

Assam CM announces ₹5 lakh ex gratia after Cachar steel factory blast kills four

Guwahati, July 27: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has expressed profound grief over the death of four workers in a devastating explosion at a steel manufacturing unit in Cachar district and announced an ex gratia of ₹5 lakh for the next of kin of each deceased. The victims were identified as Kiran Munda, Appu Baraik, Shyamal Gour and Sagar Nath. The Chief Minister also wished a speedy recovery to those injured in the incident. The explosion occurred at around 11:03 am on Sunday at the K D Road Industry premises in Pangram under Udharbond, where the factory entrance bears the names Kade Global Infrastructure LLP and IIRD Casting Works LLP. Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Kaushik Rai, who visited the accident site, confirmed that the death



toll had risen to four. He said rescue operations were launched immediately with the participation of the Cachar district administration, police, NDRF personnel and other emergency agencies. The bodies have been sent to Silchar Medical College and Hospital for post-mortem examination. The Minister said the exact

cause of the explosion has not yet been determined and multiple investigations have been ordered. Separate inquiries will be conducted by the District Commissioner, Assistant Labour Commissioner and Cachar Police to examine whether labour safety regulations and mandatory industrial norms

were being followed. He further informed that a specialised technical team from Guwahati will inspect the factory to determine the nature of the chemicals used and identify the precise cause of the blast. Kaushik Rai added that Guardian Minister Krishnendu Paul and local MLA Rajdeep Goala, who is

attending the Assembly session in Guwahati, have been closely monitoring the situation in coordination with the Chief Minister. The MLA is expected to visit the site on Monday. Responding to allegations by protesters that previous fatal accidents at the factory had allegedly been concealed, the Minister said such claims would be thoroughly examined during the investigation if supported by evidence. Meanwhile, Cachar Police have launched a criminal investigation into the incident and detained four persons, including the factory manager, for questioning over possible safety lapses. Chief Minister Sarma said any negligence established during the investigation would invite strict legal action, reiterating the state government's commitment to ensuring accountability and industrial safety.

Security forces recover AK-47, sniper rifle, mortar shell, explosives in Bishnupur

Imphal, July 27: Security forces on Sunday conducted a cordon and search operation (CASO) in the area between the northern side of Lamdan and Geljang under Loktak Police Station in Bishnupur district, leading to the recovery of a cache of arms, ammunition and explosives.

According to police, the recovered items include one AK-47 rifle with two magazines, one double-barrel breech-loading (DBBL) gun, one country-made sniper rifle, one 9 mm pistol with magazine, two country-made 9 mm pistols with magazines, one 51 HE mortar shell, two 36 HE hand grenades, one hand grenade with a tube launcher, anti-riot grenades, magazines, ammunition of various calibres, and other miscellaneous items. The recovered arms and ammunition have been seized for further investigation. Security forces have intensified search operations in vulnerable areas



as part of ongoing efforts to curb illegal weapons and maintain law and order in the state. Authorities emphasized that the intensified operations are not only aimed at recovering weapons but also at reassuring local communities of the government's commitment to their safety. By combining intelligence-based raids with community outreach, security forces hope to dismantle networks of illegal arms suppliers while strengthening public confidence in law enforcement.

The latest recovery underscores the persistent challenges posed by insurgent groups and smuggling networks in the region. Authorities noted that such seizures are critical in preventing potential attacks and ensuring that illegal arms do not destabilize peace and security. The coordinated efforts of police and paramilitary forces reflect a broader strategy to secure border districts, disrupt militant supply chains, and reinforce the state's commitment to protecting its citizens.

LCD Elite promotes green, plastic free living

Dimapur, Jul 27: Lions Club of Dimapur Elite organised its One District One Activity on Saturday with the objective of promoting environmental conservation and creating awareness on sustainable living through tree plantation and plastic free practices.

As part of the initiative, the club distributed 10 Lions branded flower pots with saplings, each carrying a message to inspire care for nature. Three gynecologists from NIKOS Hospital-Dr. Sunil Sharma, Dr. Apeli Sukhalu and Dr. Benjong-sangba Lemtur- received potted saplings to present to their patients, encouraging families to nurture both life and nature. In a symbolic gesture, a two month old baby was presented with a sapling, signifying growth alongside the child, while a newly married couple received a sapling as a symbol of love, care and a greener future together.

The club also distributed 200 saplings in the New Market area, motivating citizens to plant trees and contribute towards a healthier environment. To further strengthen awareness, members conducted a "Say No to Plastic - Use Cloth Bags" campaign, distributing Lions branded cloth bags and encouraging the public to adopt eco friendly alternatives. The project witnessed enthusiastic public participation and spread awareness on environmental conservation, responsible waste management and sustainable living.

IAF evacuates 42 stranded passengers from Namsang

Dimapur, July 27: The Indian Air Force (IAF), requisitioned by the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA), continued its aerial humanitarian operations for the fourth consecutive day on Sunday, evacuating 42 stranded passengers from EAC Headquarters, Namsang Circle in Longleng district, despite adverse weather conditions. According to NSDMA, two IAF helicopters operating from Air Force Station Mohanbari, Dibrugarh, Assam, were deployed to Namsang,

where the first helicopter evacuated 20 passengers and the second airlifted 22 passengers. Both sorties landed safely at Dimapur Airport. The evacuated passengers included elderly persons, children, women and students who had returned to Namsang during their summer vacation and were stranded after road connectivity was disrupted by the ongoing monsoon-induced disasters.

NSDMA said the rescue mission was carried out by the same IAF team



that has been conducting operations since July 23,

describing their efforts as demonstrating exceptional

professionalism, dedication and commitment despite

difficult weather conditions. The authority informed that rescue operations were continuing and around 4.5 metric tonnes of essential relief materials were awaiting airlift to Namsang. However, the relief consignment could not be transported on Saturday due to adverse weather. It said both evacuation and relief operations would continue, subject to favourable weather conditions and operational feasibility.

NSDMA said it was closely monitoring the situation

in coordination with the Longleng district administration, the IAF and other responding agencies to ensure timely rescue and relief measures. The authority also expressed appreciation to the IAF, Airports Authority of India, Dimapur Airport and all associated agencies, district administrations, DDMA's, line departments, emergency responders, volunteers and other stakeholders for their support and efforts in the ongoing humanitarian operations.

Mizoram launches church-government narcotics awareness campaign

Aizawl, July 27: The Mizoram government on Sunday joined hands with churches to launch a narcotics awareness campaign to strengthen community-led action against drug abuse and expand community-based rehabilitation efforts.

The campaign was launched jointly by the Social Welfare department and Mizoram Presbyterian church at the Chamari local Presbyterian church in Aizawl. Social Welfare Minister Lalrinpui inaugurated the campaign and said that although the state government's 'Hulhliap' (detoxification centre) initiative has achieved significant success, it is continuing to explore additional measures to support people affected by drug addiction and strengthen rehabilitation and after-care services for people recovering from substance abuse. The minister stressed the



need for an effective yet affordable support system, underscoring the role of Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in helping recovering drug users reintegrate into society. She said the government is

also formulating an aftercare skill training programme in collaboration with the Mizoram Presbyterian Church (Synod), the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM), the Evangelical Church of

Maraland (ECM), the Lai Independent Baptist Church of Mizoram (LIKBC), and various non-governmental organisations.

As part of the initiative, NA awareness programmes

will be held in 27 churches across Aizawl and its surrounding areas, officials said.

Resource persons and counsellors from the Mizoram State Drug Demand Reduction Board (MSD&RB) under the Social Welfare department and the Mizoram Drugs User Forum (MDUF) will conduct awareness and counselling sessions, they said.

Apart from people affected by substance abuse, the campaign will also involve their family members through dedicated family sensitisation programmes, recognising the critical role of families in recovery, they said.

Lalrinpui appealed to churches, voluntary organisations and local communities to actively encourage those struggling with drug addiction to participate in the programmes and access the support available, officials added.

Tripura CM thanks PM for highlighting 'Chongpreng'



Agartala, July 27: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for making a special mention of 'Chongpreng', an indigenous musical instrument, in his radio programme 'Mann ki Baat'. Taking to social media, the chief minister said Modi mentioned Tripura resident Suraj Kumar Debbarma's efforts to revive and promote the traditional musical instrument. "Chongpreng, a three-stringed bamboo musical instrument, is a unique symbol of India's rich cultural heritage and holds a special place in the traditions of Tripura's indigenous communities. Its melodious sound

closely resembles that of the sarod," Saha said in a social media post. "Although its popularity among the younger generation had gradually declined over time, Debbarma's tireless dedication has helped revive interest in the instrument, restoring its recognition and respect among today's youth," the CM said. "Heartfelt gratitude and sincere thanks to the prime minister for showcasing this proud cultural heritage of Tripura on a national platform," he added. In a recent programme, the chief minister felicitated Debbarma for his efforts to preserve and promote the indigenous musical instrument.

Arunachal HM dismisses reports of Chinese encroachment in Taksing

Itanagar, July 27: Arunachal Pradesh Home Minister Mama Natung on Sunday firmly dismissed allegations of Chinese encroachment into Indian territory in the Taksing sector of Upper Subansiri district, terming the claims "lies and social media rumours". Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Kargil Vijay Diwas celebrations here, Natung said there has been no intrusion

by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) into any part of the state. "There has been no encroachment in Arunachal Pradesh by the Chinese. All these are just lies and social media rumours. Our jawans are protecting our border 24x7. No Chinese would dare encroach into Indian territory, and I can assure you that these are all rumours and nothing else," the minister said.



Natung highlighted the close bond between the local border populations and the security forces, saying that the people of Arunachal Pradesh remain steadfast in their commitment to defending the nation. "The people of Arunachal Pradesh are always with the Indian Army and are ready to shed blood to protect the country," he added. The minister's clarification follows

claims by the Nah Welfare Society (NWS), which alleged that PLA activities near the Taksing sector had escalated over the last decade-and-a-half. The community organisation had claimed that Chinese military outposts and infrastructure had progressively moved closer to the border, adding that they had previously submitted representations on the matter to senior constitutional au-

thorities and elected representatives. The claims had circulated widely on social media platforms, creating apprehension among residents. India and China share a 1,129-km border in Arunachal Pradesh, a region Beijing claims as part of 'South Tibet'. India has repeatedly dismissed Beijing's claims, reiterating that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral and inalienable part of the country.

Creative Cardboard Signs Take Center Stage at Shillong Protest

Guwahati, July 27: Protesters at Don Bosco Square traded loud chants for sharp wit. Local students and residents used hand-crafted cardboard signs to voice their grievances during a recent CJP solidarity demonstration. The display relied on satire and pop-culture references rather than standard slogans.

The creative approach caught the eye of social media users and passers-by. People stopped to read the messages, which observers found more effective than traditional rhetoric. The protesters used their art to push for transparency, accountability, and the right



to peaceful democratic expression.

Even those who disagreed with the politics involved recognized the effort. As one observer noted, the group proved that “creativ-

ity can serve as a potent form of activism.” For several hours, the most powerful voices in the square were not heard through loudspeakers, but read in bold ink above the crowd.

