership requires confronting threats and defending allies, particularly in strategically important regions.

The political impact inside the United States is also significant. Foreign policy decisions involving military action often become subjects of intense domestic debate. Questions about presidential authority, congressional oversight, financial costs, and public support remain central issues. Critics argue that major military decisions require

broader consultation, while supporters emphasise the need for rapid action during security crises.

Iran's leadership faces its own challenges. The government has used confrontation with the United States as part of its political narrative, presenting resistance against foreign pressure as a matter of national sovereignty. However, economic sanctions and military tensions have placed significant pressure on Iran's population. Rising costs, limited economic opportunities, and international isolation remain major concerns for ordinary citizens.

The role of regional actors has further complicated the crisis. Countries across the Middle East must balance their security relationships, economic interests, and concerns about becoming targets in a wider confrontation. Gulf states, in particular, face difficult choices as they seek protection from security threats while avoiding becoming directly involved in a larger war.

Diplomatic efforts remain the most likely path toward reducing tensions, although negotiations face significant obstacles. Both Washington and Tehran have invested heavily in public positions that make compromise politically difficult. Leaders on both sides risk appearing weak if they reduce their demands, creating a situation where escalation can continue even when neither side benefits from prolonged conflict.

The experience of past negotiations suggests that successful diplomacy often requires difficult compromises. Agreements involving security guarantees, sanctions

relief, and limits on military activities require trust that is often absent during periods of intense confrontation. Rebuilding communication channels may therefore be one of the most important steps toward preventing further escalation.

The Iran crisis also raises broader questions about the future of international security. In an increasingly interconnected world, regional conflicts can quickly produce global consequences. A military confrontation in the Gulf can influence energy prices, economic stability, diplomatic relations, and security calculations far beyond the Middle East.

Ultimately, the central challenge facing Washington and Tehran is moving from confrontation toward a sustainable political solution. Military power can influence behaviour, but it rarely resolves the underlying disputes that create conflicts. The future of the crisis will depend on whether both sides prioritise long-term stability over short-term political victories.

As the confrontation continues, the international community faces a difficult task: preventing further escalation while encouraging meaningful dialogue. The stakes extend beyond the interests of two governments.

They involve regional peace, global economic security, and the lives of millions of people affected by decisions made far from the battlefield. The outcome of this crisis will depend not only on military strength but also on diplomacy, restraint, and the willingness of leaders to pursue solutions beyond conflict.

Hope Meets Reality: Andy Burnham's Battle to Shape Britain's Future

Andy Burnham's arrival at Downing Street marks the beginning of a new political chapter for Britain, but history offers a warning as well as an opportunity. The experiences of previous prime ministers — from Gordon Brown and Tony Blair to Margaret Thatcher and Boris Johnson — provide important lessons about the challenges that await an incoming leader. Burnham has entered office with political momentum and a message centred on hope, community, and renewal, but the difficult task now begins: transforming public expectations into effective government.

The first challenge for Burnham will be managing the crucial opening weeks of his premiership. For many voters outside Greater Manchester, where he has served as mayor, he remains a relatively unfamiliar figure. The early impression he creates will play a major role in shaping how the public views his leadership. In politics, first impressions often become lasting judgments, and the tone set at the beginning of an administration can influence its entire trajectory.

Burnham inherits a country that has experienced years of political instability. A rapid succession of prime ministers has created frustration among voters who increasingly want consistency and competence from government. Unlike a leader arriving after a major general election victory, Burnham does not have the advantage of a fresh electoral mandate. However, he does appear to benefit from a public desire for stability and a willingness to give a new leader an opportunity to succeed.

The challenge for Burnham is to convert that cautious goodwill into lasting confidence. His central political message has been about restoring hope, and that message will be tested immediately. Previous governments have struggled when leaders focused too heavily on communicating difficulties rather than offering a sense of possibility. Burnham will need to acknowledge

the challenges facing the country while ensuring that his government is associated with ambition rather than decline.

The experience of Keir Starmer's early months in office offers a clear warning. Starmer's decision to emphasise difficult economic conditions and national problems created a sense of pessimism that damaged public confidence. While governments must be honest about challenges, voters also expect leaders to provide direction and reassurance. Burnham's more optimistic political style could become an advantage if he can combine it with credible policies and practical results.

One of the biggest strategic decisions facing Burnham will be whether to consider an early election. Political leaders often become tempted by favourable polling numbers or moments of popularity, but history shows the dangers of acting too quickly. Gordon Brown's experience remains a significant example. Speculation about a possible early election grew so intense that it eventually became politically difficult to avoid. The situation created pressure and contributed to perceptions of uncertainty.

For Burnham, the priority will likely be building public trust rather than seeking an immediate electoral advantage. A government requires time to demonstrate competence, deliver reforms, and establish credibility. Any discussion of an early election could distract from the more urgent task of governing and could create unnecessary political pressure.

Another important decision will be the selection of his cabinet and senior advisers. The principle that “personnel is policy” remains highly relevant in government. A prime minister cannot manage every issue personally; the people chosen for key positions shape the direction, effectiveness, and public image of an administration.

The difficulties faced by previous governments demonstrate the importance of having a stable and capable team around the prime min-

ister. Internal disagreements, unclear responsibilities, or frequent changes among senior advisers can create an impression of disorder. Burnham's choices in forming his government will therefore provide an early indication of how he intends to operate and what priorities he wants to pursue.

His government is expected to introduce a series of early policy announcements, a strategy designed to demonstrate momentum and avoid allowing opposition parties to dominate the political agenda. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. Governments that appear inactive during their early months often lose control of the national conversation, allowing critics to define their record before they have established one.

However, speed alone will not be enough. Burnham's government will face pressure to ensure that early decisions are carefully considered and effectively implemented. Previous policy reversals have weakened public trust in political promises, and voters have become increasingly sceptical of announcements that are later abandoned. The new administration will need to demonstrate that its decisions are based on preparation rather than political reaction. Central to Burnham's leadership will be the development of a clear governing philosophy. He has repeatedly argued that he knows what he believes and understands what he wants to achieve. A strong sense of direction is essential for any government because it provides guidance not only for ministers but also for the civil service responsible for implementing policy.

History shows the importance of governments having a clear ideological framework. Margaret Thatcher's administration, despite being deeply controversial, demonstrated the power of a consistent governing vision. Supporters and critics alike understood the principles that guided decision-making. Government departments knew the broader direction in which policy was expected to move.

Burnham's challenge is to create

a similarly clear sense of purpose while pursuing a very different political approach. He has criticised the economic settlement associated with Thatcherism, arguing that political power became too centralised while economic power became concentrated in private hands. His alternative vision focuses on greater regional decision-making, stronger public involvement in the economy, and a more active role for the state.

The difficulty lies in turning these principles into practical policies. A commitment to greater public ownership, stronger regulation, or regional empowerment raises complex questions about funding, administration, and effectiveness. A government cannot succeed through ideas alone; it must show how those ideas will improve people's daily lives.

Burnham's political identity has been strongly connected to regional representation. His years as mayor of Greater Manchester shaped his reputation as a politician who argues for greater power outside Westminster. He has frequently criticised the concentration of political decision-making in London and has promoted the idea that communities should have more control over their own futures.

This regional focus could become one of his greatest strengths. Many voters across Britain feel disconnected from national politics and believe that decisions are too often made by distant institutions. However, the challenge for Burnham will be ensuring that his regional agenda becomes a national strategy that benefits all parts of the country.

His approach will also need to address Labour's internal divisions and electoral challenges. The party has traditionally contained different political traditions, ranging from those focused on state intervention and public services to those emphasising market-based solutions and economic growth. Balancing these competing views will require careful leadership. The recent decline in Labour support highlighted the dangers of relying

too heavily on a narrow electoral strategy. Previous leadership focused heavily on winning back voters who had moved towards Reform UK, particularly in former Labour-supporting areas. While appealing to those voters remains important, elections showed that Labour's challenges were broader. Many previous supporters moved not only to Reform but also to the Greens, Liberal Democrats, and other parties.

This suggests that Labour's future success depends not simply on competing with one political opponent but on rebuilding a broad coalition of support. Burnham will need to reconnect with traditional Labour voters while also convincing new groups that his government represents their interests.

International events will provide another major test. Burnham's political focus has largely centred on domestic issues, but prime ministers are often defined by unexpected global crises. Tony Blair's leadership was dramatically shaped by the September 11 attacks and the subsequent Iraq War, events that changed the direction of his government.

Burnham cannot control international developments, but he can prepare for them. A clear domestic programme and strong decision-making structure can help governments maintain direction during periods of uncertainty. Without a clear strategy, unexpected crises can overwhelm an administration and force leaders into reactive politics.

The relationship between political communication and governing ability will therefore be central to Burnham's success. His greatest strength has always been his ability to connect with audiences through language and emotion. He has built a reputation as a communicator who can explain political issues in human terms. But the challenge of Downing Street is different: words must eventually become policies, and promises must become measurable outcomes.

3 Indian Stocks Promoters Increased Their Holdings

New Delhi: In the stock market, investors are bombarded with data, opinions, and constant market noise. But some signals still stand out. One of them is when promoters increase their stake in their own company. After all, promoters know their business better than anyone else. They have the closest view of the company’s operations, order pipeline, growth plans and the challenges it faces.Legendary investor Peter Lynch summed it up well: “Insiders might sell their shares for any number of reasons, but they buy them for only one: they think the price will rise.” That is why promoter buying often attracts investors’ attention.

A rise in promoter holding can point investors towards companies worth studying, especially when it is supported by improving fundamentals. Considering this let’s look at 3 companies where promoters increased their stake during the June 2026 quarter and examine whether the underlying fundamentals justify that confidence SGFL functions as an integrated financing partner across supply chains, extending credit to dealers, distributors, retailers, vendors, and suppliers linked to large Indian corporates.Now coming to financials, it has delivered its strongest quarter to date in Q1 FY27, marked by record loan book growth. Operating Income more than doubled year-on-year, rising 102% to Rs 1.3 bn, up from Rs 675 m in Q1 FY26, and grew 29% sequentially over Rs 1 bn in

Q4 FY26.. Net Interest Income (NII) increased 92% YoY to Rs 820.6 m, aided by strong growth in interest income to Rs 1.2 bn, though interest expenses also rose sharply to Rs 541 m due to the expanding loan book Looking ahead, the company is expected to deliver the consistent numbers and profitability in this high inflation and uncertain global environment.Manaksia Coated Metals & Industries manufactures and exports quality galvanised and pre-painted steel in sheets and coils. The company was demerged as a separate entity in 2010, and its core operations are housed in an advanced flagship steel facility in Kutch, Gujarat which is the hub of MCMIL’s coated steel operations.

MCMIL offers a wide range of flat steel products with value added finishes to many industries including construction, appliances, general engineering, HVAC, refrigeration and other industrial and domestic applications.

Profitability saw an even stronger jump. Profit Before Tax rose 111% YoY to Rs 716 m, while Profit After Tax (PAT) surged 119% YoY and 27% QoQ to an all-time high of Rs 536.8 m, up from Rs 245.2 m in Q1 FY26.Asset quality remained pristine, with the company maintaining a NIL NPA book, while operating efficiency stayed strong with a Cost-to-Income ratio below 15%. Return ratios were healthy, with an annualised Return on Assets of 5.1% and Return on Equity of 14%.

Robotic cancer surgery strengthens advanced healthcare access for Mizoram patients

Aizawl: Manipal Hospital, EM Bypass, Kolkata, has reinforced its presence in the Northeast’s advanced healthcare segment after successfully treating a 68-year-old woman from Aizawl, Mizoram, diagnosed with early-stage uterine (endometrial) cancer through robotic-assisted surgery. The case highlights the growing adoption of minimally invasive robotic technology for complex cancer procedures and the increasing movement of patients from the Northeast to specialised tertiary care centres.

The patient, Lalhlupuii, was initially diagnosed with FIGO Grade I endometrial cancer following abnormal uterine bleeding at a hospi-

tal in Aizawl before being referred to Manipal Hospital for specialised treatment. After detailed MRI and CT scan assessments, a multidisciplinary team led by Dr. Arunava Roy, Head – Gynaecology Oncology & Robotic Surgery (Gynaecology), performed a four-hour robotic-assisted hysterectomy with removal of both ovaries, fallopian tubes and pelvic lymph nodes. The patient resumed oral intake the same day, recovered without major complications and was discharged within 24 hours. Final histopathology confirmed the cancer was confined to the uterus, eliminating the need for chemotherapy or radiation therapy. She returned to her daily

routine within a week and is scheduled for a routine follow-up after six months.