Mizoram initiates a narcotics awareness campaign in collaboration with the church and government

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The minister stressed the need for an effective yet affordable support system, underscoring the role of Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in helping recovering drug users reintegrate into society. She said the government is also formulating an aftercare skill training programme in collaboration with the Mizoram Presbyterian Church (Synod), the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM), the Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM), the Lai Independent Baptist Church of Mizoram (LIKBK), and various non-governmental organisations. As part of the initiative, NA awareness programmes will be held in 27 churches across Aizawl and its surrounding areas, officials said. Resource persons and counsellors from the Mizoram State Drug Demand Reduction Board (MSD&RB) under the Social Wel-



fare department and the Mizoram Drugs User Forum (MDUF) will conduct awareness and counselling sessions, they said.

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Home Minister of Arunachal Pradesh has refuted claims regarding Chinese encroachment

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The minister’s clarification follows claims by



the Nah Welfare Society (NWS), which alleged that PLA activities near the Taksing sector had escalated over the last decade-and-a-half.

The community organisation had claimed that Chinese military outposts and infrastructure had progressively moved closer to the border, adding that they had previously submitted representations on the matter to senior constitutional authorities and elected representatives.

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East Khasi Hills Sets Hard Dawki Highway Repairs

Shillong, July 27: The East Khasi Hills administration forced the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited to submit a firm, stage-wise repair schedule for the ruined Shillong-Dawki highway. Officials moved after an emergency inspection by IIT-Guwahati experts revealed the depth of the damage. The road serves as a vital artery for international trade and local tourism.

Deputy Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal ordered the Pynursla SDO to track project milestones every two weeks. NHIDCL must set specific dates for the expert report, the start of construction, and the final project completion. The corporation previously claimed the repairs would take months. Now, the government rejects these excuses as stalling tactics.

Pressure boiled over earlier this week when the Khasi Students’ Union and the Federation of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo People threatened to repair the road themselves. They accused officials of complete neglect. The groups stood down only after spotting machinery and crews at the site. “We want to see the trucks moving again. Every day



of delay hits the pockets of farmers and traders,” a local representative said.

The administration lifted all time restrictions for light motor vehicles to provide relief. Commuters may now use the diversion route through Laitlyngkot, Iew Mawiong, Umthli, Nongthymmai, and Laitkynsew freely. Officials also scrapped the previous three-day-a-week traffic regulation on the main highway. NHIDCL now faces orders to build a temporary subway for light traffic while crews work on the permanent fix. Local groups are watching closely to ensure the temporary repairs do not lead to further delays.

Shillong Launches Rs 25 Crore Revamp for Ward’s Lake

Shillong, July 27: Shillong is spending Rs 25 crore to overhaul Ward’s Lake, known locally as Nan Polok. The state government split the work into two tracks: cleaning the water and beautifying the grounds. Commissioner and Secretary Vijay Kumar D confirmed the Urban Affairs Department already started the cleanup phase. They are de-silting the lake and installing a Lamella Clarifier. Nano bubble technology will boost oxygen levels to revive the ecosystem. Officials expect clear water in three months. The Tourism Department handles the beautification side. Plans include upgraded walkways, new signage, decorative lights, and fresh street furniture. Workers are currently building a new entry gate. This structure upset some locals. Many residents argue the current setup of large iron panels and hessian sheets blocks views, saying it serves to “diminish its historic appearance.” Crews will soon reconstruct the Japanese-style central wooden bridge. The Forest Department cleared the plans, promising the new bridge will match the original aesthetic. The government finished the Detailed Project Report to align restoration with heritage conservation. Public complaints sparked this move. Locals claim the site turned into a venue for constant fairs and government events, destroying the once-tranquil atmosphere. They blame the shift from Forest Department management to the Tourism Department for this commercial creep. Citizens hope this project brings back the quiet charm of their city landmark.

Four militants arrested Manipur cops recover 29 arms

Imphal, July 27: Commando unit of Manipur police on Sunday recovered a cache of 29 arms with ammunition during an intelligence-based operation at Wakha Ching under Porompat police station, Imphal East.

Acting on reliable inputs, teams led by Dr. S. Ibomcha Singh, officer-in-charge of the commando unit and holding additional charge of 6th IRB commandant, launched a search in the jungle area of Wakha Hill, opposite Shelloi Langmai Composite Farm.

Four suspicious plastic bags were detected, containing five SLRs, four INSAS rifles, two AK Ghataks, one INSAS LMG, six .303 rifles, three DBBLs, seven SBBLS, a pump action gun, one Lathode bomb, 530 live rounds of .303, 64 rounds of 7.62 SLR, 19 rounds of INSAS, six rounds of 5.56 carbine, 40 drill cartridges and 17 chargers.

Police said further searches are underway to trace more hidden arms. The operation formed part of ongoing security force measures in vulnerable areas of the state.

In a separate operation on Saturday, security forces recovered a 12-bore rifle, a locally made pumpi, an improvised mortar shell, an



IED and nine live rounds from Shangkai and Mongkot Chepu villages under Litan police station, Ukhrul district.

Meanwhile, in intelligence-based operations against extortion and criminal activities, four militants belonging to proscribed outfits were arrested. Two cadres of UNLF (P), identified as Mutum Seitaraj Singh (31) and Thounaojam

Rakesh Meitei (35), were apprehended from Thoubal Bazar for alleged involvement in recruitment. Two cadres of Kangleipak Communist Party (City Meitei) were also arrested—Yaikhom Abhinash Meetei (26) from Kongpal Khongkham Leikai, Imphal East, and Urikhinbam Malemnganba (30) from Thongju Part-II, Imphal West.

Environment Leadership Programme

Imphal, July 27: An Environment Leadership Programme for young students, based on the Pani Pahar curriculum developed by Hearth Advisors and the University of Cambridge, was held at Tea Courtyard, Atoqa Tea Factory, Niuland, on July 25.

The event was organised by North East Environment and Development Association (NEEDA) and White Owl, and sponsored by Atoqa Tea Factory producing CTC black tea under the brand Nagaland Gold (North East Brews) and The Tea Courtyard, with the vision of promoting tea, eco adventure and ecotourism.

According to a press release issued by Dr. Atoho Jakhalu, Fellow of the Cambridge Commonwealth Society, students from Hope Academy, St. Peters, Livingstone Foundation International, Milon, Toluvi Church Sunday School, and Tetso College participated in interactive environmental learning sessions conducted by Shashank Vira, Cambridge alumnus and author of the Pani Pahar curriculum. A personality development and leadership session was also conducted by Tono-Zhimomi, recipient of the TAFMA Excellence Award from the Governor and former Global Mr. Nagaland.

The release stated that the Cambridge curriculum is currently being implemented in seven North Eastern states under the Mobius North East Climate Project, a platform of North East Leaders Connect (NELC). The initiative was officially launched by Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu in Pasighat in 2025, and inaugurated by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio in Kohima the same year.

While the flood circumstances in Assam are improving, 650,000 residents continue to be affected

Guwahati, July 27: The flood situation in Assam improved on Sunday as water levels were receding in most of the affected areas with those places not receiving overnight rainfall, even as over 6.5 lakh people remained hit in six districts and 66 people lost their lives in this year’s deluge, officials said.

An official of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said that water levels were receding in most of the flood-hit areas of Upper Assam, especially Charaideo, Sivasagar and Jorhat districts. “We hope the situation would improve further during the day. This would help us provide relief in a better way,” he added. According to the authority’s daily flood report issued at midnight, more than 6,54,800 people have been affected in Charaideo, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat, Nagaon and Sivasagar districts.

Sivasagar was the worst-hit district with nearly 2.9 lakh people affected, followed by Charaideo (1.9 lakh) and Jorhat (1.3 lakh). The flood situation has improved marginally since Friday, when more than 7.05 lakh people were affected across nine districts.

The ASDMA’s midnight bulletin said that four more people lost their lives in the deluge in the last 24 hours, taking the toll in this year’s floods to 66. Three deaths were reported in Sivasagar and one in Charaideo. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday offered full

support to the Assam government in dealing with the deluge, which has shown signs of improvement as rain has stopped in most parts of the state.

Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal reviewed the relief measures at camps in flood-affected areas and directed officials concerned to ensure uninterrupted access to healthcare, food, drinking water and other essential services. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the situation has slightly improved and the administration has been able to reach out to almost all the affected areas.

Addressing a press conference after a late-evening cabinet meeting, he said that a central team has arrived in the state to assess the damage caused by the flood in Upper Assam. ASDMA said the administration has been operating 274 relief camps and distribution centres in six districts, taking care of 18,902 displaced people at present. Multiple agencies such as the Army, NDRF, SDRF, Fire & Emergency Services, police and civil agencies have rescued many people from different parts of Upper Assam, it added. The authority has distributed 1,668.68 quintals of rice, 286.99 quintals of dal, 83.75 quintals of salt and 7,995.01 litres of mustard oil among the flood victims of the state in the last 24 hours. At present, 810 villages

are under water and 34,970.8 hectares of crop areas have been damaged across Assam, the ASDMA said. Embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been damaged by floodwaters in different districts of the state. At present, Dikhow River at Sivasagar and Dhansiri at Numaligarh are flowing above the danger level. Modis Sonowal, enquires about flood situation in Assam

Guwahati, Jul 26 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi called up Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Sunday to enquire about the flood situation in Assam, a day after the former chief minister reviewed aid efforts at relief camps in deluge-hit areas of the state. This was Modi’s second call in two days to take stock of the natural calamity ravaging the northeastern state. He dialled Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday and offered full support to the state government in dealing with the deluge.

Sonowal, in a post on X, said he received a call from the prime minister, who took stock of the flood situation in Assam. “I am currently in Dibrugarh, visiting the affected areas, assessing the ground situation and standing with our affected brothers and sisters,” he said in the post. He went on to add that PM Modi has always held Assam close to his heart, and an inter-ministerial team reached the state on Saturday and is moving to the affected districts.

Three districts in Odisha close their schools due to a heavy rain warning; the IMD issues a red alert

Bhubaneswar, July 27: Due to a strong depression over the Bay of Bengal that predicted exceptionally high rainfall and raised concerns of flash floods in these districts, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert on Monday, closing schools in three districts of Odisha. As a precaution, schools were kept closed in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Jagatsinghpur, and Kendrapara. Additionally, the IMD issued a red alert for Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, and Keonjhar due to the possibility of exceptionally heavy rainfall in certain areas. At 5:30 a.m. on Monday, the IMD reported that the deep depression was located approximately 120 kilometers east-southeast of Balasore, centered over the northwest Bay of Bengal and bordering the West Bengal-North Odisha coast. The system had moved slowly northwards at a speed of 3kmph during the previous six hours and was expected to move north-northwest before crossing the West Bengal-North Odisha coast between Balasore and Canning by Monday afternoon. IMD regional director Manorama Mohanty warned that the system could trigger widespread heavy



rainfall, thunderstorms and squally weather across Odisha through July 29. Purna Chandra Sethi, the district education administrator for Mayurbhanj, issued an order on Monday to close all public and private schools up to Class 12. However, in order to respond to any emergency, teachers and non-teaching staff were told to report for duty and stay in contact with local authorities. All government, government-aided, and private schools, including elementary, secondary, and higher secondary institutions as well as Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas, had their courses suspended by the Jagatsinghpur district administration. Additionally, the

district's Anganwadi centers remained closed. As a precaution against the predicted heavy rainfall, the Kendrapara district government also declared a one-day school closure. With heavy to extremely heavy rainfall predicted, the IMD issued an orange warning for the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Subarnapur, Boudh, and Kandhamal. The special relief commissioner has instructed collectors in 27 of Odisha's 30 districts to stay alert for potential flash floods due to ongoing heavy rainfall. Odisha has experienced an exceptionally wet July, with rainfall at 467.9 mm, exceeding normal levels by 67%. This month marks the third low-pressure system affecting the state, following earlier systems on July 3 and July 14, which have significantly alleviated the monsoon rainfall deficit. Meteorologist Sarat Chandra Sahoo emphasized that these low-pressure areas from the Bay of Bengal are crucial for the state's monsoon, typically bringing 10 to 13 systems that enhance rainfall across Odisha.