Commenting on the procedure, Dr. Roy said the increasing incidence of uterine cancer, driven by changing lifestyles, obesity, sedentary habits and hormonal factors, has accelerated the adoption of robotic surgery, which offers greater precision, reduced blood loss, smaller incisions, less pain and faster recovery, even for elderly patients with previous surgical histories.

The patient’s grandson said the family opted for robotic surgery after doctors explained the available treatment options, adding that the smooth recovery and minimal

post-operative pain reinforced their confidence in the technology and the hospital’s specialised cancer care.In Aizawl, the successful outcome reflects rising demand among Mizoram patients for advanced oncology services unavailable locally, creating stronger referral linkages with tertiary hospitals in eastern India. Healthcare providers say increasing awareness of robotic-assisted surgery and improved treatment outcomes are expected to drive greater patient mobility from the Northeast, strengthening the region’s medical value ecosystem while expanding opportunities for specialised healthcare providers catering to complex cancer care.

US market set for a weak opening Nasdaq futures drops 2% after global sell-off

New Delhi: A major selloff in technology stocks continued to happen Friday, pulling down global markets after concerns grew that AI-related stocks may have become too expensive. Nasdaq 100 futures dropped 2%, S&P 500 futures also fell as investors continued selling semiconductor stocks that had driven much

of this year’s market rally.The weakness was not limited to the US. Markets across Asia also declined sharply, led by chipmakers, as investors questioned whether heavy spending on artificial intelligence will continue to deliver strong returns.Chip stocks lead the global decline The biggest pressure came from

semiconductor decline in the last four weeks. Investors are becoming more cautious about whether the huge investments being made in artificial intelligence can continue to justify the h Many of the world’s biggest technology companies have been spending hundreds of billions of dollars to build AI infrastructure.

ket experts believe thelong-term outlook for AI remains positive.Francis-co Simon, European head of strategy at Santander Asset Management, said the recent fall appears small compared with earnings momentum has been exceptional this year, and results are still coming in strongly,” Simon told CNBC.

Decline of semiconductor stocks linked to the AI bubble has caused a downturn and global markets

New Delhi: Has the AI Bubble Finally Burst Most global market investors may be concerned about this, given the recent drop in prices of semiconductor stocks. From Korea to Japan to the US stock market, leading equity indexes are seeing new bouts of selling in AI chip stocks.

The numbers tell a sobering story: Paul Hoffman, BestBrokers.com, shares the numbers. “As of July 2026, AI-linked companies account for 62.04% of the S&P 500’s total market capitalisation,” says Hoffman. This means this selloff has the power to shake the entire market, not just chipmakers.During Thursday’s regular session, the Nasdaq Composite dropped 1.4%, and tech-heavy Nasdaq-100 fell over 1.6%. Micron Technology, Broadcom, AMD, Western Digital, Seagate, Rocket Lab, Scandisk, and Intel were the top losers, falling between 5% and 13% during the session.

On Friday, the story continues with US stock futures pointing towards a significantly lower opening for the Nasdaq, where futures are down over 1.5%. This suggests the pressure on chip stocks is far from over. “The decline was led by the semiconductor sector, where investors reduced exposure following the strong gains accumulated over recent months, particularly among companies tied to artificial intelligence,” says Antonio Di Giacomo, Senior Market Analyst at XS.com. The focus of market interest has once again shifted to the semiconductor industry. The lofty valuations of AI-related chipmakers have come under scanner and investors seem to have started taking note despite the industry’s aggressive growth expectations.

Chipmakers have been among the top achievers over the last two years, serving as the foundation for consumer technolo-

gy, cloud computing, data centers, automotive electronics, and artificial intelligence. But following an incredible surge driven by confidence about AI, investors are starting to wonder if values have gone too high. Dan Niles, Niles Investment Management founder, has been positive on chip stocks more than on the AI investments of Hyper-scalers. In an interview with CNBC a month back, Niles said, “I think that just gets back to where the money is being spent, not the guys who are spending the money because they’ve got cash flow concerns or having to raise capital to fund that spending.” The recently listed SK Hynix ADR is down nearly 10% since the debut and closed over 13% lower on Thursday. This is a sharp fall for a stock that had generated significant excitement at listing.Another case is Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, where the stock is under pressure despite posting strong Q2 results and giving upbeat Q3 guidance. This shows that even solid earnings are not enough to protect chip stocks right now.

Most Semiconductor Sector stocks have doubled several times over in the last 1 year, with the benchmark PHLX Semiconductor Sector Index (SOX) clocking over 100% during the same period.

Over the past month, SOX has fallen by nearly 17%, closing 4.29% lower on Thursday, while the KOSPI Composite has dropped over 24% during the same period. Japan’s Nikkei 225 and the broader TOPIX index also continue to feel the pressure. The writing is on the wall. The chip stocks are under pressure. The fatigue in the tech stocks may be getting more visible, and some investors could be booking profits. “Companies within the artificial intelligence ecosystem. In recent quarters, enthusiasm for AI has



fuelled strong rallies in chipmakers, infrastructure providers, and software companies, prompting many investors to lock in profits ahead of the new corporate earnings season,” adds Giacomo. The recent market correction could also indicate a shift or rotation of funds into defensive sectors. Such events typically occur after a peak in AI-related stock performance and reflect cautious reassessment of high technology valuations amid rising macroeconomic uncertainty and restrictive central bank policies.According to Hoffman, “As of July 2026, 218 companies of the 503 index constituents are now directly linked to the AI economy, representing 43.3% of all. Together, these companies are worth \$42.39 trillion, accounting for 62.04% of the S&P 500’s total market capitalisation. Just 58 Core AI companies – those building AI chips, models, software, and security – are collectively valued at \$32.2 trillion, having a combined index weight of 47.13%.” This scale explains why any wobble in chip stocks can move the broader market so sharply. The escalating tensions between the US and Iran have once again intensified concerns over

supply disruptions in the Middle East. Oil is up over \$85, gaining more than 10% for the week.A rising inflation scenario may prevent the US Federal Reserve from cutting interest rates, resulting in increased borrowing costs for businesses and other borrowers. Together, these factors add another layer of uncertainty for markets already on edge over AI valuations.

Investors will keep a close watch on the upcoming earnings season for semiconductor and large-cap technology firms. That could turn the tables if clarity emerges on AI demand and enterprise spending.

“Investor attention is now turning to the upcoming earnings reports from the largest technology companies. Alphabet, Microsoft, Meta,

Apple, Amazon, Nvidia, and Tesla will need to demonstrate that their substantial investments in artificial intelligence continue translating into revenue growth, margin expansion, and stronger cash flow generation. Their results could determine the Nasdaq’s direction over the coming weeks,” says Giacomo.

Tata AIA retains top India MDRT ranking for fourth straight year

Aizawl: Tata AIA Life Insurance Company has retained its position as India’s top-ranked insurer in the Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT) rankings for the fourth consecutive year, while securing the 13th position globally with 1,397 MDRT-qualified advisors. Nearly half of the qualifiers, 695 advisors, are women, reflecting the company’s emphasis on building an inclusive and professionally trained agency network.

The latest rankings highlight Tata AIA’s continued focus on developing full-time financial advisors who provide guidance on insurance protection, retirement planning, wealth creation and long-term financial security. The company also ranked first in India in the category of advisors with five to nine years of MDRT qualification, with 207 members in this segment. MDRT, established in 1927, is regarded as a global benchmark for excellence in life insurance and financial services, recognising advisors for ethical conduct, professional expertise and customer service.

Chief Distribution Officer – Proprietary Business Rakesh Sharma said the recognition reflects the quality, consistency and long-term

commitment of the company’s advisor network, adding that Tata AIA will continue investing in developing future-ready financial advisors through its Aura learning and digital enablement platform.

The company also highlighted its customer retention performance, stating that it ranked first in four of five persistency cohorts in FY26, an indicator of long-term policy continuation and consumer trust. As of March 31, 2026, Tata AIA reported assets under management of ₹1,45,589crore, a total premium income of ₹38,164 crore in FY26 and an individual death claim settlement ratio of 99.45%.

In Aizawl, the sustained recognition could strengthen confidence in professional financial advisory services across Mizoram, where awareness of life insurance and long-term financial planning has been steadily improving. The company’s emphasis on professionally trained advisors, digital support and greater participation of women may help expand insurance penetration and encourage more individuals in Aizawl to consider financial advisory as a viable career while boosting access to structured financial planning solutions.

Caliber Mining IPO: Over 70% subscribed within 3 hours

New Delhi: Caliber Mining is raising Rs 450 crores through an initial public offer. The IPO bidding opened for subscription today, July 17, and will close on July 21. The issue is a combination of fresh issue of 0.94 crore shares amounting to Rs 400 crores and an offer for sale of 0.12 crore shares, totalling to Rs 50 crores. The company has set the IPO price band between Rs 402 and Rs 424 per share. The retail investors have shown interest in the IPO, booking the category 90% within the first three hours of bidding. The IPO has been subscribed to a total of 0.72 times as of 12:30 PM. The Non-Institutional Investors (NIIs) category was booked 0.84 times, and the QIB segment was subscribed 0.31 times, during the same time period.

The allotment for the IPO shares is expected to be finalised on July 22, while the listing on the exchanges, NSE and BSE, is likely to be on July 24, as per the tentative schedule. A retail investor needs to apply for a minimum of one lot that contains 35 shares, amounting to Rs 14,840. The lot size investment for a small Non-Institutional Investor (NII) is 14 lots of 490 shares, totalling Rs 2 lakh, and for a big NII, it is 68 lots of 2,380 shares, aggregating to Rs 10 lakh. The company intends to utilise around Rs 208 crore from the fresh issue proceeds towards debt repayment, which is

expected to reduce finance costs and improve profitability. The remaining proceeds will be used towards capital expenditure for the acquisition of commercial vehicles, mining equipment, and machinery to strengthen execution capabilities and support future business expansion. Caliber Mining and Logistics is a one-stop provider of integrated coal mining and logistics services. The company offers end-to-end solutions, including overburden (OB) removal, coal extraction, coal loading and unloading, road transportation, and rail logistics coordination.

Caliber Mining operates mining and OB removal projects across Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, with its key customers comprising subsidiaries of Coal India, primarily Western Coalfields (WCL) and Northern Coalfields (NCL). The company is launching a Rs 450 crore IPO, comprising a fresh issue of Rs 400 crore and an Offer for Sale (OFS) of Rs 50 crore, implying a post-issue market capitalisation of approximately Rs 2,772 crore. Going forward, Devan Choksey Research said that the company is well-positioned to sustain growth, supported by a robust order book, expansion into Odisha and Jharkhand, diversification into iron ore logistics, and continued focus on operational efficiencies.

Antique reaffirms ‘Buy’ on 3 financial stocks with 26% to 45% upside after Q1 HDFC Life to Union Bank

New Delhi: Antique Stock Broking has reaffirmed its constructive view on select financial stocks following their June-quarter earnings, retaining positive ratings on Union Bank of India, HDFC Life Insurance Company and ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company, while maintaining a more cautious stance on HDFC Asset Management Company (HDFC AMC).The brokerage said the latest quarterly results reinforced the long-term earnings outlook for the banking and insurance companies under its coverage, supported by healthy profitability, stable asset quality and improving business momentum. However, it believes HDFC AMC’s current valuations adequately reflect its growth prospects despite a steady operating performance. Union Bank: Earnings beat driven by margins and lower costs Union Bank of India emerged as

one of Antique’s preferred picks after reporting a stronger-than-expected Q1FY27 performance.The brokerage said the bank posted a profit after tax of Rs 5,332 crore, up nearly 30% year-on-year, driven by better-than-expected net interest income growth, expansion in net interest margins and lower operating expenses. Antique noted that reported net interest margins expanded sequentially as the bank benefited from balance sheet optimisation, a lower share of high-cost bulk deposits and improved funding costs. While loan growth remained below the industry average, management continues to guide for credit growth above the system in FY27. Following the results, Antique marginally raised its FY27 and FY28 earnings estimates by 3% and 2%, respectively, while maintaining its ‘Buy’ rating. The brokerage revised its target price to Rs 212 from Rs 215

after rolling forward its valuation, indicating an upside of around 26%. HDFC Life prioritises growth over margins

Antique retained its ‘Buy’ rating on HDFC Life Insurance with an unchanged target price of Rs 740, saying the insurer delivered an inline June-quarter performance, indicating an upside or around 30%.The brokerage highlighted 9% year-on-year growth in both annualised premium equivalent (APE) and value of new business (VNB), supported by strong traction in credit life and group insurance, while individual business growth remained moderate due to continued softness in the HDFC Bank distribution channel. Although VNB margins moderated slightly to around 25%, Antique said the impact of GST changes was largely offset by a better product mix. Management has reiterated its strategy of prioritising premi-

um growth over margin expansion, with margins expected to remain broadly stable.The brokerage expects HDFC Life to deliver APE, VNB and embedded value CAGR of 14%, 16% and 14%, respectively, over FY26-FY29, and maintained its ‘Buy’ recommendation. Antique maintained.