After the badminton team loses, an Andhra businessman shoots three shots

New Delhi, July 27: After reportedly firing from his licensed gun outside a badminton academy in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, a real estate businessman has been placed under arrest. Police claimed on Monday that the firing followed his team's loss in a local tournament quarterfinal. The event happened on Sunday night during the Kurnool Badminton Premier League (KBPL), which has been going on for the last four weeks. According to the police, nobody was hurt in the shooting. Police said that shortly after his team's semifinal defeat, the businessman, identified as Kaushik, opened fire into the ground. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Raghavendra of Kurnool stated that the firing seemed to be an act of resentment after the loss. After his team lost the morning semifinals,



Kaushik, who has a valid license for a .32 revolver, fired three rounds on the ground out of rage. Thankfully, nobody was hurt," he said. The DSP said the shots were fired into the ground and the incident did not result in any injuries. Police detained Kaushik after the event and started the process of confiscating the handgun that was used. According to officials, the revolver was granted for self-defense several years ago and had a valid license. Additionally, they have started the process of suggesting that the license

be revoked to the district collector via Superintendent of Police Vikrant Patel. Officials claim that Kaushik is involved in the real estate industry. There was no disagreement or physical altercation prior to the firing, according to investigators. According to the preliminary inquiry, they think that rather than a disagreement at the venue, the event was caused by displeasure about the team's defeat. However, police stated that they are looking into every facet of the case before making a decision. Additionally, officials made it clear that Kaushik was not the team's captain. He belonged to the Ananya franchise, which was taking part in the competition. According to police, a thorough investigation is in progress, and additional steps will be taken in response to the investigation's conclusions.

Testing bodies create a new NTA LinkedIn post to implement exam reforms



New Delhi, July 27: The top testing company in India, which administers competitive entrance examinations like JEE and NEET, is hiring. As part of the most extensive institutional strengthening in its history, the National Testing Agency (NTA) is seeking applicants for four senior leadership positions. The decision to "build new NTA" comes after a panel of subject matter experts was established to counsel the government on updating the NTA in order to implement exam changes in response to widespread protests over paper leaks.

NTA is undertaking the most extensive institutional strengthening in its history in response to the recommendations of the High-Level Committee of Experts (HLCE), which is chaired by Prof. K Radhakrishnan. In a LinkedIn post, the NTA stated,

"We are rebuilding the Agency to serve crores of candidates with the credibility they deserve across academic rigor, technology, security, operations, and governance." General managers for assessment (R&D and psychometric), test center network and operations, information security (chief information security officer), and vigilance, investigation, and forensics were the four posts that were advertised.

According to the NTA, these positions are essential to enhancing the way the nation chooses, develops, and uses its human resource. Additionally, the organization has extended invitations to young professionals who passed civil service exams for twelve academic research posts, two legal research positions, and two finance and accounts research roles. Those interested have been

asked to write to the NTA. The hirings are part of the government's effort to bring in massive structural reforms in how competitive exams are held across the country, especially for medical and engineering courses. In addition to other important entrance exams, the NTA administers the Common University Entrance Test (CUET), Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), and National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET). A powerful task team headed by Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani was created yesterday by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to investigate ways to enhance India's testing procedures. It has been entrusted with guaranteeing the accuracy of forthcoming competitive tests and is made up of some of India's brightest minds.

The redesign comes after Dharmendra Pradhan resigned as education minister following a month-long campaign for accountability over paper leaks.

The Center also announced a number of other initiatives to enhance exam processes, such as the introduction of a legislation prohibiting paper leaks. To hear these cases, a fast-track court has also been established.

A Bihar police officer was suspended after being caught on camera firing an AK-47 at protesting students

New Delhi, July 27: After a video of a Bihar police officer wielding an AK-47 rifle on demonstrating students during the July 25 "Bihar Bandh" protests in Siwan district went viral, the officer was suspended. Large-scale protests by student organizations took place throughout several districts throughout the statewide shutdown, and there have been reports of altercations between demonstrators and police in several sites. Official reports state that the Bihar Police Headquarters suspended a police constable after taking serious notice of the widely shared

video purportedly showing him firing an AK-47 during the demonstration. The three injured protesters are being treated at Jayprabha Medanta Hospital in Patna, and their condition is said to be stable. One of the injured is 15-year-old Md. Arif, who works at a neighborhood shop, according to his family. According to his family, he was hit in the neck by a bullet during the disturbance while going home after shutting the store during the bandh. His status is now said to be stable after the bullet was successfully removed during surgery. Tejashwi Yadav, the leader of

opposition in Bihar, called for action against guilty officials and posted a video of the incident, where a cop can be seen firing at the students.

The leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, also brought up the subject and claimed that the pattern is the same everywhere, citing the use of AK-47s in Bihar and pellet guns against protesting students in Delhi.

According to police officials, upholding law and order is the force's core duty, and any transgression of established protocols is regarded very severely. They also

stated that a thorough departmental investigation has been started and that the results would be used to decide on further steps. It is anticipated that the investigation will ascertain if the firearm was used in accordance with police procedures and whether any additional disciplinary or legal action is necessary.

As part of the statewide shutdown, many students gathered in the city and marched in the direction of Gandhi Maidan. The situation worsened when demonstrators and police got into a fight while students were shouting slogans.

Delhi High Court has withdrawn its appeal against the internet cutoff near Jantar Mantar



New Delhi, July 27: New Delhi: Software Freedom Law Centre, India, a legal services organization, dropped their PIL against the suspension of mobile internet services in several areas of central Delhi from the Delhi High Court on Monday. After the CJP withdrew its protest, services were resumed. "The petitioner's attorney claims he has been instructed to withdraw the petition. Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia's bench declared, "The petition is dismissed as withdrawn." Software Freedom Law Centre, India, filed a lawsuit to have the Union Ministry of Home Affairs' July 17, 20, 22, and 23 orders to halt mobile internet services in some areas of central Delhi revoked. Since June 20, the Cockroach Janta Party has

been demonstrating at Jantar Mantar in the center of Delhi to demand that the government take responsibility for the NEET paper leak and Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation as Union education minister. Following Pradhan's resignation on Saturday and the government's acceptance of other CJP requests, the more than month-long protest was called off. Central Delhi's internet services were quickly restored. SLFC. The temporary suspension of telecommunication services, including mobile internet services, was described in the petition as "one of the most extraordinary coercive powers conferred upon the Executive" because it interfered with the exercise of freedoms protected by Articles 19, 19, and 21 of the Constitution. The

petitioner called the suspension orders "illegal, arbitrary, and unconstitutional" and said that they did not reveal any public emergency or offer justifications for why a general suspension of mobile internet services was required or appropriate in light of any purported threat. The plea emphasized that although the authorities recorded that the suspension was required "in the interest of public safety and averting public emergency" using Section 20 of the Telecom Act read with the Suspension Rules, 2024, they neglected to take "less restrictive alternatives" into account before enforcing a general suspension of mobile internet services. It further alleged that the suspension orders did not disclose an "apparent independent application of mind" and "reflect a mechanical exercise of statutory power inconsistent with the requirements of administrative law". "The current challenge arises from the Impugned Orders issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs directing suspension of all mobile internet technologies within a radius of about 1.5 kilometres from Jantar Mantar, New Delhi," the appeal said. "The importance of determining whether each exercise of statutory power was independently carried out in compliance with Section 20 is further highlighted by the repeated issuing of six distinct suspension orders over a period of seven days, it stated.

Shashi Tharoor and his kid are still making fun of ban boomers on WhatsApp

New Delhi, July 27: Ishaan Tharoor, the son of Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, continued to make clever comments to his father on Monday after he posted on social media that "India needs to ban Boomers on WhatsApp," to which his father responded. Ishaan joked that his father's return "wasn't that witty" by his typical standards in his most recent humorous response to Shashi Tharoor's X post on Monday. The Congress MP was still the "number one target" of his planned ban, he joked. A) Come on, by his standards, that wasn't that funny. B) He is the main target of my suggested ban," he wrote. The banter between the two began on Saturday when Ishaan responded to Zoho co-founder Sridhar Vembu on X by suggesting that boomers should be barred from WhatsApp. Young children should not be allowed to use social media in India. I think young children should avoid social media, play in the soil under the sun, and read real books! Vembu had made a post. Ishaan responded, "I believe that small children shouldn't use social media at all. However, India must first prohibit Boomers from using WhatsApp before taking any further action. Shashi Tharoor responded with his trademark humor, claiming that Ishaan was also a "baby boomer." "Given our reproductive patterns, my son, unlike in the West, every generation of Indians, including yours, qualifies as [baby] Boomers!" he said. The Congress MP stated earlier on Saturday that Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation as Union education minister following weeks of protests in Delhi spearheaded by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) demonstrated that administrations cannot disregard the voices of people who peacefully



and steadfastly demonstrate. Gen Z was commended by Tharoor for taking action after becoming frustrated with exam irregularities. "The resignation of the Education Minister is an important moment," Tharoor stated in a video. It serves as a reminder of a basic aspect of democracy: governments cannot stand by while citizens peacefully and repeatedly voice their concerns. It's not about him today. He continued, "It's about a whole generation of young Indians. And Gen Z, I am so proud of you. You took your frustration and turned it into action. You took your anger and channeled it with courage, creativity, and conviction." The top Congress leader said, "You refused to be silenced and you reminded the nation that democracy belongs not only to those who govern but also to those who hold governments accountable." "Keep making the memes, keep being edgy, keep asking uncomfortable questions, keep calling out hypocrisy, but above all, keep showing up," he also stated.

Total Vehicle Prohibition During Kanwar Yatra on the Delhi-Haridwar Highway August 4–12

New Delhi, July 27: Due to the Kanwar Yatra, heavy vehicle traffic on the Delhi-Haridwar National Highway and the Ganga Canal road will be restricted starting on July 30. From August 4 to August 12, all vehicles will be prohibited from using these roads, police announced on Monday.

The Kanwar Yatra, which takes place from July 30 to August 11, will see millions of devotees gather holy water from the Ganga in Haridwar to present at Shiva temples back home. A portion of the Delhi-Haridwar National Highway would

be set aside just for Kanwariyas during the yatra, according to Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Atul Kumar Chaubey.

Heavy vehicle traffic on the Ganga Canal road and the Delhi-Haridwar National Highway will be banned starting on July 30 in order to facilitate the annual pilgrimage.