‘Buy’ rating on HDFC Asset Management Company with a target price of Rs 3270, indicating an of around 24%.The brokerage said HDFC AMC reported a stable operating performance, supported by healthy equity inflows, resilient market share and continued profitability. However, it believes the stock’s current valuation already captures much of its medium-term growth potential.As a result, Antique retained its ‘Hold’ recommendation despite remaining constructive on the company’s underlying business fundamentals.

Israeli ministers announce plans for new illegal settlements in Gaza and West Bank

Israel: Israel's defence and finance ministers announced plans for three illegal settlements in Gaza and more than \$400m (£300m) in funding to expand construction in the occupied West Bank, as Israel's military commander for the region celebrated violent outposts as his "security partners". With national elections scheduled for 27 October, Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right coalition is racing to expand control of land in occupied Palestine and drive out Palestinians before its mandate expires.

The defence minister, Israel Katz, said he intended to set up three "Nahal" outposts in northern Gaza, a type of military community that for decades has paved the way for Israeli civilian settlements.

The finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, announced 1.3bn shekels (£318m) in funding for dozens of new Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. The cabinet allocated the money last month but kept the decision secret because of expected US opposition, Israeli media reported.

Maj Gen Avi Bluth, who commands Israeli forces in the West Bank, told residents of extrem-

ist outposts that he "appreciates their work" and considered them to be partners in security with the military.

Bluth, who grew up in a West Bank settlement himself, spoke on Wednesday at a meeting of the euphemistically named Farms Association, which represents settlements that are illegal even under Israeli law.

These play a key role in campaigns of terror that have driven Palestinians from their homes and lands across the occupied West Bank. Dozens from Israel's political and military elite, including two former prime ministers and former heads of all its security services, have threatened legal action against their government over support for Jewish terrorism in the West Bank.

"Settler violence is state violence," the UN human rights office for Palestine said in a new report published this week that detailed how Israel used settlers to lead annexation efforts, while systematic impunity for perpetrators ensured violence could grow unchecked.

Hagit Ofan, from the Israeli activist group Peace Now, said bulldozers were working on



at least seven settlements that would be populated before polling day. "The government is on a reckless pre-election sprint to raid the public purse in order to create facts on the ground," Ofan said.

Katz outlined his settlement plans for Gaza during a visit to Israeli-controlled parts of the territory. He has also pushed for the ethnic cleansing of Gaza through the large-scale migration of Palestinians. "I intend to establish

three Nahal outposts, which is also a military entity, in those places that were [Israeli settlements] in northern Gaza," he told Channel 14 TV. Nahal outposts were not intended for military use in the long term, said Dror Etikes, the founder of the advocacy group Kerem Navot, which monitors Israel's land grab in the occupied West Bank. "The military is only the first phase, which aims to prepare it for future settlement," he said. "All together,

dozens of Israeli settlements in the West Bank were established in this way."

Nahal settlements were first established in border regions in the 1950s, including surrounding the Gaza Strip, Etikes said. From 1967, the same system was used in the occupied West Bank, initially along the Jordan valley and then spreading to other areas.

Smotrich also said last month that plans for three settlements in Gaza were complete and work

could begin as soon as Netanyahu gave a green light. The prime minister's office did not respond to requests for comment on Katz's plans.

Katz also told Channel 14 that he "felt good" seeing the wasteland of rubble that had replaced Palestinian homes and communities in most of Israeli-occupied Gaza.

Israel now controls 65% of Gaza, Israel's deputy chief of staff, Maj Gen Tamir Yadai, told Katz in an on-camera briefing. This is far beyond the 53% agreed under the ceasefire brokered last year by the US president, Donald Trump.

About 2 million Palestinians who survived Israel's war of annihilation are crowded into the remaining third of Gaza's territory.

"I don't know how to describe this, other than victory, when you control 65% of the territory, when you have killed over 70,000 terrorists here," Yadai said.

His figures appeared to label 21,000 Palestinian children killed by Israeli attacks as "terrorists", including more than 1,000 babies who never reached their first birthday.

Israel's military has recognised that a database of Gaza's war dead compiled by Palestinian health authorities is broadly accurate. It contains more than 73,000 people listed by name, with their Israeli-issued ID number.

More than 21,000 were children; more than 10,000 were women under 60 years old, and more than 5,000 were elderly people. Asked whether Yadai's data counted women, children and elderly people as "terrorists", the Israeli military declined to comment directly.

A spokesperson said the military was still assessing casualty numbers in Gaza, and despite Yadai's comments to Katz, had not briefed civilian officials on this issue.

"The IDF is currently conducting a staff assessment regarding the breakdown and categorisation of its casualties. The process has not yet been completed and has not been presented to the political echelon," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson declined to comment on Bluth's backing for settler militants and said decisions on settlements were a political issue.

Israeli attacks on Gaza kill 14



Gaza: Eight people were killed when an Israeli strike targeted a gathering of civilians in the Al-Balata market area of Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza on Friday, Gaza's civil defence agency and a hospital said.

Witnesses said the drone targeted Palestinian mourners gathered outside the Ahmad Yassin Mosque as they waited to begin a funeral procession for a Palestinian killed in a separate attack earlier in the day in the same area.

"The people who were participating in the [funeral] procession were coming out of the mosque [when] a drone strike targeted a group of people within the procession itself." Multiple Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip have killed at least 14 Palestinians, more than half of them in a drone strike on a funeral procession.

Nine months into its so-called "ceasefire" with Hamas, Israel continues to violate it on a near-daily basis. The Israeli military confirmed carrying out the strike, the AFP news agency reported.

The army claimed to have struck a "terrorist" cell in central Gaza, but added that it was "aware of the claims

that several uninvolved individuals were harmed as a result of the strike. The results of the strike are under review."

"This heinous crime takes place while the aggressor regime, through its systematic and continuous violation of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, continues to kill and terrorise innocent citizens in front of the eyes of mediators and the international community," it said. Earlier on Friday, a 52-year-old woman was killed in the northern city of Beit Lahia when an Israeli drone dropped a bomb near Abu Tammam School, Palestinian Wafa news agency reported.

An Israeli attack targeting a gathering of Palestinians in the town of Az-Zawayda in central Gaza killed another person and injured several others. In al-Sawarha, west of Nuseirat refugee camp, one person was killed when a structure housing displaced people was struck by Israeli fire. Elsewhere, an Israeli drone struck an apartment in Gaza City, killing a Palestinian and wounding several others, including children, while another woman died from wounds sustained in Israeli gun-

fire southwest of Khan Younis. Despite a nominal "ceasefire" taking effect last October, Israel has continued attacks across Gaza on a regular basis.

The research group, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), reported on Wednesday that Israeli attacks on the enclave have increased since May.

ACLED said there were more than 40 strikes last month – the highest monthly total since the "ceasefire" began. The increase has raised questions about whether Israel's genocidal war on Gaza will ever end, allowing the devastated territory to be rebuilt and Palestinians to return to a sense of normality.

The skies above the Gaza Strip are filled with drones," Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud said. "You can hear the mechanical hum of these drones everywhere ... In addition to the ongoing [Israeli] destruction of remaining infrastructure," he added. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported on Friday that Israel has been killing children as "a matter of routine" – 274 since the "ceasefire" started. It said that, on average, one child has been killed every day since then

Beyond LNG: Berlin's red-carpet diplomacy signals a bigger bet on Algeria

Berlin, Germany: Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune was welcomed with military honours at the historic Villa Borsig on Thursday, high above Lake Tegel, north of Berlin.

Hours before the ceremony, he reminded a small group of guests, in French, just how far relations between the two countries had come. "Algeria and Germany were not in the same league," he told the delegation about past Algerian-German relations, in remarks heard by Al Jazeera.

The ceremony came two weeks before a tanker, the Tessala, landed at a floating terminal off Wilhelmshaven on Germany's North Sea coast loaded with gas from the GL2Z liquefaction complex near Oran, Algeria.

It was the first ever liquefied natural gas export to Germany from Algeria's state energy company, Sonatrach.

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's invitation to Tebboune to visit Germany was part of a wider business and political outreach programme designed to bolster ties between the two countries.

Thirty agreements were signed between German and Algerian companies at a bilateral economic forum in Berlin, including on hydrocarbons, renewables and energy transition, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing and advanced technology.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who met Tebboune at the Chancellery on Thursday, said the visit had been marked by "a whole series of agreements" – including on legal, investment and transparency issues – between German and Algerian companies, and he wished to see further progress on this issue.

On Wednesday, Tebboune addressed members of the Algerian community at the Hotel Adlon in Berlin, where he called Germany a great friend. He also revealed that the two countries had agreed to work together on green hydrogen, gas, helium and car manufacturing industries. Tebboune's visit comes at a critical time for Europe,



which has been desperately looking for new energy suppliers given the global tumult in recent years which has affected markets.

Russia's share of EU imports of pipeline gas has collapsed since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, from about 40 percent in 2021 to approximately 6 percent last year.

In January, the European Council adopted a regulation banning Russian LNG and pipeline gas outright from March 18, 2026, with transition periods for existing contracts.

Algeria has helped make up some of this shortfall, with Norway now supplying 54.4 percent of the EU's gaseous natural gas imports in 2025 and Algeria second at 18.5 percent. Algeria's role appears to be increasing, with this share rising to 20 percent of EU pipeline imports in the first quarter of 2026. Merz has acknowledged this, saying that Algeria is playing "a very important contribution to Europe's security of energy supply" and pointing out that the country also holds "significant raw-material deposits, among them natural gas, oil and rare earths".

Rare earths are among the materials Europe has spent three years trying to source from outside China and Russia.

Standing beside Merz on Thursday at a joint news conference at the Chancel-

lery in Berlin, Tebboune offered words Germany must have wanted to hear.

"We are careful to be a reliable supplier – we always meet our contractual delivery obligations," he said, and promised that Algerian supplies would not only be destined for Germany, but all of Europe.

This pledge comes at a critical time for Europe, with Qatari LNG exports disrupted by the US-Israel war on Iran, after Iranian attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

The Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) now forecasts that the United States will overtake Norway as the EU's main gas supplier in 2026. Amid these difficulties, it is convenient that Algeria's gas is able to directly reach Europe via a sub-Mediterranean pipeline.

"Algeria is strategically central for Europe, above all for Germany, if it is to get its industry back on its feet in the next three to five years," Michael Ayari, Algeria analyst at the International Crisis Group, told the Frankfurter Rundschau. "It could ramp up its gas deliveries and thereby compensate for the loss of Russian gas." Behind that sits the Trans-Saharan pipeline, a line stretching approximately 4,000km (2,500 miles) and intended to carry up to 30 billion cubic metres (1.06 trillion cubic feet) of Nigerian gas a year across

Niger and Algeria to Europe. Sonatrach began welding its own 1,210km (752 miles) section of this pipeline in June, which will feed into the national grid and Hassi R'Mel, northern Algeria, Africa's largest gasfield.

Hydrogen, considered a cleaner energy source than LNG, became a prominent part of the news conference. Both Tebboune and Merz returned to the issue of the Southern Hydrogen Corridor, a 3,300km (2,050 miles) dedicated hydrogen pipeline linking North Africa to Italy, Austria and Germany. It is recognised as a Project of Common Interest under the EU's TEN-E regulation, which should speed up the approval of permits and access to money from the Connecting Europe Facility. Design capacity, according to the project's promoters, is 4 million tonnes of green hydrogen a year.

Tebboune called it a pioneering project and thanked Germany for backing it, while Merz said Berlin would drive the corridor forward together with Italy. On January 21, 2025, Algeria, Tunisia, Italy, Austria and Germany signed a Joint Declaration of Political Intent in Rome, at a ministerial attended by European Commission representatives and the EU body now lists the corridor as a "Team Europe initiative" under its Global Gateway strategy.