He stated that from August 4 to August 12, all cars would be prohibited. To protect pilgrims, police divers would be stationed at all significant bathing locations along the Ganga Canal road, District Magistrate Umesh Mishra told

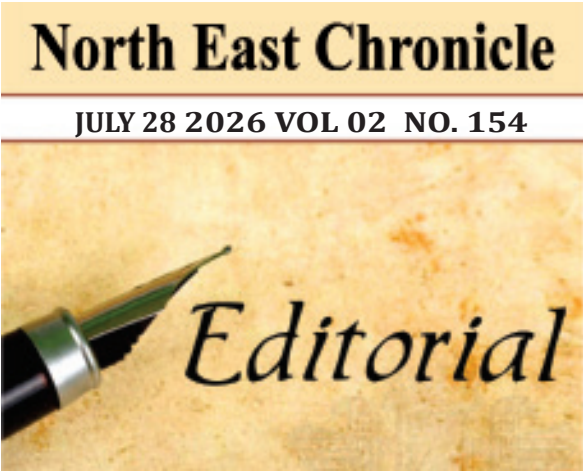


reporters. For the Kanwar Yatra, a makeshift police station has been set up at Rampur Tiraha on the Delhi-Dehradun National Highway. Sub-Inspector Subhash Chand will serve

as the SHO of the temporary police station at Rampur Tiraha, and about 20 police officers will be stationed there, according to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sanjai Kumar.

The Rs 900 crore double-decker flyover would accelerate the growth of Greater Noida West

New Delhi, July 27: Greater Noida is set to undergo a significant infrastructure enhancement with the introduction of its first double-decker flyover at Shahberi. This Rs 900 crore project aims to improve connectivity between Greater Noida West and Ghaziabad, alleviating traffic in one of the National Capital Region's busiest corridors. The six-lane flyover will connect multiple key areas and enhance access to the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, offering shorter travel times for daily commuters. As Greater Noida West rapidly expands as a housing market, this initiative addresses the increasing demand for efficient infrastructure to manage growing congestion near Shahberi. "The planned double-decker flyover at Shahberi is a clear example of how infrastructure development is changing to keep up with Greater Noida West's rapid urban growth. In addition to reducing traffic, this corridor will increase the area's appeal to end customers looking for a higher standard of living, according to Ashish Agarwal, Director, AU Real Estate. According to real estate developers, the flyover may mark yet another significant advancement in Greater Noida West's infrastructure. According to Manoj Gaur, CMD of Gaur Group, the project satisfies a long-standing resident need. "For Greater Noida West, this is a much-needed and welcome development. With over 5 lakh residents, Gaur City would immediately benefit from this project, which will improve connectivity throughout the Greater Noida West region. It has long been necessary to have direct connectivity to NH-24. Thousands of everyday commuters will find travel more convenient as a result," he stated. Gaur added that improved infrastructure enhances Greater Noida West's standing as one of the NCR's most sought-after residential locations and praised the government for sanctioning the project. Infrastructure has been the primary force driving the region's change, according to Salil Kumar, Director, Marketing & Business Management at CRC Group. "A major infrastructure project that would improve Greater Noida West's connectivity and urban ecosystem is the planned Shahberi Double-Decker Flyover. The project is anticipated to reduce traffic congestion and increase commuting efficiency for lakhs of inhabitants by offering easy access to important corridors like NH-9, the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, Crossings Republik, and Greater Noida," he stated. Kumar stated that major connectivity projects, such as the Shahberi Flyover and the Noida International Airport at Jewar, are essential for sustainable urban development in Greater Noida West, enhancing its appeal among NCR's fastest-growing residential markets. Aman Gupta highlighted that these developments will reshape investment patterns across NCR, improving accessibility to key highways and benefiting broader regions, including Faridabad. Iqbal Singh Sodhi described the flyover as transformative, facilitating commuter travel between Ghaziabad and Greater Noida West, leading to increased residential and commercial demand. Manish Jaiswal emphasized that better connectivity will enhance commuting and attract investments, driving urban development and long-term value for residents and the real estate sector.



Britain’s Stories at Stake: Why This Media Merger Matters

The proposed merger between Paramount and Warner Bros Discovery has raised serious concerns about the future of Britain’s film, television and media industries. Although the deal has not yet become a major public debate in the UK, its potential consequences could affect thousands of workers, the diversity of British culture, and the choices available to audiences. For many actors, filmmakers and public figures who have spent their careers working with British crews, studios and creative communities, the merger represents more than a corporate transaction. It is a question about who controls the stories people watch, the information they receive, and the future of an industry that has become an important part of Britain’s cultural identity and economy.

The UK government has recognised the significance of the deal, with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport expressing that she is “minded to intervene” and examining whether the takeover could harm the public interest. Such scrutiny is essential because media ownership is not only an economic issue but also a democratic one. When a small number of companies gain control over large portions of entertainment and news production, there is a risk that audiences will have fewer choices and that independent voices will struggle to reach the public.

Concerns about the merger are not limited to Britain. In the United States, several states have challenged the proposed takeover, arguing that it could increase costs, reduce film production and limit the quality and variety of content available to audiences. These concerns highlight a wider international debate about the effects of media consolidation. However, decisions made by American regulators or European authorities cannot replace the responsibility of British institutions to protect the UK’s own cultural and public interests.

Britain’s film and television industry is a major economic and cultural asset. It supports more than 180,000 jobs, contributes billions of pounds to the economy and provides employment for actors, directors, writers, technicians, designers, editors and countless other professionals. Behind every successful film or television programme are thousands of workers whose skills and creativity sustain local economies and maintain Britain’s reputation as a global production centre. The industry is not simply about entertainment; it represents livelihoods, communities and a national creative identity.

Supporters of the merger may argue that larger companies can provide greater investment and compete more effectively

in the global streaming market. However, critics warn that large-scale consolidation often comes with significant costs. When companies merge, executives frequently seek financial savings through job cuts, reduced production budgets and fewer creative risks. A company carrying substantial debt after a major takeover may prioritise profitability over experimentation, leading to fewer opportunities for emerging filmmakers and independent productions.

Previous mergers in the entertainment industry have increased these concerns. Cost-cutting measures following major corporate combinations have resulted in cancelled projects, staff reductions and changes in commissioning strategies. Critics fear that the Paramount-Warner Bros deal could repeat this pattern, particularly because the combined company would face pressure to achieve billions of dollars in savings. For British creative workers, this could mean fewer productions, reduced employment opportunities and a narrower range of stories reaching audiences.

The impact of consolidation is also significant for independent cinema and documentary filmmaking. As entertainment companies become larger, fewer decision-makers control which projects receive funding and distribution. Films dealing with challenging social or political issues may struggle to find support if executives believe they are commercially risky. A healthy creative industry depends on a wide range of voices, including those that challenge established views and explore issues beyond mainstream interests.

The merger also raises important questions about media plurality and news ownership. A company controlling major entertainment brands alongside influential news platforms could gain significant power over the information landscape. News diversity is a fundamental part of a democratic society because audiences should have access to multiple perspectives and independent sources of information. If too much control is concentrated in the hands of one organisation, there is a danger that commercial interests could influence editorial decisions.

This concern becomes more serious when considering the scale of the assets involved. The proposed combination could bring together major television channels, streaming services and valuable news archives. Such control over historical records and current reporting would give the new company considerable influence over both entertainment and public information. Regulators must therefore examine not only the financial aspects of the merger but also its impact on democracy, cultural diversity and public access to information.

Opening the Final Frontier: India’s Private Space Sector and the Challenge of Sustainability

India’s space sector stands at a historic turning point. The successful launch of Skyroot Aerospace’s Vikram-1 orbital launch vehicle marks a significant milestone, not only for the country’s private space industry but also for India’s broader ambitions in the global space economy. For decades, India’s space programme was driven almost entirely by government institutions, particularly the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), which built a reputation for cost-effective innovation and scientific excellence. However, the reforms introduced in 2020 opened the doors for private participation, allowing start-ups and companies to contribute to satellite manufacturing, launch services, space applications, and other emerging areas. The success of Vikram-1 demonstrates that these reforms are beginning to produce tangible results. It signals that India has the potential to become a major player in the rapidly expanding commercial space sector.

Yet, as the country celebrates this achievement, it must also recognise that technological advancement alone cannot guarantee long-term success. The future of India’s space economy depends equally on maintaining strong public institutions, ensuring sustainable investment, and working towards a peaceful and predictable international environment in outer space. The emergence of private companies in India’s space sector reflects a global transformation. Space is no longer the exclusive domain of governments and national agencies. Around the world, private firms are increasingly involved in developing launch vehicles, operating satellite networks, providing communication services, collecting Earth observation data, and exploring

possibilities such as space tourism and resource extraction. Companies such as SpaceX, Blue Origin, and other commercial players have changed the way governments view space activities. India’s decision to encourage private participation through policy reforms was therefore both necessary and timely. The creation of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) provided an institutional mechanism to support and regulate private companies entering the sector. These changes have encouraged entrepreneurship, attracted investment, and created opportunities for young companies to develop innovative technologies.

The growth of private investment demonstrates growing confidence in India’s space potential. The sector has attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in private capital, with investments supporting companies involved in satellite technology, launch systems, and space-based services. The government has further strengthened this ecosystem through financial support mechanisms, including a Rs 1,000-crore venture capital fund aimed at supporting space start-ups and a Rs 500-crore technology adoption fund designed to encourage innovation. Liberalised foreign direct investment rules have also been introduced to attract global participation. These measures indicate that India wants to move beyond being merely a government-led space power and become a competitive commercial hub.

However, the rise of private companies must not weaken the foundation on which India’s space achievements have been built. ISRO remains the backbone of India’s space programme, having developed critical capabilities in satellite technology,

navigation systems, communication networks, and planetary exploration. The organisation’s achievements, from the Chandrayaan missions to the Mars Orbiter Mission, have demonstrated India’s ability to accomplish complex scientific objectives with limited resources. As private companies expand, there is a risk that public institutions may lose experienced scientists and engineers to better-paying private sector opportunities. Reports of scientists leaving government organisations for private companies highlight the need for careful policy planning. A national research institution cannot become merely a training ground or recruitment pipeline for commercial enterprises. If ISRO’s workforce, expertise, and institutional capacity are weakened, the entire ecosystem could suffer.

The government must therefore create a balanced model where public and private sectors complement each other rather than compete unfairly. Private companies can bring speed, flexibility, and investment, while public institutions provide long-term research capabilities, strategic vision, and national infrastructure. Countries with successful space industries have generally relied on strong partnerships between government agencies and private companies. The United States, for example, has encouraged commercial participation while continuing to invest heavily in institutions such as NASA. India must follow a similar approach by ensuring that ISRO receives adequate funding, retains skilled personnel, and continues to lead advanced research programmes.

Another important challenge facing India’s expanding space ambitions is the growing problem of space debris. The success of commercial space

activities depends on the availability of a safe and stable orbital environment. Thousands of satellites are already operating around Earth, and the number is expected to increase significantly in the coming decades. Every satellite launch adds to the complexity of managing orbital traffic. Broken satellites, abandoned rocket stages, and fragments created by collisions or military tests can remain in orbit for years, creating serious risks for functioning spacecraft.

The problem of space debris is not limited to one country. It is a global challenge requiring international cooperation. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 established the basic legal framework for activities beyond Earth. Ratified by more than a hundred countries, including India, the treaty introduced important principles such as preventing national ownership claims over celestial bodies and restricting the placement of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction in orbit. It helped create an environment where countries and companies could invest in space activities with greater confidence.