Transmission operators

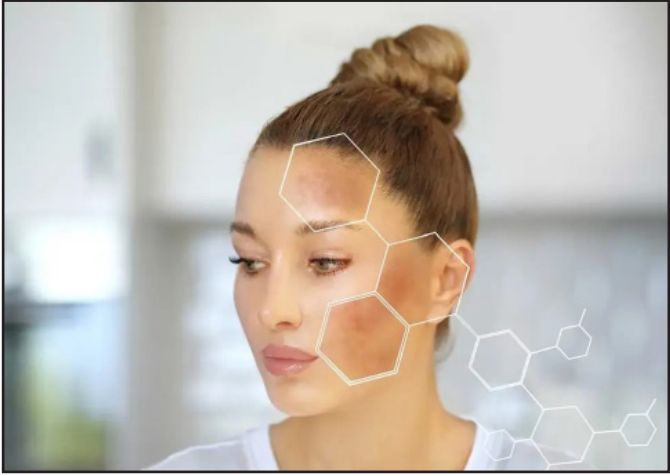
have begun feasibility studies. The pipeline would carry hydrogen produced in Algeria, the corridor's main production hub, through neighbouring Tunisia and across the Mediterranean to Italy, Austria and Germany, with initial work under way on the Algerian and Tunisian sections. One name went unmentioned in the opening statements. Christophe Gleizes, the French freelance sport journalist and contributor to the magazines So Foot and Society. He was arrested in Tizi Ouzou in May 2024 while reporting on the football club JS Kabylie and convicted of glorifying "terrorism" over alleged contacts with the Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylie.

He was sentenced to seven years in June 2025, and an appeals court upheld the sentence on December 3. Reporters Without Borders, a press freedom NGO, describes him as the only French journalist currently imprisoned anywhere in the world.

When a German reporter asked Tebboune about appeals for clemency from Gleizes's supporters, asking the president to pardon the journalist, he gave a firm but not dismissive response.

"Out of respect for the Algerian judicial system, I will not answer this question except on Algerian soil," he replied. "I am now in Germany, not in Algeria."

Despite using lightening serums, dark patches and pigmentation frequently recur



The serum is purchased by you. You use it assiduously. For a few happy weeks, you think you have finally figured out the pigmentation code as the dark area starts to disappear. Then summer arrives. Or your hormones change. Or a particularly angry breakout leaves behind a mark that refuses to disappear. And suddenly, you are back where you started. Pigmentation has become one of beauty’s most persistent frustrations, despite bathroom shelves being increasingly crowded with brightening serums, exfoliating acids and products promising more even-toned skin. Perhaps the problem isn’t that we don’t have enough products. Perhaps it is that we are treating every dark spot as

though it has the same origin story. Welcome to skincare’s more personal era. That ‘Tan’ Might Be Trying to Tell You Something One of the first mistakes people make with pigmentation happens before a treatment has even begun: identifying the concern incorrectly. A patch of uneven skin may be dismissed as tanning. Persistent discolouration might be blamed on a recent holiday. The instinct is often to scrub, exfoliate or reach for a DIY remedy before asking why the pigmentation appeared in the first place. “Despite growing awareness around skincare, pigmentation remains one of the concerns people continue to struggle with the most,” says Shaily Mehrotra,

CEO and Co-Founder, Fixderma. “That tells us the conversation needs to shift from chasing quick fixes to understanding the skin itself.” According to Mehrotra, what people assume is tanning or sunburn can sometimes be the early stages of pigmentation. The danger of treating skin based on an assumption is that the actual trigger, whether sun exposure, hormonal changes, post-pregnancy pigmentation or post-inflammatory skin damage can remain unaddressed. And your kitchen-concocted skincare experiment? It may not always help. “In the absence of the right guidance, DIY remedies can often worsen the condition,” she cautions. Not All Dark Spots Have the Same Origin Story The umbrella term pigmentation makes the concern sound deceptively straightforward. In reality, the route to uneven skin tone can be considerably more complicated. “Hyperpigmentation and melasma are often mistaken as cosmetic concerns, but they are complex skin conditions influenced by genetics, hormonal changes, UV exposure, pollution, lifestyle and even skin inflammation,” explains Vidur Kapur, Director, O3+ Professional. This is precisely why the se-

rum your friend swears transformed her skin may do very little for yours. Two people can look in the mirror and see similar patches of discolouration, while the mechanisms behind them are entirely different. One may be dealing with marks left behind by acne. Another may be experiencing hormonally influenced pigmentation. A third could be repeatedly triggering uneven tone through sun exposure or inflammation. A one-size-fits-all routine, Kapur argues, rarely provides lasting results. The Strongest Brightening Serum Isn’t Always the Answer Beauty has spent years teaching consumers to shop by ingredient. Vitamin C for brightness. Retinoids for renewal. Acids for exfoliation. The result is a generation of skincare users who can pronounce niacinamide but may still not understand what is triggering their pigmentation. Personalised skincare attempts to reverse that order. Instead of beginning with what product should I buy?, the conversation starts with what is happening to my skin? “Personalised skincare focuses on understanding an individual’s skin type, concerns, triggers and barrier health before selecting the right combination of ingredients and treatments,”

says Kapur. More importantly, he adds, long-term pigmentation management isn’t about finding the strongest brightening product on the shelf. A routine needs to bring together targeted actives, daily sun protection and products that support the skin barrier while working to prevent further pigmentation. In other words, declaring war on a dark spot with every active ingredient in your bathroom cabinet may not be the sophisticated skincare strategy TikTok makes it appear to be. Indian Skin Needs a More Nuanced Pigmentation Conversation There is another reason personalisation matters: Indian skin’s tendency towards post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation and uneven skin tone. A breakout may disappear, but the mark it leaves behind can remain for weeks or months. Skin inflammation itself can become part of the pigmentation cycle, making overly aggressive routines particularly counterproductive. “At O3+, we believe that every skin journey is unique, especially for Indian skin, which is more prone to post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation and uneven skin tone,” says Kapur. For him, a customised skincare regimen, professional guidance and consistent main-

tenance offer a more sustainable route to healthier, even-toned skin than repeatedly chasing quick corrections. It is a subtle but important shift in beauty language. The goal is no longer simply to erase something from the face. It is to understand why the skin is responding the way it is. Your Sunscreen Is Still Non-Negotiable Of course, even the most carefully personalised pigmentation routine has one rather unglamorous constant: sunscreen. “Consistent sunscreen use is equally important because even the most effective treatment cannot prevent pigmentation from returning if the skin isn’t protected,” says Mehrotra. It is perhaps the least exciting answer in skincare and the one experts continue to repeat. Consumers can invest in sophisticated actives and increasingly advanced formulations, but continued exposure without adequate sun protection can work against efforts to manage pigmentation. At FCL Skincare, Mehrotra says this long-term approach has influenced the development of patented pigmentation solutions as well as investment in newer innovations, including biomimetic exosome technology. But technology alone isn’t the entire answer.

The larger philosophy, she explains, is rooted in helping consumers better understand their own skin. Maybe It’s Time to Stop Chasing Flawless Skin For years, pigmentation products have been sold through the promise of correction: fade the spot, brighten the skin, achieve an even complexion. The next chapter of skincare may be less impatient. “As awareness around pigmentation grows, the focus must shift from temporary correction to long-term skin health,” says Kapur. “Personalisation is no longer a luxury in skincare. It is the foundation of effective and sustainable pigmentation management.” Mehrotra echoes the sentiment. “Ultimately, successful pigmentation management isn’t just about fading dark spots. It’s about helping people understand their skin better so they can care for it with confidence for the long term.” Perhaps that is the real promise of personalised skincare. Not a miraculous bottle that makes every mark disappear overnight, but a better understanding of why your skin behaves the way it does. Because if your dark spots keep coming back, maybe the answer isn’t another stronger serum. Maybe your skin is asking you to pay closer attention.

Beginner’s introduction to niacinamide serums for healthier, brighter skin

As a skincare enthusiast, you may have encountered numerous skincare ingredients that claim to provide you with soft and plump skin. One such ingredient is Niacinamide, which is highly recommended. Renowned for its gentle yet potent properties, niacinamide is appropriate for nearly all skin types and tackles various skin issues. It helps in minimizing excess oil and enhancing skin texture, making it an ideal choice for beginners that should be included in your skincare regimen. Which niacinamide is good for beginners? In this guide, we’ll explore why niacinamide is popular, what beginners should look for, and the best niacinamide serums to consider. What is niacinamide? Niacinamide, also known as Vitamin B3, is a water-soluble vitamin that supports the skin’s natural barrier and improves its overall appearance. Unlike some active ingredients that may irritate, niacinamide is generally well-tolerated, making it an excellent choice for beginners. It works well alongside most skincare ingredients, including hyaluronic acid, ceramides, and peptides, making it easy to incorporate into both morning and evening skincare routines. Dermatologist Dr Rinky Kapoor, Founder, Esthetics Clinic, tells HT Shop Now, “Niacinamide is one of the most versatile skincare ingredients and is easy to incorporate into any routine, making it an excellent choice for beginners. It helps strengthen the skin barrier, regulate sebum production, minimise the appearance of pores, reduce redness, and promote a more even skin tone”. She advises, “For those just starting, a 5% niacinamide serum is an ideal choice, as it delivers effective results while minimising the risk of irritation. Apply the serum once daily in the evening after cleansing and before moisturising. If your skin tolerates it well, you can gradually increase the application to twice daily”. According to Dermatologist Dr Pallavi Phatak, Plastic Surgery, “Niacinamide supports the skin’s natural repair processes rather than simply working on the surface. It encourages skin cells to produce ceramides and other lipids that strengthen the skin’s protective barrier, which helps the skin retain moisture, reduces sensitivity and protects it from everyday environmental stressors such as pollution and UV exposure”. She further says that niacinamide

also helps improve the appearance of uneven skin tone and post-acne marks by influencing how pigment is distributed within the skin. Its anti-inflammatory properties can help calm redness and regulate excess oil production, making it a versatile ingredient for many skin types. Benefits of niacinamide for beginners Adding a niacinamide serum to your skincare routine can provide several benefits, including: Controls excess oil production. Minimises the appearance of enlarged pores. Brightens dull and uneven skin tone. Reduces redness and irritation. Strengthens the skin barrier. Improves overall skin texture. Helps fade post-acne marks over time. What percentage should beginners choose? When selecting your first niacinamide serum, concentration matters. For beginners, a serum containing 2% to 5% niacinamide is usually the best option. These lower concentrations provide noticeable results while minimising the risk of irritation. Although 10% niacinamide serums are widely available, beginners with sensitive skin may prefer to start with a lower strength and gradually increase it if needed. 7 niacinamide face serums 1. Paula’s Choice Boost 10% Niacinamide Booster, Vitamin B3, Vitamin C & Licorice Extract Serum: Paula’s Choice Boost 10% Niacinamide Booster is a lightweight serum designed to improve uneven skin tone, reduce the look of enlarged pores and strengthen the skin barrier. It contains 10% niacinamide (vitamin B3), panthenol (vitamin B5), vitamin C, and soothing plant extracts to support smoother, healthier-looking skin. The fast-absorbing formula layers well with other skincare products and suits most skin types, including oily and combination skin. Amazon customers often praise its noticeable pore-refining effect, lightweight feel and long-lasting results with regular use. 2. COSRX 74% Snail Mucin Dual Essence with Niacinamide 5% + | Anti Aging Face Serum for Dull Skin: COSRX 74% Snail Mucin Dual Essence with Niacinamide combines 74% snail secretion filtrate with niacinamide (vitamin B3) to deeply hydrate while helping improve skin brightness and texture. The dual-chamber pump delivers



brightening ingredients for balanced skincare. It also contains hyaluronic acid and moisturising ingredients that leave skin soft and plump. Amazon reviewers frequently appreciate its lightweight texture, lasting hydration and visible improvement in dull, dehydrated skin without feeling greasy. 3. Minimalist 10% Niacinamide Serum with Zinc – Reduces Acne Marks, Controls Oil & Minimizes Pores: Minimalist 10% Niacinamide Serum helps reduce excess oil, minimise the appearance of pores and improve uneven skin tone. It features 10% niacinamide (vitamin B3), zinc, and hydrating ingredients that support a stronger skin barrier while keeping skin balanced. The fragrance-free formula absorbs quickly and is suitable for oily, combination and acne-prone skin. Amazon customers commonly highlight its affordable price, lightweight texture and noticeable improvement in skin clarity and oil control after consistent use. 4. The Ordinary Niacinamide 10% + Zinc 1%, Brightening & Smoothing Serum for Blemish-Prone Skin: The Ordinary Niacinamide 10% + Zinc 1% is a popular serum formulated to reduce excess oil, improve skin texture and visibly minimise enlarged pores. It contains 10% niacinamide (vitamin B3) and 1% zinc, which help support clearer, more balanced skin. The water-based formula is lightweight, fragrance-free and suitable for daily use. Amazon

reviewers often mention its value for money, effective oil control and visible reduction in post-blemish marks with regular application. 5. Beauty of Joseon Glow Serum with Propolis & Niacinamide (30ml) | Korean Face Serum for Glowing Skin: Beauty of Joseon Glow Serum combines propolis extract, niacinamide (vitamin B3) and gentle hydrating ingredients to promote radiant, healthy-looking skin. Propolis helps soothe and nourish, while niacinamide supports a brighter complexion and improves skin texture. The silky serum absorbs comfortably without leaving a sticky finish, making it suitable for most skin types. Amazon customers frequently praise its natural glow, soothing feel and ability to leave skin looking smoother and more hydrated. 6. Olay Niacinamide Face Serum | Clear and Even Skin | Fights Dullness and Provides Radiant Glow: Olay Niacinamide Face Serum is designed to hydrate skin while improving its texture and supporting a healthy skin barrier. It contains niacinamide (vitamin B3), glycerin, and moisturising ingredients that help maintain smooth, comfortable skin throughout the day. The lightweight formula absorbs quickly and layers easily under moisturiser or make-up. Amazon reviewers often appreciate its gentle formula, fast absorption and the smoother, softer skin they notice after several weeks of regular use.

8 Ways to Tame Frizzy Hair in Humidity

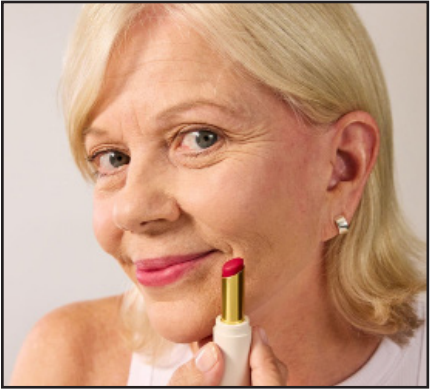
Frizz and humidity frequently go hand in hand. Hair might expand due to excessive moisture in the air, resulting in flyaways, puffiness, and unmanageable strands. Even if you have no control over the weather, you can prevent frizz by making a few easy adjustments to your haircare regimen. Start With A Sulphate-Free Shampoo: Your hair may become dry and more prone to frizz after being stripped of its natural oils by harsh shampoos. Choose a mild, sulphate-free cleansing solution that doesn’t make you too dry. Never Forget Conditioner: Conditioner reduces frizz and makes hair simpler to manage by sealing the cuticle and retaining moisture. Before rinsing, pay attention to the lengths and ends and keep it on for a few minutes. Use a Microfibre Towel:

Using a standard towel to rub wet hair can cause friction and exacerbate frizz. Instead, to reduce breakage and flyaways, gently press out extra water using an old cotton T-shirt or a microfibre towel. Use a Leave-In Cream or Serum: A humidity-resistant barrier is produced by a lightweight anti-frizz serum or leave-in cream. For smoother strands, apply it to damp hair, focusing on the ends and mid-lengths. Limit Heat Styling: Regular use of blow dryers, curling irons, and straighteners can cause frizz and damage to the hair cuticle. Always use a heat protectant and utilise the lowest effective setting if you must use heat. Select Protective Hairstyles: Buns, twists, ponytails and loose braids can all help keep hair in check and limit exposure to humid air. Additionally, they reduce needless

friction and avoid tangling throughout the day. Deep Condition Once a Week: To restore lost moisture and enhance hair texture, apply a deep-conditioning treatment or nourishing hair mask once a week. Aloe vera, shea butter, coconut oil, and argan oil are some natural ingredients that can help reduce frizz. Sleep on a silk pillowcase: When you sleep on a cotton pillowcase, friction can result in frizz and tangles. Changing to a silk or satin pillowcase will assist your hair stay smoother and retain moisture throughout the night. You’re Craving Sugary Foods: Frequent cravings for refined carbohydrates or sweets may indicate that your meals don’t contain enough protein. Protein helps control hunger and keeps blood sugar levels from abruptly rising or falling.

Give Your Old Lipsticks a Colourful Makeover

After two to four applications, lipstick, regardless of quality, begins to seem dated. In addition, many folks wish their lipstick matched the colour of their new attire a little better! It’s not always possible to purchase lipstick that complements your outfit. It might be expensive at times. Instead, try using leftover lipstick to create new hues. This will allow you to design your own distinctive colours in addition to expressing your own creativity and preference. Additionally, old lipsticks can be useful. What do you need to make your own lipstick? 2-3 types of lipstick. You can pick between satin, matte, or creamy finishes. Matching two different colour types—light and dark—will be simpler. A clean plate, palette, or paint mixing container, as well as a brush or spatula. A bottle for fresh lipstick and lip balm. Mixing method When applying creamy lipstick, use a spatula or brush to pick up individual lipsticks on a clean palette. Apply liquid lipstick by spreading it out with a brush. One or two additional colours, either bright or



dark, can be combined to produce new hues. It resembles watercolour in certain ways. You can combine two or three distinct colours to generate new colours if you don’t obtain any when painting. The situation is the same here as well. To determine the type of colour that will result from combining different colours, some testing is also required. The task is not at all challenging, though. You can recognise the nude or your own lip colour, such as pink or red, as the primary hue and combine it with other hues to create a lighter or deeper tint.

Rajamouli's
Varanasi hits
screens April
2027

Mumbai : SS Rajamouli's highly anticipated globe-trotting adventure Varanasi is set to release in theatres on April 7, 2027. While the Mahesh Babu-led spectacle is expected to be one of Indian cinema's biggest global releases, its overseas rollout could face stiff competition from a packed Hollywood release calendar.

The weeks surrounding Varanasi's release are already filled with several major Hollywood titles. Warner Bros. is set to release Godzilla x Kong: Supremova on March 26, 2027, with an IMAX rollout. Lionsgate's Day Drinker is also scheduled for the same date. On April 2, Disney and Universal are expected to release two major event films, while April 9 is shaping up to be another crowded weekend with Warner Bros.' Panic Carefully, Paramount's Boys for Life, Warner Bros.' Revenge of La Llorona and other studio releases. Universal's Not Alone is slated to arrive on April 16. With multiple tentpole films targeting the same period, competition for audience attention is expected to be intense across key international markets.

Industry observers point out that premium formats such as IMAX often play a crucial role in driving opening weekend collections. With multiple Hollywood blockbusters already securing premium large-format releases, screen availability could become a challenge in markets such as North America, Europe, Australia and parts of Asia. Rajamouli's films have traditionally performed strongly overseas, particularly in North America, Australia and the Gulf region, thanks to their scale, visual spectacle and strong word-of-mouth.

The Odyssey day 1 box office: Nolan's
epic opens at ₹17 crore in India



Mumbai : Filmmaker Christopher Nolan's The Odyssey, starring Matt Damon, Anne Hathaway, Tom Holland, Zendaya, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong'o, Charlize Theron, and Jon Bernthal, hit theatres on July 17, 2026, and has opened to overwhelmingly positive reviews from both critics and audiences. The epic has been widely praised for its breathtaking visuals, ambitious storytelling, emotional depth, and stellar performances, with many hailing it as another cinematic triumph for the Oscar-winning director. Amid rave reviews, the film has taken a flying start at the Indian box office.

According to Sacnilk, The Odyssey made a strong debut at the Indian box office, collecting an estimated Rs 17.40 crore net (Rs 20.76 crore gross) on its opening day. The Christopher Nolan directorial was screened across 8,413 shows nationwide and registered an overall occupancy of 48.7 per cent, with premium formats, particularly IMAX, witnessing exceptional demand. Released in English, Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu, the film saw the original English version dominate ticket sales, contributing the bulk of its Day 1 earnings. Among the language versions, the English release led the way with an esti-

mated Rs 13.75 crore net, followed by the Hindi dub at around Rs 1.90 crore. The Telugu version contributed roughly Rs 1.10 crore, while the Tamil version added an estimated Rs 65 lakh to the overall collection. The impressive opening places The Odyssey among the biggest Hollywood openers in India. While it fell short of Avatar: Fire and Ash (around Rs 18 crore net) and Deadpool & Wolverine (approximately Rs 21 crore net) on their respective opening days, Nolan's epic still secured one of the strongest starts for an international release in the country.

A part of our review read, "What leaves an indelible impression is that the film doesn't treat war as a spectacle. The battle sequence where men perish amid flames and devastation, lingers in Odysseus' mind long after the smoke clears. The images return to him like a recurring nightmare. After breaking Athena's statue, she starts accompanying him as his figment of imagination. The effect is palpable."

Rajesh Sharma recovering at home
after Fauzi set health scare



Mumbai : Actor Rajesh Sharma is recovering at his Mumbai residence after being discharged from hospital days after a reported insect bite during the shoot of Prabhas' upcoming film Fauzi. While the veteran actor is said to be doing well and is expected to resume work soon, conflicting accounts have emerged regarding the incident.

According to an update shared by the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE), Sharma has returned home after receiving treatment and is currently recuperating. Confirming the development, FWICE President BN Tiwari told Bollywood Hungama, "Rajesh Sharma ji recently got discharged. He is currently recuperating at his residence in Mumbai. He is also set to travel abroad in the days to come to shoot for a project." Recently, his family friend-actor Sudipa Chatterjee revealed that Sharma is 'much better' and that his condition is being regularly monitored. "He's a little

better now. It's an unknown insect bite and tests are being done and his condition is being monitored. So treatment is on and the last two days he is much better," Chatterjee told Hindustan Times.

"Rajesh ji mum is very old and his sister was abroad so he is our family friend. When we got to know about this we rushed to the hospital and that's when I also gave an earlier statement," he con-

tinued. "After he came back from Hyderabad and was home he was under a fever. Unhone socha bukhar hain and mosquito bite ho sakta toh chalo ghar. And he was home then after he felt uncomfortable he went to the nearby hospital where he was admitted," Sudipa added.

Reports of Sharma's health issue first surfaced earlier this month after actress and

his family friend Sudipa Chatterjee shared a statement on social media, which has since been deleted. The statement claimed that the actor was bitten by an insect while filming Fauzi at Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad. It further stated that his condition worsened after the incident, following which he travelled to Kolkata and was admitted to Manipal Hospital in Dhakuria for treatment.

Amit Rai slams Paresh Rawal's omg 2 comments: 'woke up too late'



Mumbai : Writer-director Amit Rai has reacted to Paresh Rawal's claims about Omg 2's script. The veteran actor recently claimed that he came up with the story of the Akshay Kumar starrer alongside Rai, but was never given his due credit. In a new interview, Rai questioned Rawal's claims and even said that he had proof that the story belonged only to him.

Amit Rai told Hindustan Times, "Woh kis tathya ke adhaar pe ye keh rahe hain? First, he needs to answer this. He is merely making a claim. Kehne ko to woh kuch bhi

keh sakte hain. Woh bade actor hain; I cannot go up to an actor of his stature and ask why is he saying this?" The filmmaker added, "Proof of that is the certificate from

the Screenwriters Association and the stamp that is put by the person who sees the script; it has my name." He said that Omg 2 is his child and as far as he knows, he

is the creator of the film. He said he raised the film to go to school and college.

"Maine film likhi hai aur bana di hai. Bohot jaldi jaag gaye hai woh," Rai said. He added that Paresh Rawal's claims could only be verified by the actor, the production house or Akshay Kumar. According to Paresh Rawal, his original version was a father-son drama about sex education, public humiliation and a parent's fight for justice. It did not feature God or any other divine character. He also alleged that he received no credit for the sto-

ry or concept in the finished film.

Speaking to Vickey Lalwani, Rawal mentioned, "I had approached Amit Rai, the director of Road to Sangam, and asked him if he was planning another film. I admire him a lot. I told him, 'I have an idea. Let's sit and write it.' I told him I wasn't a writer, but I could contribute ideas and help identify where we were going wrong because I understand screenplay to some extent." The story centred on a schoolboy whose private act is recorded and circulated, leaving him socially

ostracised. His father then attempts to defend him and challenge the shame imposed upon the child. He added that the screenplay was narrated to Anurag Kashyap and later to Somen Mishra from Dharm Productions. Recalling the latter's response, Rawal said, "Somen outright said it wouldn't work."