However, the space environment has changed dramatically since the treaty was created. Commercial space companies did not exist on today’s scale in the 1960s. Private operators now launch thousands of satellites, and new possibilities such as asteroid mining, lunar resource extraction, and large-scale commercial missions are being discussed. The existing legal framework does not adequately address these developments. It does not clearly regulate private companies, establish detailed rules for commercial resource use, or provide strong enforcement mechanisms for irresponsible behaviour in orbit.

The absence of effective global rules has become increasingly concerning as space becomes a new area of strategic competition. Major powers such as the United States and China are competing for influence in lunar exploration and space technology. At the same time, military activities in space have increased concerns about future conflicts. Anti-satellite weapons, which can destroy satellites in orbit, pose a major threat because they create large amounts of debris. China’s 2007 anti-satellite missile test generated thousands of trackable fragments, while Russia’s 2021 test also produced a significant debris cloud. Such incidents demonstrate how military actions can create consequences that affect all space users, including civilian and commercial operators.

For India, the growing risks in space have direct economic and strategic implications. The country’s emerging private space industry depends on predictable access to orbital space. Companies investing millions of dollars into satellites and launch systems require confidence that their assets will not be threatened by uncontrolled debris or geopolitical tensions. A single major collision in orbit could damage valuable infrastructure and increase the cost of space operations. Insurance costs could rise, launch schedules could become more complicated, and smaller companies could struggle to survive.

Therefore, India must continue advocating for stronger international governance mechanisms. Through platforms such as the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, India should support efforts to create binding international standards on space debris management, responsible satellite operations, an-

ti-satellite weapon testing, and space traffic coordination. Voluntary guidelines are useful, but they may not be sufficient as space becomes increasingly crowded and commercially important. The international community needs clear rules that encourage innovation while preventing irresponsible actions.

India’s approach should also focus on developing its own capabilities for space sustainability. Investments in tracking space objects, improving satellite design, developing debris removal technologies, and creating better space traffic management systems will become increasingly important. A country aspiring to become a major space power cannot focus only on launching satellites; it must also contribute to maintaining the safety of the orbital environment. Space sustainability will become a key measure of responsible space leadership.

The rise of India’s private space sector represents a major opportunity. Start-ups can accelerate innovation, create employment, attract investment, and help India capture a larger share of the global space economy. But commercial expansion must be accompanied by responsible governance. The goal should not simply be to increase the number of launches or attract private capital; it should be to build a complete and sustainable space ecosystem.

The success of Skyroot Aerospace’s Vikram-1 is therefore both a celebration and a reminder. It shows that India has the technological talent and entrepreneurial energy required to compete globally. At the same time, it highlights the importance of protecting the foundations that made this achievement possible. A strong ISRO, supportive government policies, responsible private companies, and effective international cooperation are all necessary components of India’s space future.

The Hidden Costs of War: Lives, Economies and Global Uncertainty

The modern world has entered an era where decisions made by powerful leaders can quickly create consequences far beyond national borders. The conflict between the United States and Iran, and the wider instability surrounding it, represents not only a military confrontation but also a deeper crisis of global security, economic confidence, and political responsibility. What may begin as a strategic calculation in government offices can rapidly become a reality experienced by ordinary people through rising fuel prices, economic pressure, insecurity, and the loss of human lives.

The central concern is that wars are rarely contained within the battlefield. Their consequences spread through international markets, diplomatic relations, and household budgets across the world. The uncertainty surrounding the conflict has created an atmosphere in which escalation and negotiation appear to alternate repeatedly, leaving governments, businesses, and citizens struggling to predict what comes next. The conflict has increasingly taken on the character of a prolonged crisis rather than a limited military operation. What was initially expected by some observers to be a short confrontation has developed into a situation marked by repeated strikes, threats, diplomatic reversals, and shifting positions. Public narratives surrounding the war often change rapidly: one moment there are claims of progress toward peace, and the next there are warnings of further escalation. Such uncertainty creates a dangerous environment where temporary agreements can appear fragile and military actions can quickly reshape the political landscape. For people

watching from outside the region, the conflict may seem like a cycle of repeated developments, with each new announcement replacing the previous one before its consequences are fully understood.

At the centre of this crisis is the difficult question of how conflicts end once they have expanded beyond their original objectives. Military campaigns often begin with specific goals, but the realities of war frequently create new challenges that make withdrawal complicated. Political leaders may find themselves trapped between the desire to avoid appearing weak and the recognition that continued conflict carries enormous human and financial costs. This dilemma creates what is often described as a “sunk-cost” problem, where governments continue investing resources because ending the conflict appears politically difficult after so much has already been spent.

For the United States, prolonged military involvement carries significant economic and political consequences. Defence spending can increase rapidly during periods of conflict, placing pressure on national budgets and forcing difficult choices about domestic priorities. Resources directed towards military operations are resources that cannot be used elsewhere, including areas such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social programmes. The debate over military expenditure is therefore not only about foreign policy but also about the balance between national security and domestic welfare. Citizens often question whether the costs of military action are justified, particularly when conflicts appear disconnected from their immediate concerns.

The human cost of war remains the most serious consequence. Military personnel placed in dangerous situations face the risk of injury and death, while civilians often suffer the greatest impact. Airstrikes, economic disruptions, damage to infrastructure, and the breakdown of essential services can transform daily life for millions of people. Children, families, and vulnerable communities frequently bear the consequences of decisions made by political and military leaders. Beyond immediate casualties, wars can create long-term effects, including displacement, economic decline, psychological trauma, and instability that continues for generations.

The conflict’s impact also extends beyond the countries directly involved. The global economy is deeply interconnected, and disruptions in major energy-producing regions can affect consumers worldwide. The Middle East remains one of the most important regions for global energy supplies, and any threat to key shipping routes or production facilities can create uncertainty in international markets. Even countries far from the conflict zone may experience the effects through higher transportation costs, increased energy prices, and inflationary pressure.

Energy markets are particularly sensitive to geopolitical instability. When fears about supply disruptions increase, oil prices often rise as markets respond to uncertainty. Higher oil prices can influence the cost of electricity, transportation, manufacturing, and food production. For households already struggling with rising living expenses, increased fuel and energy costs can create additional financial pressure.

Governments may also face challenges as they attempt to protect consumers through subsidies or price controls while managing their own budget constraints.

The economic consequences of conflict demonstrate how interconnected the modern world has become. A military confrontation in one region can affect businesses, workers, and consumers across continents. Developing countries are often especially vulnerable because they have fewer resources to absorb sudden increases in energy costs. Higher fuel prices can increase transportation expenses, raise food prices, and place additional pressure on public finances. For poorer economies, even a temporary shock can create long-term difficulties.

The crisis also highlights the importance of responsible political leadership during periods of instability. In an increasingly connected world, decisions taken by major powers influence not only their own citizens but also the international community. Military strength and economic influence provide countries with significant power, but they also create greater responsibility. Leaders must consider not only immediate political advantages but also the long-term consequences of their actions.

Critics of aggressive foreign policy approaches argue that military interventions often create problems that are more difficult to solve than the original disputes. The use of force may achieve short-term objectives but can also deepen hostility, strengthen opposition movements, and create new security challenges. Diplomacy, negotiation, and international cooperation are therefore essen-

tial tools for preventing conflicts from becoming permanent crises. While diplomacy can be slow and complicated, it often provides a path toward stability that military action alone cannot achieve.

The role of international institutions is also crucial in managing conflicts and reducing global uncertainty. Organisations designed to promote dialogue and cooperation can help create channels for negotiation and prevent misunderstandings from escalating into larger confrontations. However, these institutions depend on the willingness of powerful countries to respect international rules and participate constructively.

Another concern is that prolonged conflicts can gradually become normalised. When wars continue for months or years, public attention may decline even as the consequences become more severe. What begins as a major international crisis can eventually become background news, despite continuing human suffering and economic disruption. This normalisation of conflict is dangerous because it reduces pressure on leaders to seek meaningful solutions.

The global community must remain aware that wars are not isolated events. They affect food prices, energy markets, migration patterns, diplomatic relationships, and the future security environment. The consequences of conflict often extend far beyond the battlefield, shaping the lives of people who have no direct connection to the original dispute. This reality makes preventing unnecessary escalation one of the most important responsibilities of governments.

AU SFB shares at Rs 800 or Rs 1,275 Targets by JPMorgan

Mumbai: AU Small Finance Bank Ltd shares rallied nearly 5 per cent in Monday’s trade after the lender reported another strong June quarter, driven by healthy business momentum across advances and deposits. The quarter was marked by robust balance sheet growth, sustained margins, improving profitability and continued normalisation in asset quality. Following the results, the stock rose 4.90 per cent to hit an intraday high of Rs 1,051.45 on BSE. Among brokerages, MOFSL has the highest target price of Rs 1,275 on the stock, while BNP Paribas has the lowest at Rs 800, revised targets available for 25 brokerages suggest. Centrum Broking said AU SFB’s profit grew 37 per cent YoY for the quarter to Rs 796 crore, supported by 23 per cent loan growth and 24 per cent deposit growth. Net interest margin (NIM), it said, remained robust at 5.9 per cent despite a moderating rate environment. “The quarter also reflected continued investments in technology, manpower and distribution, which kept operating expenses elevated but position the bank for sustained operating leverage over the medium term. CoF has effectively bottomed and could edge up, with asset mix remaining the key swing factor on margins going forward,” the brokerage said as it suggested ‘Buy’ and a target of Rs 1,004 on the stock. Analysts noted that the one-time Rs 23 crore provisioning charge by AU SFB in Q1 reflected a harmonization of provisioning norms across unsecured products rather than a shift in credit cost trajectory. The management, they said, expects incremental improvement in OpEx and credit cost lines through FY27,

which may help close the gap to its 1.8 per cent return on asset (RoA) target. This is even as the bank refrained from providing NIM guidance. AU SFB remained confident of delivering growth at 2-2.5 times India’s nominal GDP, led by secured retail businesses including mortgages, commercial banking and gold loan, analysts said.

Ashika Stock Broking continued advances and deposits growth at 23 per cent and 22 per cent respectively, over FY26-FY28, resulting in RoA of 1.8 per cent and return on equity (RoE) of 18.1 per cent by FY28E. It sees AUSFB as a compelling structural growth story, supported by its diversified lending franchise, strong liability mobilisation and tech-led execution. “The impending transition to a Universal Bank remains a key catalyst, with the potential to lower the cost of funds (CoF), broaden liability acquisition and enhance fee income. We continue to value AUBANK at 3.25x June’28E ABV (in line with its 5-yr average P/ABV), implying a target price (TP) of Rs1,195. We maintain BUY,” the brokerage said. With TD repricing benefits largely behind it, the incremental NIM trajectory will hinge on loan and liability mix, said Equirus Securities. “With repo rate hikes likely to be deferred, AUBANK remains well placed to sustain current NIMs. Despite our concerns over potential asset-quality stress in vehicle finance amid fuel price hikes and supply constraints, slippages remained contained. We broadly retain earnings estimates, maintain ADD, and reiterate our Mar’27 target of Rs 1,145, based on an unchanged 3.2x Mar’28 ABV,” said Equirus Securities.

FM directs Income Tax department to work for benefit of common people

Mumbai: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday urged the Income Tax department to work for the benefit of common people without making them run from pillar to post.

She also went public with her disappointment at the “laidback” nature of government departments, which leads to illegal occupation or encroachments on government lands and underlined the need for integrity in conduct from all officials.