The actor maintained that the story was never conceived as a direct sequel to Omg. Instead of a godly figure, he wanted a biker to guide the father through his legal and emotional battle. Rawal said he approached Ajay Devgn

and Salman Khan for the biker's role but deliberately stayed away from Akshay to avoid Omg 2 discussions.

Paresh Rawal claimed that discussions were still at an exploratory stage when the possibility of involving Akshay Kumar began surfacing. The actor said Amit Rai later informed him that Akshay Kumar wanted to take up the film. He believes the script reached Kumar through producer Ashwin Varde. Rawal then left the project as the story changed direction, and even refused to appear in the film.

Priyanka Chopra's new Varanasi look sweeps
internet on her birthday



Mumbai : Priyanka Chopra is all set to make her comeback to Indian cinema with Varanasi. The film, helmed by SS Rajamouli, also features Mahesh Babu and Prithviraj Sukumaran.

Mahesh Babu today shared a birthday greeting alongside a picture of his co-star from Varanasi. He wrote, "Priyanka Chopra from 'Varanasi'." Along with it, he added, "Happy birthday to the one

and only 'Mandakini'. Have the most amazing year ahead PC... Sending you lots of love and wishing you happiness always!!!" Rajamouli also shared a new picture of Chopra on Instagram, captioning it, "Grace when she smiles. Fire when she doesn't."

The film is slated to release on April 7, 2027 and revolves around a community in 512 AD who possess an ancient secret that can save the world. In 2027 AD, an asteroid named Shambhavi collides with Earth, causing a cataclysmic event. Meanwhile, a greedy scientist, Kumbha (Prithviraj), becomes paralysed while try-

ing to retrieve the artefact.

The poster shared by the "RRR" filmmaker on his Instagram handle on Saturday featured Chopra, who will essay the role of Mandakini, in an all-black ensemble with her hair tied. "Grace when she smiles. Fire when she doesn't. Mandakini..." @PriyankaChopra in #Varanasi," read the caption. It was followed by another picture of the actor from the sets of the film. "Varanasi" will feature music by MM Keeravani, who won an Oscar for Rajamouli's previous film "RRR". It is produced by Sri Durga Arts and Showing Business.

Jani master faces federation boycott
over dancers' union row



Hyderabad : Choreographer Jani Master has landed in a difficult position after the Telugu Film Industry Employees Federation (TFIEF) reportedly issued a non-cooperation call against him and his wife, Sumalatha, president of the Telugu Film & TV Dancers Association, for allegedly making remarks against federation members and violating its norms.

"Jani has earned fame and money, but he is behaving high-handedly," says Rajeswar Reddy, former general secretary of the Telugu Film Industry Employees Federation. "The federation stood firmly behind dancers when the Telugu film industry shifted from Chennai to Hyderabad. During our tenure, we ensured that more Telugu danc-

ers were employed in song sequences. Even when Tamil choreographers worked on Telugu films with 100 dancers, we ensured that around 70 were local dancers and only 30 came from Chennai. The federation also fought successfully for wage hikes benefiting over 600 dancers. Without the federation's support, none of this would have

been possible."

He points out that the federation is affiliated with the Film Employees Federation of South India (FEFSI) and the All India Film Employees Confederation (AIFEC). "In simple terms, if Jani is signed for a film, workers from the federation's 23 affiliated crafts across South India may refuse to cooperate, making it extremely difficult to complete the project," he says. Rajeswar Reddy also criticises what he describes as the growing attitude among some choreographers. "A few choreographers think they are heroes themselves. It is like disowning your parents after becoming successful. Jani is disrespecting the federation, and that is not acceptable," he adds.

Shakira, Burna boy confirmed for world cup
halftime

New York : As anticipation builds for the 2026 FIFA World Cup Final at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, global music stars Shakira and Burna Boy have offered fans a behind-the-scenes look at their final rehearsal sessions for what will be FIFA's first-ever Super Bowl-style halftime show. The international artists, who previously performed together during the tournament's opening ceremony in Mexico City, reunited on the pitch this week to fine-tune their performance before Sunday's showpiece event.

Sharing a glimpse of the preparations on social media, Shakira posted a rehearsal photograph with Burna Boy and wrote, "Getting ready for Sunday! @burna-boygram See you at the @fifaworldcup Final! Dai dai, iko, dale, allez, let's go." The post quickly generated widespread engagement, attracting more than a million likes and thousands of supportive comments. Among those respond-



ing were the Ghetto Kids, who are also scheduled to take part in the halftime spectacle. The 2026 FIFA World Cup Final will also mark a significant moment in the tournament's history with the introduction of its first-ever Super Bowl-style halftime entertainment. The production is expected to feature multiple artists and extend beyond the traditional 15-minute interval. Shakira and Burna Boy are set to perform "Dai Dai", the official song of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The track serves as a global anthem promoting unity while supporting the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund. The halftime lineup is expected to include Justin Bieber, Madonna, BTS, conductor Gustavo Dudamel, the PS22 Chorus accompanied by Coldplay, as well as appearances by characters from Sesame Street and The Muppets to spotlight the education initiative. The entertainment programme will take place between the two halves of the World Cup final, where de-

fending champions Argentina face Spain in a highly anticipated title clash.

Argentina reached the final with a dramatic 2-1 comeback victory over England in the semifinal. After falling behind in the first half, Enzo Fernandez scored the equaliser before Lautaro Martinez struck a stoppage-time winner to book Argentina's place in the championship match, ending England's hopes of reaching their first World Cup final since 1966. Spain, meanwhile, secured a 2-0 victory over France to reach their first FIFA World Cup final since their 2010 triumph. Mikel Oyarzabal opened the scoring from the penalty spot after Lamine Yamal won a spot-kick, while Pedro Porro doubled the advantage after the break following a move involving Dani Olmo. Spain's defence held firm despite late pressure from France, sealing their sixth clean sheet in seven matches and earning the nation's second-ever World Cup final appearance.

Janhvi Kapoor signs next project
with pagglait director



Mumbai : Janhvi Kapoor is on a roll. A month after Peddi row, the actress has signed her next big film with Pagglait director Umesh Bist. This will be their first collaboration ever. Meanwhile, Janhvi has still not reacted to the controversy regarding Peddi where a section of netizens bashed the portrayal of her character, Achiyamma, accusing the makers of objectifying her.

According to Variety India, Janhvi Kapoor's project is untitled as of now. It will be backed by Ekta Kapoor's Balaji Motion Pictures and Guneet Monga's Sikhya Entertainment. The cast and crew will start shooting around October-November this year. There is no additional information yet regarding the storyline, genre and cast. On the other hand, Umesh Bist will also be busy directing Pagglait 2 alternatively. It is the sequel to the 2021 Netflix film and Sanya Malhotra is expected to reprise her lead role as Sandhya. The second part will carry the story forward.

Meanwhile, Janhvi Kapoor's role

in Peddi had sparked a major debate over the objectification of women in commercial cinema. Many viewers criticised the film's camera angles, close-up shots and romantic scenes, saying they reduced her character to a visual object rather than giving her a meaningful role. While some blamed Janhvi, others argued that actors should not be held responsible for a filmmaker's creative choices.

Following the backlash, director Buchi Babu Sana apologised and removed the controversial scenes from the film. The issue also prompted reactions from celebrities including Jaya Bachchan, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Nithya Menen, Jagapathi Babu and Dimple Hayathi, with many calling for better-written female characters and a change in how women are portrayed in mainstream cinema.

“Zero to Hero”: Space Regulator Chief on Skyroot’s Historic Vikram-1 Launch

New Delhi, July 18: As Vikram-1 prepares to launch from Sriharikota, India is witnessing one of the most historic events in the country’s private space business. What makes the event unique is not just the launch of a new rocket, but also the incredible narrative behind it. In just eight years, two former ISRO engineers developed a startup into a corporation capable of developing and launching an orbital rocket. IN-SPACe, India’s space regulator, summarizes the trip in three words: zero to hero. Dr Pawan Goenka, Chairman of IN-SPACe, that Vikram-1 was a watershed moment for Skyroot Aerospace, India, and the world space sector. “I think it is a big milestone for all three. For Skyroot, for India, and perhaps even for the world,” Dr Goenka said. Skyroot was founded in 2018 by former ISRO scientists Pawan Kumar Chandana and Naga Bharath Daka with an ambitious dream of building private launch vehicles in India. Today, that dream sits on the launch pad waiting to fly. According to Dr Goenka, very few companies around the world have achieved what Skyroot has accomplished in such a short period. “They started in 2018 with two engineers leaving ISRO and setting up this company. In eight short years they have come to a point where they have the rocket ready to be launched on the launch pad. I do not think too many companies can claim to have achieved this in eight years. I am told it is one of the fastest in the world.” The success has not come easily. The company has had to navigate an exhaustive evaluation process involving technical reviews, safety assessments, and repeated scrutiny from experts. Dr Goenka said the standards applied to Vikram-1 were as rigorous as those used for ISRO missions. “We have put them through the rigor of reviews that is as difficult and as rigorous as ISRO does. They have passed all the tests. It took them many iterations, and they showed very high perseverance in responding to every question and every ask that the review committee had,” he said. His assessment of the rocket’s readiness was unequivocal. “They have done a really good job. I am really happy with what I see in front of me.” Even so, Dr Goenka stressed that spaceflight is inherently challenging and no regulator or engineer can promise absolute success. “It is as safe as a rocket can be before launch. There is no such thing as a guaranteed 100 per cent success when you launch a rocket. It is rocket science. Every agency in the world and every large company in the world have gone through failures. But the rigor that it has passed through is really very high, and therefore the confidence level is as high as it can be.” Then came the phrase that perhaps best captures Skyroot’s rise. “Zero to hero story. Absolutely. Zero to hero” asserted Dr Goenka. For India,



the significance of Vikram-1 goes beyond a single launch mission. The rocket represents the outcome of a national effort to create a thriving commercial space ecosystem. When the Government of India opened the space sector to private participation and created IN-SPACe, many questioned whether the model would work. Today, Vikram-1 provides one of the strongest answers yet. Dr Goenka said India is pursuing a much larger ambition. “One of the things that we are wanting to do is to become the global hub for launching small satellites.” Achieving that goal requires much more than rockets. It requires launch infrastructure, satellite manufacturers, ground stations, investors and regulatory support. According to him, those pieces are now beginning to come together. India is building a dedicated small satellite launch facility at Kulasekarapattinam in Tamil Nadu. In a significant disclosure, Dr Goenka said operations of the facility could eventually be handed over to private industry. The private sector will do the rockets. The private sector will do the launches. ISRO will have its facilitation, mentoring, and guidance. It will be owned by ISRO but managed by the private sector,” he said. He described the move as another major step toward creating a complete commercial space ecosystem. The chairman of INSPACE also highlighted the emergence of several Indian startups capable of building satellites weighing between 100 and 200 kilograms, creating a complementary industry alongside launch vehicle companies. For some observers, the rapid growth of private space firms raises concerns over talent moving away from ISRO. Dr Goenka firmly rejected that view. “It is not an either-or situation. It is not a win-lose situation. It is a win-win situation.” Drawing from his decades of experience

in the automobile sector, he argued that mature industries naturally create new entrepreneurs. “ISRO is playing that role and should play that role. It is not a loss to ISRO. In fact, if you look at Pawan and Bharath, they came from ISRO. If they had not decided to jump into this eight years ago, this would not have happened.” He believes ISRO’s talent base remains deep enough to support both national missions and commercial ventures. “I would very much encourage people to step out and do something different. It is not a loss to ISRO at all.” As Vikram-1 awaits launch, Dr Goenka reserved his warmest words for Skyroot’s young team, whose average age is said to be around 28. “We are proud of you. What you have achieved makes us feel very good about you, about us and about the whole ecosystem that we are trying to create.” But he also offered a note of caution. “Remember this has just begun.

There is a lot more that you have to do. To become commercially successful in this sector is going to take as much effort or maybe even more than it has taken to get to this first base.” Yet he believes Indian startups possess one major advantage that many competitors around the world do not. “Never undermine the presence of ISRO. The presence of ISRO gives you the strength that many other companies will not have in the world.” And he has a powerful assurance. “I can tell you with all confidence that IN-SPACe and ISRO are with you one hundred percent and will help you to succeed.” From two engineers with a dream to a rocket poised for liftoff, Vikram-1 represents more than a launch vehicle. It is proof that India’s private space revolution has arrived. It is, in Dr Pawan Goenka’s own words, a true “Zero to Hero” story.

For the first time in 96 years, FIFA World Cup 2026 champions will get a special prize

East Rutherford: Argentina and Spain are competing for more than just the World Cup crown on Sunday. They’re also vying for championships. For the first time, FIFA is awarding championship rings. Title-winning teams receiving rings is a tradition in North American sports dating back to the late 1800s, but it is not popular in other regions of the world. FIFA’s decision to hold the final in the United States appears to be a bow to history. Players on the World Cup-winning team will get gold medals as normal, and the winning team’s captain and coach will also receive temporary rings immediately after the final match. Eventually, the victorious team will receive 30 unique rings. The World Cup trophy will be on one side, with the other side designed “to reflect the identity of the winning team,” according to FIFA. Only 2,026 rings will be created, as a reference to the year, and each will be personally numbered, custom-fitted, and accompanied by its own certificate of authenticity. The 1,996 rings that do not go to the victorious team will be sold to the public. FIFA has not stated how much these rings would cost.

The tradition of championship rings is believed to go back to at least 1893 when the Montreal Hockey Club was awarded the Dominion Hockey Challenge Cup, the precursor to what is now called the Stanley



Cup. That team also commissioned simple bands with tiny hockey sticks attached at the top. Major League Baseball teams began giving out championship rings in the 1920s, while NBA champions have received them basically since that league’s inception in the late 1940s and NFL teams have gotten them throughout the entirety of the Super Bowl era that dates to the 1960s. Some Halls of Fame give rings out to their members, and U.S. Olympians and Paralympians have received rings as part of the perk package that comes with representing their country on the world stage. Rings are now commonly awarded in all U.S. pro sports — along with a number of college, high school and even youth sports — to commemorate championships.

BCCI ‘Not Pleased’, Sends Strong Message To Selectors Amidst Rohit Sharma Buzz

England: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has allegedly instructed men’s national team selectors to avoid public engagements, amid speculation about experienced batter Rohit Sharma’s future. India’s defeat to England in the second one-day international at Cardiff was overshadowed by suggestions that the third and final game at Lord’s may be Rohit’s last for the side in the format.

However, BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia has denied the rumors, insisting that Rohit would continue to play as long as he is part of the plan. According to a report by Cricbuzz, the BCCI has expressed its displeasure over the leaked in-

formation surrounding Rohit, urging the selectors to avoid dialogue with media personnel in any form. The report also added that with too much speculation going on, the current scenario is fluid, and nothing can be officially confirmed regarding what is happening behind the scenes.

Indian cricket revolves around narratives, and the current focus is whether Rohit Sharma will be able to fulfill his dream of playing in the 2027 ODI World Cup, which will be co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. Rohit’s current form, which has yielded just 241 runs in eight innings at an average of 30.12 and a strike rate of 88.60, has failed to con-

vince some selectors, who no longer want to persist with the former captain. Prior to the commencement of the Afghanistan series last month, certain members of the selection committee notified Rohit that he was no longer in the picture. India’s head coach, Gautam Gambhir, was also kept informed of the conversations between the selectors and Rohit. However, Rohit was chosen for both the Afghanistan and England series after the former India skipper lobbied BCCI officials. However, with Rohit scoring just 11 and 26 in the first two ODIs against England, the selectors had to reinforce their position to the experienced opener, who is anxious to extend his career.

Ahead of the World Cup Final vs Spain, Lionel Scaloni’s Praise For Lionel Messi Takes The Internet By Storm



New Jersey: Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni has urged supporters to make the most of witnessing Lionel Messi lead his team out in another World Cup final at the age of 39, as the holders look to retain the title when they face Spain this weekend. “He’s created history. “He is a legend,” Scaloni said of the former Barcelona star, who has helped Argentina win a World Cup and two Copa America trophies in the previous five years. Messi’s international career has had a spec-

tacular late resurgence; a decade ago, at the age of 29, he momentarily withdrew from the Argentina squad after losing the Copa America final to Chile, his fourth final defeat for his country.

Messi and Scaloni hugged on the pitch after Argentina’s 2-1 semi-final triumph against England, with Messi describing the result as “pure history”. Scaloni praised Messi as “the best player in the history of football,” citing his sixth World Cup goal and 21 all-time tournament

goals. I think it’s fantastic that he’s been able to reach to a final at the age of 39. “That is why I said we should enjoy having him, because look at what happened with Diego (Maradona) and how we ended up missing him.” We still have Leo, which we should enjoy. He is a historical character and a legend, as are all of the players who have given us these wonderful years.” Argentina had been without a major international championship for 28 years before winning the Copa America in 2021, which ushered in the current golden period. “They have accomplished things that were inconceivable a few years ago. “It wasn’t easy to get here and compete at this level for so many years,” he said ahead of Sunday’s final at MetLife Stadium outside New York City.

We could win, and I hope we do, but the trip to this point has been tremendous. Scaloni said he couldn’t say whether the game will be Messi’s last in a World Cup, although it seemed doubtful he will play until the next one in 2030.

Argentina must defeat the defending European champions if they are to become the first nation in 64 years to win back-to-back World Cups. “They are a great team. Everything worries me about them,” Scaloni said.

“Won’t Tolerate This Man” The Lawrence Bishnoi Gang Threatens Aamir Khan

New Delhi, July 18: Aamir Khan, a Bollywood star who just married for the third time, was purportedly threatened by the Lawrence Bishnoi gang in a claimed social media post. The threats were reportedly made by Lawrence Bishnoi’s brother, Arzu Bishnoi, and another individual named as Tyson Bishnoi. The tweet, could not independently verify, accused Khan of encouraging ‘love jihad’ in the country and stated that they will “not tolerate” him. “I, Aarzoo Bishnoi and Tyson Bishnoi (Lawrence Bishnoi Group), would want to express concern that persons such as Aamir Khan are pushing what is known as ‘Love Jihad’ in our nation, which is contrary to our tradition. We will not tolerate this man, and he will soon face the consequences. “This is against Sanatan Dharma and against the nation,” the message stated. It continued, “We assure our brothers, sisters, and fellow citizens that whomever advocates such despicable deeds will be dealt with in our own way. “Those who encourage this in the name of fame will be silenced.” The gangsters, in the post, also mentioned the alleged kidnapping, trafficking, and sexual assault of a 13-year-

old girl in Rajasthan’s Sri Ganganagar last month, praising the administration over its swift action. “We also want to mention the horrific crime committed against an innocent girl in Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan. The administration has done a commendable job, but some political leaders are trying to protect certain accused. This is our first and final warning: anyone who was even one percent involved in the crime against that innocent girl and manages to escape the law will be punished by us. Those political leaders attempting to shield them should immediately stop interfering, otherwise they will face the same fate as those they are protecting. Show some humanity,” it said. The post further mentioned, “Our two martyred brothers, Parvesh and Himanshu, will always remain in our hearts. We will not let your sacrifice go in vain. Our enemies will receive a fitting reply. May God grant peace to the souls of both our brothers.” According to sources, the police received information about the alleged threat via Facebook and a voice note - which they are verifying. Sources say that the Mumbai Police have not yet received any complaint from Aamir

Khan or his team. A case may be registered if a complaint is received from Khan, they added. Bollywood actor Salman Khan has been receiving a string of threats from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang for years. The gang, which became a household name after claiming responsibility for murdering musician Sidhu Moose Wala in 2022, has said it wants to kill Salman Khan because of his alleged involvement in shooting blackbucks at Bawad in Mathania near Jodhpur in September 1998, during the filming of ‘Hum Saath Saath Hain’. The alleged act had upset the community, which considers the blackbuck sacred. Lawrence Bishnoi had also said during a court appearance in 2018: “We will kill Salman Khan in Jodhpur. Everyone will know once we take action. I have not done anything as of now; they are accusing me of crimes for no reason.” The Lawrence Bishnoi gang had claimed responsibility for the shooting outside Salman Khan’s house in Mumbai’s Bandra in April 2024. The actor’s name had also come up when the Bishnoi gang said it had killed former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique in Bandra in October 2023.

Sonam Wangchuk’s Removal From Jantar Mantar: A Timeline Of His Hunger Strike

New Delhi, July 18: Sonam Wangchuk, an educator and activist who has been on hunger strike since the suspected NEET paper leak, has been taken from the protest location at Delhi’s landmark Jantar Mantar. The cops took him to a hospital early in the morning and ordered demonstrators to leave. Wangchuk and his followers have been demonstrating against Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for over a month, hoping to bring at-

tention to the predicament of millions of students vying for admission to India’s top medical universities. He began his hunger strike on June 28 at the historic protest location in the middle of Delhi, with the support of the satirical group Cockroach Janta Party. The Delhi High Court had already directed the government to do “anything and everything” to ensure Wangchuk’s safety. The police intervention occurred a day after physicians declared his situation

an emergency, with the possibility of his organs failing. Wangchuk begins his hunger strike from a makeshift platform at Jantar Mantar on June 28 to protest both education and Ladakh-related concerns. Hundreds of supporters, primarily students, join him. June 29: The protest is originally a local student issue with modest audiences. Wangchuk’s video messages explain the need for openness and accountability in national competitive testing regimes.

“Danced At His Wedding” Ex-India Pacer shares Heartfelt Message for Rohit Sharma Amidst Retirement Reports

New Delhi: Former India cricketer Ashok Dinda lauded Rohit Sharma as a great who has made significant contributions to Indian cricket. Amid concerns over Rohit’s retirement, Dinda stated that the squad would miss him if he retired. Notably, there has been conjecture that the third and final ODI of the upcoming series against England, which takes place on Sunday at Lord’s, may be Rohit’s final outing in the 50-over format. However, neither Rohit nor the BCCI have made a formal declaration about his retirement. Dinda responded to the developing chatter, telling ANI that Rohit Shar-

ma is a great who has had immense success for India, including winning the World Cup and earning the nickname ‘Hitman’. Recalling their close friendship, he said they started their India careers around the same time and shared many memories. Dinda added that while India would miss Rohit if he retires, he would congratulate him on a remarkable career. “He is a massive player. We’ve played quite a few matches together; we practically started our careers for India around the same time. Since then, he has won so many matches for India, set so many records, earned the nickname ‘Hit-

man,’ and even won a World Cup. He is a legend. If he retires, I offer him my heartiest congratulations, though India will certainly miss him. I have so many memories with Rohit. We used to play PlayStation together, go shopping, and have dinner together.

I even danced at his wedding,” Dinda said. While the speculations around Rohit’s retirement have been rife, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Secretary Devajit Saikia dismissed speculations over Rohit Sharma’s retirement, clarifying that there has been no discussion about the Lord’s ODI against England be-

ing his final match. “There are lot of speculations going on in media about Rohit Sharma’s future. I want to firmly assert that there has been no such discussion that Rohit will be playing his last match at Lord’s on Sunday. Rohit is a regular member of the Indian ODI team and he will continue to represent the country as long as he is in the scheme of things. In other words, Lord’s ODI won’t be his last match,” Saikia said. Rohit, 39, made his ODI debut against Ireland in Belfast on June 23, 2007, and has already stepped away from both the T20I and Test formats.

Novak Djokovic names greatest on-court rival, not Jannik Sinner or Carlos Alcaraz



New Delhi: For nearly two decades, Novak Djokovic has battled some of the greatest players tennis has ever seen. From his epic clashes with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal to his recent duels against Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, the Serbian has built his legacy on overcoming formidable opponents. Yet, when asked to name his biggest rival on the court, Djokovic did not mention any of his contemporaries. Instead, the 24-time Grand Slam champion delivered a simple answer: “Myself always.” Djokovic’s response offered a glimpse into the mindset that

has helped him remain at the pinnacle of the sport at the age of 39. The former world No.1, who holds the men’s record of 428 weeks atop the ATP rankings, admitted that his toughest battle has often been with his own expectations and relentless pursuit of improvement. “There’s always something to prove, to myself primarily, and to others, but mostly to myself that I can always be better than I was yesterday,” Djokovic said while speaking during an appearance on CBS Mornings to promote his upcoming documentary The Wolf in Winter. The Serbian has little

left to achieve in the sport after winning 24 major titles, an Olympic gold medal and completing the Career Golden Slam in Paris 2024. Even so, the drive to push himself remains intact. While Djokovic continues to chase success, he acknowledged that competing at the highest level has become increasingly difficult as his body begins to feel the effects of more than two decades on tour. “The body is responding differently, and that’s just biology. The wear and tear of the 20-plus years on the highest level, it’s just taking its toll. So it takes more time for me to recover,” Djokovic said. The Serbian pointed to his recent defeat to Jannik Sinner after an exhausting quarter-final that lasted five hours and 15 minutes, admitting that he was unable to fully recover in time for the semi-finals. “After that five-hour, 15-minute quarterfinal, I just couldn’t fully recover for the semis and I wasn’t as fresh as I wanted to be. But not to take anything away from Sinner, who won and won the tournament. It’s different nowadays,” he added. Despite the physical challenges, Djokovic insists there is still plenty that keeps him motivated.