Citing the challenges faced by the department in getting permissions to construct a building in the Nariman Point business district, which she inaugurated on Sunday, Sitharaman said these experiences, despite serving in the Indian Revenue Service (IRS), would have given them an idea of what the common man goes through. An IRS officer has the name of the Income Tax department behind him, a “powerful force to frighten people”, Sitharaman reminded, adding that despite this, the officials had to run from pillar to post to get clearances from authorities to proceed with work on the 13-floor building.

“Can this (experience) incentivise you to understand the position of a common citizen when he approaches you? Don’t make them run from pillar to post where your authority is



required; do the work for them,” the FM said. The minister was quick to say that she is not asking the officials to break the rules or do something out of the way for the common citizens but rued that it takes a lot of effort in this country for people to get their rightful claims. The land parcel on which Aaykar Sindhu, the 1.13 lakh sq ft building, is built, had been with the I-T department since 1973, Sitharaman said, adding that despite this, illegal occupations had sprouted up on the land.

“The fact that you led it to have occupations, illegal occupation, shows somewhere in our governance, we are too laid back. It is somebody’s job to take care of our assets, and when it is encroached, we say, oh,

we have the land, but we can’t build it,” she said. Sitharaman also promised to look into the issue of many of the I-T officials not staying in official accommodations in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai areas, hinting that half of them do not enjoy such a facility and also travel for long to get to workplaces. Stating that she would prefer government-to-government transfer of lands for the purpose, Sitharaman assured that she will facilitate the quick transfer of lands and other aspects like getting the permissions, building, dealing with CPWD (Central Public Works Department), assigning contracts and tenders will be the job I-T officials will have to perform. “Get it all done at the earliest so that we do not get into the second

half of the 21st century with scattered office spaces, rental accommodation in a city, which is fast growing and expect to pay rents or lease rental at phenomenal rates,” she said.

She particularly mentioned state-run BSNL, asking officials to get the telco’s land and promised to speak with her counterpart minister.

Meanwhile, she also used the opportunity to underline the importance of integrity in the discharge of a critical work like tax collection for the country. I will advocate to each one of you,” she said. tral Public Works Department), assigning contracts and tenders will be the job I-T officials will have to perform. “Get it all done at the earliest so that we do not get into the second half of the 21st century with scattered office spaces, rental accommodation in a city, which is fast growing and expect to pay rents or lease rental at phenomenal rates,” she said. She particularly mentioned state-run BSNL, asking officials to get the telco’s land and promised to speak with her counterpart minister. Meanwhile, she also used the opportunity to underline the importance of integrity in the discharge of a critical work like tax collection for the country. “Integrity is the one and only principle I will advocate to each one of you,” she said.

PNB’s profit is projected to exceed Rs 20,000 crore in FY27, according Managing Director

Mumbai: Enthused by the consistent financial performance of the last four quarters, Punjab National Bank MD and CEO Ashok Chandra exuded confidence that the bank’s profit would surpass the Rs 20,000 crore mark this financial year. The public sector lender had earned a net profit of Rs 16,904 crore in the previous financial year.

From the second quarter of last financial year, the bank has been maintaining net profit of over Rs 5,000 crore every quarter, Chandra told PTI in an interview.

We have maintained the same trend in the first quarter (ongoing financial year). And I am hopeful and confident that with the profitable growth, which is happening in the system...we will be surpassing the Rs 5,000 crore number and every quarter will be reaching a new height,” he said. Asked if the bank can cross the Rs 20,000 crore mark during FY27 at this run rate, he said, “If I am telling that every quarter Rs 5,000 crore of net profit will happen, I think that goes to that figure which you are talking about”. To achieve the target, he said, the bank is focusing heavily on conducting mega outreach activities every quarter on a very large scale.

Besides, he said, retail, agri, MSME, and self-help groups are going to be the focus areas for asset creation. Overall, loan growth will be 12-13 per cent while deposits would be growing at 9-10 per cent during the ongoing financial year, he added. Chandra also said the bank would enter into acquisition finance in the third quarter of the current financial year as the RBI recently opened the window for lenders. Earlier this year, the Reserve Bank came out with final guidelines on acquisition finance by banks, increasing the lending limit to up to 75 per cent of the deal value from the 70 per cent proposed in the draft rules. “The acquisition finance market is a very, very big market and ample opportunities are there in the system. We have got our policy approved for the acquisition financing in the last board meeting,” he said.

“We are looking for a good partner and then maybe from Q3 onwards, we will



be initiating some work in the acquisition financing.”

To begin with, he said, the bank would be starting acquisition finance with the domestic entities, and this will help the bank to diversify its asset portfolio.

While permitting the activity from July 1, the RBI listed out a set of conditions to be met while banks do such financing activities, including a corporate guarantee from the acquiring company and ensuring that the debt-to-equity ratio does not exceed 3:1 post-acquisition on a continuous basis.

The equity shares or compulsorily convertible debentures acquired by the acquiring company shall be free from any encumbrance; a borrower needs to have a net worth of at least Rs 500 crore and a net profit for three years, and the unlisted entities should additionally enjoy investment-grade ratings, the RBI had said.

Brokerages retain ‘Buy’ despite Q1 revenue dip QoQ; check target prices Sagility shares surge 8%

Mumbai: Shares of Sagility India Ltd surged 8.26 per cent in Monday’s trade to hit a high of Rs 43.80. Select domestic brokerages retained their ‘Buy’ ratings on the healthcare-focused BPM firm despite a sequential decline in June quarter revenue. Elara Capital said, “In Q1, Sagility’s reported revenue was down 6.4 per cent QoQ (up 15 per cent YoY) but adjusted to seasonal revenue bump-up in Q4 FY26, it was up 5 per cent QoQ. SAGILITY maintains that it expects similar seasonality to play out this year – i.e., H2 revenues will be higher than H1.” It noted that the top-10 health insurers in the US continue to face cost pressures and are increasingly looking at outsourcing opportunities. Sagility currently works with seven of the top 10 insurers and is pursuing business from the remaining players.

The brokerage also highlighted improving client diversification. The top three, top five and top 10 clients contributed 60 per cent, 70 per cent and 84 per cent of Q1 FY27 revenue, respectively, compared with 72 per cent, 81 per cent and 91 per cent in FY23.

Elara further said Sagility’s acquisition of CareSeed, a tuck-in acquisition with annual revenue of around \$5 million, would strengthen its ca-



pabilities in Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) reporting. It also noted that the company maintained its FY27 adjusted EBITDA margin guidance of 24-25 per cent. The brokerage retained its ‘Buy’ rating and raised its target price to Rs 58.

Meanwhile, Mirae Asset Sharekhan said the QoQ revenue decline was due to the absence of the open enrollment (OE) period.

“Removing the sequential bump

due to OE, revenue grew 5.1 per cent QoQ,” it said. Elara Capital said, “In Q1, Sagility’s reported revenue was down 6.4 per cent QoQ (up 15 per cent YoY) but adjusted to seasonal revenue bump-up in Q4 FY26, it was up 5 per cent QoQ. SAGILITY maintains that it expects similar seasonality to play out this year – i.e., H2 revenues will be higher than H1.”

“We maintain a positive view on Sagility despite modestly lowering our EPS estimates to factor in the 120

bps margin impact from recent minimum wage hikes. With management reiterating its FY27 growth and margin guidance, strong deal momentum, and exposure to the largely non-discretionary healthcare operations market, we continue to remain constructive on the stock’s medium-term growth outlook,” Sharekhan also said. The brokerage reduced its FY28 earnings estimate but maintained its ‘Buy’ rating with a revised target price of Rs 52.

FSSAI suspends licence of Westend Agro Products

Mumbai: Food regulator FSSAI on Sunday said it has suspended the licence of Westend Agro Products Pvt Ltd, for serious violation of laws including alteration of manufacturing and expiry dates on many products.

In a social media post, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) informed that it has suspended the licence of Westend Agro Products “ following serious violations observed during inspection at the food business premises”.

The regulator received a complaint regarding the alteration of manufacturing dates, packing dates, fraudulent re-labelling and sale of misbranded food products at the premises.

During the inspection, it was found that Westend Agro Products, and Westend Corporation were operating from the same premises.

“Several food products were found with altered manufacturing dates, expiry dates, batch numbers and misleading label declarations,” FSSAI said.

That apart, the regulator found printing machinery, stamps, solvents and other materials which were allegedly used for altering mandatory food label information.

FSSAI recovered packaging materials, labels and printed wrappers bearing misleading declarations, including “organic” claims.

“Deliberate forgery and alteration of mandatory labelling information and sale of food with false or misleading labels pose a direct threat to consumer and public health. The food products are, therefore, prima facie

considered unsafe,” FSSAI observed.

As a result, the State FSSAI Licence of Westend Agro Products Pvt Ltd has been suspended with immediate effect, the regulator said. On Saturday, FSSAI imposed penalty against Sopan Restaurant for sale of sub-standard food in a pantry car of Chandigarh and Dibrugarh Express. An “adjudication order” has been passed against Sopan Restaurant for sale of sub-standard food. The order was passed following “analysis of Nova Flavoured Double Toned Milk sample collected from Pantry Car No. 15904 (Chandigarh – Dibrugarh Express) operated by Sopan Restaurant”, it added.

Earlier this week, FSSAI suspended the licence of Punjab-based Rehaan Healthcare after it found serious violation of rules in the company’s health supplements and nutraceuticals manufacturing unit. Rehaan Healthcare, which manufactures digestive syrup, multi-vitamin syrup and other syrup-based food products, has been asked to stop producing till it corrects all deficiencies and the rectification gets verified by competent Authority. In the last few months, FSSAI has cracked down on many energy drink and alcoholic beverage companies for misleading claims and labellings. It has also issued notices to many e-commerce platforms. These actions are based on consumer complaints, suo-motto cognizance and also regular enforcement activities of food safety officers. Interestingly, FSSAI is posting these enforcement actions against the food business operators and e-commerce companies on social media platforms, including Instagram.

Maruti Suzuki eyes 30% jump in CNG vehicles

Mumbai: Car maker leader Maruti Suzuki-India is aiming to sell around 9 lakh CNG vehicles, a nearly 30 per cent increase in the ongoing fiscal, with demand for such automobiles rising in the wake of the West Asia war, according to a senior company official.

The demand for CNG vehicles is no longer restricted to small cars and vans, but it has also seen a rise even in the company’s SUVs, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) Senior Executive Officer, Marketing & Sales, Partho Banerjee told PTI.

“In the first quarter of this fiscal, we have sold 2.2 lakh units of CNG vehicles across models, which is a growth of 58 per cent over the same quarter last year,” he said when asked about the traction of CNG vehicles currently in the market.

Asked what the target for CNG vehicle sales this fiscal is, he said, considering how CNG vehicle sales have grown in the first quarter, for the full year we are targeting around 9 lakh units.

Maruti Suzuki India currently sells 15 CNG models, including light commercial vehicles, in the domestic market. In fiscal 2025-26, it sold more than 7 lakh units of CNG vehicles.

The demand for CNG vehicles is no longer restricted to small cars, vans, and the utility vehicle Ertiga. There is also a strong demand for CNG in SUVs as well, he noted.