Andy Flower rules out England role, commits to continuing with RCB as head coach

New Delhi: Royal Challengers Bangalore head coach Andy Flower has ruled himself out of contention for England’s vacant Test coaching job, ending speculation over a return to the national side following Brendon McCullum’s departure. Flower, who was widely regarded as the England and Wales Cricket Board’s leading candidate to replace McCullum, said he was happy with his current coaching commitments and had no plans to leave the IPL franchise. “I have spoken with Rob (Key) and the ECB on that topic. The bottom line for me is that I’m very happy in the work that I’m doing at the moment,” Flower told reporters at Lord’s on Friday during London Spirit’s media day. “I work for a couple of really good organisations, I’ve got really good teams around me, really good people around me. I’m re-



ally comfortable with what I’m doing at the moment.” As England coach, Flower oversaw home and away Ashes victories as well as a Test series win in India. Since leaving the national side, he has enjoyed considerable success in franchise cricket, most recently leading RCB to back-to-back IPL titles. “I’ve worked with England before and I had an amazing time when I had the privilege to be England head coach... and it

would be a privilege for me or anyone else to be the Test coach,” he said. “But for me at this time, I’m really comfortable with what I’m doing. I’m going to stick with doing that.” The decision comes as another setback for the ECB, which has been forced into a major rebuild following Ben Stokes’ retirement from international cricket and McCullum’s exit as Test coach after England’s 2-1 home series defeat to New Zealand. Mc-

Cullum’s four-year spell in charge of the Test side ended on July 12, bringing the curtain down on the Bazball era that transformed England’s approach to red-ball cricket. Although the ECB maintained that McCullum had stepped down, the former New Zealand captain suggested he had been dismissed, saying he respected the board’s decision. He will, however, continue as England’s white-ball coach. Flower had emerged as the frontrunner owing to his successful previous stint with England. Under his leadership, England rose to the No. 1 spot in the ICC Test rankings. Instead, the Zimbabwean will continue his work with Royal Challengers Bangalore, where he has overseen the franchise’s resurgence in recent IPL seasons. With Flower no longer in the race, England’s search for a new Test coach is set to widen.

Sex party raid nearly derailed FIFA World Cup final referee’s illustrious officiating career

New Delhi: It was a glorious moment when Slavko Vincic was appointed as the referee for the FIFA World Cup final between Argentina and Spain. There were tears of joy and just a feeling of accomplishment from the Slovenian official as he lapped in all the applause from his colleagues and helped the final referee jersey with pride. But this moment almost didn’t happen. Vincic is an experienced campaigner and one of Europe’s top referees, having officiated multiple high-profile games. However, in 2020, his career almost came crashing down when he was arrested as part of sex party bust in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to a report from the Daily Mail, Vincic attended an invitation for a business lunch in the Bosnian city of Bijeljina. But he quickly found himself in the centre of a police

raid that saw him get arrested alongside Tijana Maksimovic, who the cops believed was the leader of the prostitution ring. The following year, Maksimovic pleaded guilty to the charges and served a one-year prison sentence. The officers that day arrested nine women and 26 men in total and seized four packets of cocaine, 10 pistols, three protective vests, over 10,000 euros. Vincic wasn’t accused of directly being involved in the crime and was later let go after being questioned as a witness. Vincic told Slovenian outlet Vecer that he nothing to do with the group and maintained his innocence throughout the ordeal. “I found myself on this ranch by chance. I have my own company, I was in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a business meeting,” he said. “I accepted an invitation to lunch, which turned out

to be my biggest mistake. I regret it. I was sitting at a table with my company, all of a sudden the police came and what happened, happened.” “I have nothing to do with the group that was arrested and detained, nor do my business partners. Yes, they really took us to the police, asked [us] as witnesses, when it turned out that we didn’t even know them, we were able to go.” The president of the Association of Football Referees of Slovenia, Vlado Sajin, defended Vincic, saying that he was just at the wrong place at the wrong time and didn’t press charges against him. Vincic is all set to referee a game for the fourth time at the World Cup this year and has a bit of history with Argentina. Slovenian referee Slavko Vincic was appointed to officiate the FIFA World Cup final between Argen-

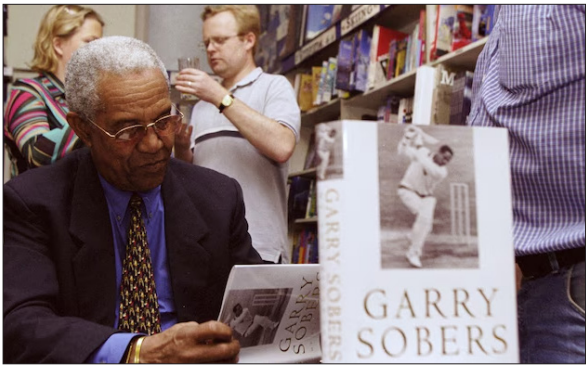


tina and Spain, marking a proud career highlight. However, in 2020, his career nearly ended after he was arrested during a police raid on a sex party in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Though questioned as a

witness, Vincic was not implicated in the crime. He maintained his innocence, attributing his presence to a business lunch invitation. Supported by his peers, he continues to referee at top international events.

When Garry Sobers waited to meet Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli

New Delhi: The cricketing world is mourning the passing of Sir Garfield Sobers, who died on Friday at the age of 89. While his incredible statistics and records are a matter of history, it was his enduring love for the game and respect for successive generations that truly defined him. A perfect example of this unfolded in July 2023, during India’s all-format tour of the West Indies. The series marked the final Test appearances for Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in the Caribbean islands. Ahead of the opening match in Barbados, Sobers and his wife attended an Indian team practice session. Rather than expecting the modern-day stars to come to him, Sobers watched from the stands and then walked down onto the field after the session wrapped up. The former West Indies captain spent time talking with both Rohit and Kohli, and was introduced to a young Shubman Gill by India’s then-head coach, Rahul Dravid. It was a straightforward, respectful exchange between generations of



cricketers, and a moment that gave the visiting Indian side a memorable connection to the history of the game in the West Indies. Cricket lost one of its tallest icons on Friday with the death of Sir Garfield Sobers, the peerless West Indian whose breathtaking all-round brilliance made him one of the greatest players the game has ever known. He was 89, and his death leaves a legacy that transcends generations. The death of the former West Indies captain was confirmed by his son Daniel. Born in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1936, Sobers was exactly 11 days shy of

completing his 90th birthday. Widely regarded as the game’s greatest all-rounder, Sobers played 93 Tests and scored 8,032 runs at 57.78 with 26 centuries and 30 half-centuries between March 1954 to April 1974. A left-handed batter, who also could also bowl left-arm pace, wrist spin and orthodox spin, Sobers claimed 235 wickets in Test cricket. He played in a solitary ODI, taking one wicket. He was also a splendid fielder. He was also the first-ever batter to have hit six sixes in an over in First-Class cricket, playing for Nottinghamshire against Glamorgan in 1968.

Cucurella vows Spain retirement, tattoo if La Roja wins World Cup

New York: Spain left-back Marc Cucurella has made a stunning pledge ahead of Sunday’s FIFA World Cup 2026 final against Argentina, saying he will retire from international football if La Roja clinch their second World Cup title, reported French daily L’EQUIPE. The 27-year-old, who has been one of Spain’s stand-out performers throughout the tournament, said winning both the UEFA European Championship and the FIFA World Cup would leave him with nothing more to achieve in international football. According to L’EQUIPE, Cucurella stated in an interview, “If we win the World Cup, I’ll call Luis the next day and tell him not to count on me anymore, that I’m retiring from the national team. With a European Championship and a World Cup, I can’t do any better.” The Real Madrid full-back has been an ever-present for Spain at the World Cup, playing every minute of the team’s seven matches as Luis de la Fuente’s side reached the final after conceding just one goal throughout the tournament.



Cucurella, who was also a key member of Spain’s triumphant UEFA Euro 2024 squad, believes lifting the World Cup would be the perfect way to end his international journey despite being just 27 years old. The defender has also promised another memorable tribute if Spain defeat Argentina, revealing he would get a tattoo of head coach Luis de la Fuente. “I would get a little tattoo of Spain manager Luis de la Fuente’s face on my bicep if we were to win the World Cup,” he said, according to Fox Sports. The bold declarations continue a trend for Cucurella, who has never shied away from making eye-catching promises. Earlier in his ca-

reer, the Barcelona academy graduate had famously said he would rather shave his head than play for Real Madrid. The left-back, however, completed a move to Los Blancos in June this year and kept his hair. Cucurella is not the only Spanish player embracing the occasion with unusual promises. Teenage sensation Lamine Yamal has also vowed to grow “a full beard and moustache for three weeks” should Spain emerge victorious on Sunday. Spain will be aiming to become world champions for only the second time in their history when they face defending finalists Argentina. The final also presents an opportunity for Luis de

la Fuente’s side to add the World Cup crown to the European Championship they won in 2024. For Cucurella, who has already enjoyed success with clubs including Chelsea and Real Madrid and won the UEFA Conference League, FIFA Club World Cup and the European Championship, Sunday’s final could represent the crowning moment of his career—and, if his promise holds, the end of his international journey with Spain. In a post shared by the Portugal national football team on X, Andrade and Alves were seen wearing Dallas Cowboys jerseys and taking part in an American football session. The Spanish men’s national football team, on the other hand, held a meet-and-greet session in Dallas with their fans ahead of the Round of 16 fixture. In an X post, La Rojas shared photos from their meet-and-greet sessions with fans, captioning it: “As tradition dictates, another meet and greet with you all.” Portugal will head into the contest after a 1-1 draw against Congo DR, a 5-0 win over Uzbekistan, a goalless draw, and a 2-1 victory of 32 clash.

2027 ODI World Cup qualifier winner earns direct group-stage spot

Tezpur: The 2027 ODI World Cup Qualifier will carry significant weight, with the winner earning direct entry into the main group stage of the World Cup in Africa, avoiding the opening Super Series round under the ICC’s revamped format, according to ESPNcricinfo. The ICC on Monday announced sweeping changes to the 2027 ODI World Cup format, replacing the structure approved in 2021. The revised format reduces the main tournament from 14 teams to 12, with two groups followed by a Super Seven stage before the semi-finals and final, instead of the earlier two-group and Super Six format. The overhaul also changes the qualification route for the top four teams from the World Cup Qualifier. Under the original format, the qualifying teams would have been divided into two groups of seven, giving them the opportunity to play more matches against top-ranked opponents. However, under the revised model, the top eight teams in the ODI rankings at the end of September 2026, along with co-hosts South



Africa and Zimbabwe, will secure direct qualification for the World Cup. Namibia, the third co-host, will not receive automatic qualification and must earn its place through the qualifying pathway. The winner of the Qualifier will earn the 11th direct entry to the World Cup’s main stage. The second, third and fourth-placed teams will have to contest a two-match Super Series, with only the winner progressing further. The remaining teams will bow out after playing just two matches. Making its debut at the 2027 ODI World Cup, the Super Seven stage will feature the top three

teams from each of the two groups of six, along with the next best-ranked team across both groups. The seven teams will compete in a single round-robin, comprising 21 matches, with the top four advancing to the semi-finals. The knockout stage will see the first-placed team face the fourth-placed side and the second-placed team take on the third-placed team, with the winners progressing to the final. The 2027 ODI World Cup Qualifier will feature 10 teams: the two lowest-ranked Full Members in the ODI rankings (excluding South Africa and Zimbabwe, who qualify automatically as hosts

regardless of ranking), the top four teams from the Cricket World Cup League 2, and four teams that progress from the World Cup Qualifier Playoff. The Qualifier Playoff will be contested by eight teams -- the bottom four sides from League 2 and the top four teams from the Challenge League. While the tournament format has not yet been confirmed, the top four finishers will advance to the ODI World Cup Qualifier. The Challenge League serves as the third tier of the qualification pathway and consists of 12 teams split into two groups of six. Each group will play three round-robin tournaments during the cycle, with the top two teams from each group qualifying for the World Cup Qualifier Playoff. The International Cricket Council’s (ICC) revamped format for the 2027 Men’s ODI World Cup has drawn sharp criticism from leading Associate nations, with players and the World Cricketers’ Association (WCA) accusing the governing body of limiting opportunities for emerging teams and failing to consult stakeholders changes.