“In case of our SUV Victorisv more than 50



per cent of sales are coming from the variant with ‘underbody CNG’ (tank),”

Banerjee said, adding that considering that trend, the company has also introduced the same ‘underbody CNG’ in the newly launched fresh version of compact SUV Brezza.

The company has equipped the new ‘Brezza S-CNG’ with the idle start-stop technology along with the new 6-speed manual transmission to deliver better fuel efficiency of 26.9 km/kg.

Last month, the company had a 42 per cent contribution from CNG vehicles to its total sales. operators and e-commerce companies on social media platforms, including Instagram.

Space datacenters proposed by Musk and Bezos ‘catastrophic’ for planet, experts warn

America: Space datacenters proposed by SpaceX, Jeff Bezos’s Blue Origin and others would release staggering levels of pollution that would probably alter the Earth’s atmosphere and be “catastrophic” for the planet, space industry experts and environmental groups warn in a new petition demanding a review of their impacts.

Tech companies have collectively proposed millions of “orbital datacenters” and are pressing forward with plans, which require Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approval. Among other issues, pollution from satellites and rockets burning up upon re-entry appears to be accumulating in the stratosphere at alarming levels. The spacecraft release black soot, rare metals, aluminum oxides and other pollutants with unknown effects.

Some scientists fear the pollution could destroy the ozone layer, potentially expose some people to higher levels of ultraviolet radiation, or help further destabilize the planet during the climate crisis. The pollution could also end up back on Earth, and millions of satellites would create a major source of light pollution.

The petition submitted to the FCC calls for a pause on new licenses for space data center projects, arguing that the plans “violate federal law”.

The datacenter companies “describe their plans in grandiose,

civilization-changing terms”, the petition states. “But these same proponents have refused to embrace any inquiry into the impacts of their self-claimed epochal technology on the environment, science, economy, or other values.”The petition was filed by the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (Peer) non-profit, the Earthjustice legal non-profit, and the DarkSky International non-profit, which works to protect the sky from light pollution.

Several former federal US space officials told the Guardian they doubt the orbital datacenters are feasible. But putting millions of additional satellites into orbit would create a significant environmental risk, said Steve Volz, the former head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) satellite office. “There is a lot of complex material in these things, and even if they do burn up, you do not want to be filling up the atmosphere with refuse from these any more than you would want it coming from a smoke stack,” Volz said. Volz was with the agency until he was put on leave and eventually fired under the Trump administration.

Facing fierce public opposition from across the political spectrum to its datacenters on Earth, big tech last year began floating the idea of launching satellite datacenters into space. Some have



begun seeking permits.

The number of active satellites in orbit has grown exponentially from about 1,400 in 2015 to about 15,000 currently. As many as 100,000 are expected to be in orbit within the decade, not including the datacenter networks. As of now, the bulk of the satellites’ pollution is thought to come from Starlink and Amazon’s “mega constellations” that provide broadband internet made up of about 10,000 satellites.Spacecraft can cause problems on their way up and down. Launches emit a range of emissions like black carbon, nitrogen oxides, carbon

monoxide, aluminum oxide, chlorine gases and, once in orbit, mercury. When satellites are decommissioned five to 15 years later, they release metals as they vaporize. That’s injecting pollutants into previously pristine parts of the stratosphere, a highly sensitive system, and there’s very little understanding of the consequences.

Scientists only began to discover some of the impact in late 2023, when a Noaa-sponsored stratospheric measurement flight found metals in sulfuric acid aerosols that make up much of the stratosphere. These aerosols

are thought to play an outsize role in regulating the Earth’s temperature, and may partly function as a planetary “sunscreen” by creating high-level clouds that reflect solar radiation, and they simultaneously keep greenhouse gases and pollution from entering the ozone layer from below.

But how the spacecraft metals, naturally occurring metals and sulfuric acid aerosols interact is “largely unknown”, scientists behind the study said. Further research has not been conducted under Trump.Meanwhile, advocates say plants and animals rely

on the darkness, and light pollution is contributing to firefly and other insect die-offs.

“These projects could permanently alter the night sky as we know it,” said Ruskin Hartley, executive director of DarkSky International. “The FCC needs to take seriously its obligation to ensure these projects do not cause unnecessary harm to naturally dark skies.”

Cole Donovan, a former Noaa space policy expert now with the Stand Up for Science non-profit, noted that the space datacenters would demand a huge amount of rare metals and other resources that are already in short supply, creating another environmental challenge on the ground.

The proliferation of satellites raises a raft of new legal and environmental questions. The petition claims Congress requires the FCC to determine “whether the public interest, convenience, and necessity will be served by the granting” of an application to operate a satellite.

The groups say the National Environmental Policy Act (Nepa), which requires federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of their proposed projects, covers the satellites. Nepa would provide mechanisms to “assess impacts, propose alternatives, examine mitigation, and disclose risks that would help inform whether such proposals are in the public interest,” the

petition states.

Among those requesting permits is the Cowboy Space Corporation, which was founded by the billionaire co-CEO of Rob-inhood, who aspires “to build an American power grid in space”. It wants to establish a 20,000-satellite system, with its first launch in 2028. The petition states that Cowboy Space’s only reference to environmental mitigation in its FCC application is a promise that the constellation “will be designed and operated to minimize potential impact on the astronomy community”.The petition notes that SpaceX claims in its FCC application that its orbital datacenters will “ensur[e] humanity’s multi-planetary future amongst the stars”, but its only reference to environmental risk is a claim that it would “develop industry-leading brightness mitigations”, though it offers no other detail.

Ultimately, the tech companies’ FCC applications provide no meaningful consideration of environmental consequences, the petition states.

“No proponent has provided satisfactory detail to explain how it will mitigate the cumulative environmental harms flowing from the foreseeable operation of more than a million satellites, orbiting our planet, colliding and disintegrating and plummeting back to Earth,” the petition states.

Andy Burnham vows to use his ‘political capital’ to fix social care system

UK: Andy Burnham has pledged to use “whatever political capital I have” to finally fix the crumbling social care system in England, saying that without rapid action the NHS could effectively collapse.

In his first full interview since becoming prime minister last week, Burnham said he could not put a timetable on the arrival of a new system for social care but that its creation would take time.

Burnham has repeatedly said he hopes to properly tackle a political issue that has been repeatedly neglected by governments, highlighting personal experience with his father, who has Alzheimer’s disease and requires care.

Asked whether he would create an entirely new system for social care before the next election, the prime minister told the BBC he would go as quickly as he could on its “reform”. He added that a completely new system would take time.

“I think there are major changes you can make before the next election. This costs the NHS billions of pounds, and we will never get the NHS back to good waiting time standards until we fix social care,” he said. Asked whether he had the necessary political will to make this happen, Burnham said he had promised previously to tackle the issue



and “I won’t change coming into this job”.

He said: “I’m not going to take different positions than the ones I’ve long put to you in interviews. Whatever political capital I have, I will put into fixing broken social care, and I would not want to leave office without having brought in the substantial change, the new system of social care that you described.

“I can’t put a timeline on it right here, right now. If we don’t do it, the NHS will collapse under the weight of trying to care for people who’ve not really needed to end up in the NHS system.”

Burnham also said the UK had to “get really serious as a country” about reducing the amount spent on social security and other benefits. However, he added that he did not want to demonise people who claimed social security.

Asked whether there were people claiming benefits who, in his view, did not need them, he replied: “Well, I wouldn’t necessarily go straight to blaming those people. What I would say is that there are people in the benefits system, young people in their 20s, who have been, I would say, quite seriously let down

because the support wasn’t there for them when it should have been there.“So I don’t blame them. I don’t think the support has been there for them in the way that it should have been.”

Burnham has also promised to overhaul the wider benefits system, a process begun under Keir Starmer, which has included a review into payments for people with a disability or illness, as well as a study of how to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment, or training.

Asked how he hoped to balance any changes, Burnham said: “It’s about changing the nature of the support and making some of the support conditional upon people taking opportunities that are presented in front of them.

“So you might increase the conditions required to receive benefits. I think it’s a good thing that the government has given guarantees of opportunities for young people.

“And I think we need to continue down that approach, and where mental health support is needed, for instance, it’s provided in work to support people in an opportunity. Let me just say something more, though, about what you’re driving at, which is the welfare bill. I think we’ve got to get really serious as a country at getting welfare down.”

RAF Chinook crash victims’ families ask Andy Burnham for review of disaster

England: The families of those killed in an RAF Chinook crash in 1994 have urged Andy Burnham to end Britain’s “cover-up culture” and order an independent review into the disaster.

Twenty-nine serving military personnel died when the Chinook HC2 helicopter crashed on the Mull of Kintyre in south-west Scotland during a flight from Northern Ireland.

The two pilots were initially blamed for the crash but exonerated after an inquiry in 2011, which did not determine its cause.

Liam Fox, the former Conservative defence secretary who ordered that official review, said last month there were now “deep concerns” that “vital information” could have been withheld.

Fox, who is backing the calls for a fresh independent review, said there was now a “strong enough belief” that a deliberate cover-up had taken place. There were concerns, he said, that details provided by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) on the airworthiness of the Chinook that crashed were “not correct”.A high court judge ruled this month that the families of several victims of the crash could not bring a legal claim against the MoD over the incident because it had been



brought too late.

The Chinook Justice Campaign (CJC), which is made up of more than 55 family members of 25 of the victims, said it would take the case to the European court of human rights.

However, Matt Tobias, whose father, Lt Col John Tobias, was killed in the crash, said the families “do not want years of further litigation” and urged the prime minister to help by ordering a fresh independent review.

He said: “We would urge Mr Burnham to meet us within his first 100 days in office so we can present the evidence that has emerged over recent years and explain why we believe a fresh review, independent of the Ministry of Defence, is now essential.“Mr Burn-

ham’s speech in the House of Commons, in which he spoke about ending Britain’s cover-up culture and strengthening the duty of candour, gave our families real hope.”

In a letter delivered to Burnham, the Chinook families said it could be a “test case” for the new Hill-sborough law, which was unanimously backed by MPs this month and creates a legally enforceable duty of candour compelling public officials and authorities to act transparently during investigations.

Tobias said: “We ask that he and his ministers give the Chinook families more respect than we received from his predecessor, who denied us a meeting and an inquiry – believing MoD lies instead. After 32 years, we are not asking for spe-

cial treatment. We are simply asking for the truth.”

The CJC group said it wanted Burnham to establish a fresh review, independent of the Ministry of Defence, with full access to all relevant documents relating to the airworthiness of the Chinook helicopter and the circumstances leading up to the crash.

An MoD spokesperson said: “Our thoughts and sympathies remain with the families, friends, and colleagues of all those who died in the Mull of Kintyre crash.

“We understand the recent court judgment will be disappointing for those involved. Defence Ministers have previously met with the CJC and we will continue to engage to hear concerns and discuss this important matter.”

Evacuated villagers in Cairngorms allowed home after wildfire threat lifts

UK: Residents of Nethy Bridge have been told they can return to their homes after a large fire broke out in the Cairngorms national park.

Supt Judy Hill of Police Scotland said: “Thanks to the efforts of fire crews, gamekeepers, contractors, partners and many others over the past 24 hours, there is no longer the immediate threat which prompted the evacuation of properties in Nethy Bridge.

“We are grateful to the community for their support and understanding in what has been a period

of concern and disruption.”

Scotland’s first minister, John Swinney, welcomed the news, saying: “Efforts to tackle the wildfire in the Cairngorms are in their 10th day, and changeable weather conditions have presented a range of challenges for those on the ground. I praise their resilience and tireless efforts to bring it under control.

“With residents in Nethy Bridge now able to return to their homes, Police Scotland have lifted the major incident declaration.

“I want to stress, however, that

the Scottish government, the emergency services and all relevant authorities will continue to treat this wildfire, as has been the case since its onset, with the utmost seriousness and necessary resources until the last flames are out.”

Earlier in the day Swinney had asked for military aid from the UK government as more than 500 firefighters alongside specialist wildfire appliances, all-terrain vehicles, helicopter water-bombing operations and partner agencies tackled the fire that had raged in

the Cairngorms national park for the past 10 days and forced the evacuation of homes in the remote region.Residents of Nethy Bridge were taken to a dedicated respite centre at the Macdonald Aviemore hotel. Access roads were closed amid fears the fire was heading for the village. Just before 11pm on Saturday residents were told they could return home.

Swinney had said earlier in the day that changing wind conditions had “intensified the pace of spread of the wildfire, adding that the Scottish fire and rescue

service (SFRS) was focusing its resources on creating a firebreak. The wildfire, which broke out near the village of Glenmore on 15 July, led to residents and campsites being evacuated. It covered an area of about 6 sq km (2.3 sq miles) of heather and small trees at its height and its smoke drifted as far as Aberdeen, about 60 miles (97km) from where the fire started.

She said: “We could see the smoke rising and when the wind changed direction we could see the flames – it was pretty scary

and felt pretty close although it was still a few kilometres away.

“We could see lots of smoke today when we popped back home, masses coming from a very large area. It is not contained by any means.

“It was absolutely terrifying, nothing like I’ve felt before. The Dava Moor fire last summer was farther away from us.

Montague added: “Where the fire started is the original area of the Caledonian forest, a desperately important ecosystem, which they were trying very hard to pre-

serve and expand.

“The whole land had to be bulldozed for the firebreak, which is desperately sad.”Senior emergency service officials said that firefighters “continue to work across a vast and challenging landscape alongside Forestry and Land Scotland, the Cairngorms national park authority, landowners, estate gamekeepers and emergency service partners. Their expertise, local knowledge and support have been instrumental in helping crews respond to this complex and dynamic incident.”

For the muggy monsoon season, these seven sunscreen gels are a skincare marvel



Understand that the humidity outside may be making your skin feel sticky, but this should not deter you from applying your daily sunscreen. Sunscreen is crucial, irrespective of the weather or your skin type. Even if you have oily skin or when the sky is overcast, the sun’s rays can still reach you, impacting your skin. That is where a gel sunscreen comes to your rescue. Unlike traditional cream-based sunscreens, gel formulations are designed to feel weightless on the skin, making them an excellent choice for people who dislike heavy or greasy products. They spread effortlessly, absorb quickly, and leave little to no sticky residue, ensuring your skin feels fresh and comfortable throughout the day. One of the biggest advantages of sunscreen gels is their versatility. They layer well under makeup without causing pilling or leaving a noticeable white cast, making them a preferred option for everyday wear. Their non-comedogenic and fast-absorbing nature also helps minimise the risk of clogged pores and breakouts, which is especially beneficial for individuals with acne-prone skin. Which is the best gel sunscreen? In case you have been looking to buy gel sunscreens, here are 7 picks:

1. Deconstruct Gel Sunscreen for Oily skin SPF 50 PA++++ |100% Photostable Sunscreen |4 New

- Gen UV Filters: The Deconstruct Gel Sunscreen offers broad-spectrum SPF 55+ PA+++ protection while keeping your skin light and comfortable throughout the day. Powered by Uvinul A Plus, Uvinul T150 and Tinosorb S UV filters, it helps protect against harmful UVA and UVB rays without leaving a white cast. Its lightweight gel texture suits oily and combination skin, making it ideal for everyday use. Amazon customers often appreciate its non-greasy finish, easy blending and comfortable feel, especially in warm and humid weather.
2. Foxtale Ice-Burst Gel Sunscreen SPF 50 PA++++ for Oily Skin, In-Vivo Tested & 100% New-Gen UV Filters: Foxtale Ice-Burst Gel Sunscreen combines high SPF 50 PA++++ protection with a refreshing cooling sensation. Enriched with Niacinamide, Hyaluronic Acid and advanced UV filters, it helps shield the skin from sun damage while offering lightweight hydration. The fast-absorbing gel texture feels fresh without making the skin sticky. According to Amazon customer reviews, users enjoy its cooling effect, quick absorption and invisible finish, making it a favourite for daily wear during hot summer days.
3. UV Doux Silicone Sunscreen Gel SPF 50 PA+++|India’s No.1 Dermatologist Recommended Brand|Invitro,In-Vivo Tested: UV Doux Silicone Sunscreen Gel pro-

vides SPF 50 PA+++ broad-spectrum sun protection with a smooth, velvety finish. Formulated with Silicone Elastomers, Octinoxate, Avobenzone and other photostable UV filters, it spreads evenly without leaving a greasy residue. Suitable for oily and acne-prone skin, it also works well under makeup. Amazon customers frequently praise its matte texture, long-lasting protection and non-sticky formula, with many recommending it for everyday outdoor use.

4. Plum Green Tea & Zinc Super-Matte Gel Sunscreen SPF 50 PA ++++ | 50g | Formulated for Oily, Combination and Acne Prone Skin : Plum Green Tea & Zinc Super-Matte Gel Sunscreen delivers SPF 50 PA+++ protection in a lightweight gel formula. Infused with Green Tea Extract, Zinc Oxide and Kakadu Plum, it helps defend the skin against harmful UV rays while supporting oil control. The non-greasy texture absorbs quickly and leaves a soft matte finish. Amazon reviewers often highlight its shine-free feel, lightweight consistency and suitability for oily skin, making it a reliable everyday sunscreen.
5. Aqualogica Illuminate+ Dewy Gel Sunscreen SPF 50+ PA++++ with 2% Arbutin-Hyaluron Complex™ & Wild Berries - 80 g: Aqualogica Illuminate+ Dewy Gel Sunscreen offers SPF 50+ PA++++ protection with a hydrating, radiant finish. It contains Vitamin C, Papaya Extract, and Hyaluronic Acid, helping protect the skin from UV damage while adding moisture and enhancing the skin’s natural glow. The lightweight gel texture blends effortlessly without leaving a white cast. Amazon customers appreciate its dewy finish, refreshing feel and quick absorption, especially those with normal and dry skin looking for daily sun protection.
6. Garnier Super UV Cooling Watergel Sunscreen SPF 50 PA++++, 60ml: Garnier Super UV Cooling Watergel Sunscreen provides SPF 50+ PA++++ protection in a refreshing water-gel formula. Enriched with Hyaluronic Acid and advanced UV filters, it helps defend the skin from harmful sun exposure while keeping it hydrated and fresh.
- The lightweight texture absorbs quickly without feeling heavy. Based on Amazon customer reviews, users love its cooling sensation, invisible finish and non-sticky feel, making it comfortable for daily use in humid weather.
7. Dot & Key Mango Detan Gel

Sunscreen In-Vivo Tested SPF 50+ PA++++, Oil-Free Formula, With Alpha-Arbutin & Niacinamide: Dot & Key Mango Detan Gel Sunscreen offers SPF 50 PA+++ protection while helping brighten dull-looking skin. Formulated with Mango Extract, Vitamin C, Papaya Enzymes and UV filters, it protects against harmful rays and supports a more radiant complexion. Its lightweight gel formula spreads smoothly and leaves no greasy residue. Amazon customers often appreciate its refreshing texture, pleasant fragrance and easy application, making it a popular choice for everyday sun care.

Benefits of gel sunscreens

Lightweight formula: Sunscreen gels have a water-based or gel-based texture that feels light on the skin. They spread easily and absorb quickly without leaving a heavy layer.

Non-greasy finish: Unlike some cream sunscreens, gel sunscreens do not leave an oily residue. They help keep the skin fresh and shine-free, making them ideal for humid weather.

Suitable for oily and acne-prone skin: Most sunscreen gels are formulated to be non-comedogenic, meaning they are less likely to clog pores. This helps reduce the risk of breakouts while providing sun protection.

Fast absorption: Gel sunscreens sink into the skin quickly, making them convenient for busy mornings. You can apply makeup shortly after without waiting long.

Comfortable in hot and humid weather: Their cooling, refreshing texture makes sunscreen gels an excellent option during summer and monsoon seasons, when heavy products can feel uncomfortable.Helps prevent sun damage:

Like other sunscreens, gel formulations protect the skin from harmful UVA and UVB rays. Regular use helps prevent sunburn, premature ageing, hyperpigmentation, dark spots, and uneven skin tone.

Works well under makeup: The smooth, lightweight texture creates a comfortable base for makeup. Many gel sunscreens do not pill, allowing foundation and other products to glide on evenly.

Minimal white cast: Many modern sunscreen gels, particularly chemical or hybrid formulas, blend seamlessly into the skin without leaving a noticeable white cast.

Which lipstick, matte or glossy, lasts longer during the monsoon season

While the monsoon provides a welcome respite from the intense summer heat, it also presents significant challenges for makeup longevity. High humidity, sudden rain showers, and excessive perspiration can cause even the most resilient makeup to wear off rapidly. Lipstick, in particular, tends to be one of the first products to smudge. A longstanding debate exists regarding the durability of matte versus glossy lipstick, leaving many women curious about which option offers greater longevity. Here is what you should consider about each finish. Although both finishes possess their unique charm, their effectiveness varies considerably in humid conditions. Recognizing their advantages and compatibility with different skin types can assist you in making an informed decision.

Matte lipstick in monsoon

Matte lipstick has become a staple in many makeup bags, especially for people looking for a long-lasting lip colour. It contains less oil and more pigments, making it resistant to smudging and transferring. Why does matte lipstick perform better in the monsoon?

During humid weather, matte formulas remain relatively intact because they do not slide around due to moisture or sweat. Most matte lipsticks also offer transfer-resistant or waterproof formulas, making them ideal for long office hours, travel, or special occasions during the rainy season.

Benefits of matte lipstick

Lasts significantly longer than glossy lipstick.Transfer-resistant and smudge-proof.Survives humidity and sweating better. Highly pigmented with intense colour payoff.

Requires fewer touch-ups throughout the day.

Perfect for formal events and long workdays.

Gives lips a sophisticated and polished appearance.

Available in waterproof formulations. When matte lipstick may not be ideal?



If your lips are naturally dry or flaky, matte lipstick may highlight fine lines and rough patches. Applying a nourishing lip balm and gently exfoliating beforehand can help achieve a smoother finish.Glossy lipstick in monsoon

Glossy lipstick delivers shine, hydration, and fuller-looking lips. Modern glosses are less sticky than older formulations and often include moisturising ingredients like hyaluronic acid, vitamin E, or nourishing oils. Although glossy lips remain a timeless beauty trend, they require more maintenance during humid weather. How glossy lipstick performs in monsoon

Humidity can make glossy formulas move around the lips more easily. Rain, sweat, eating, or drinking may cause the shine to fade quickly. Glosses are also more likely to transfer onto cups, masks, or clothing. However, they remain an excellent option when comfort and hydration are your top priorities.

Benefits of glossy lipstick

Keeps lips hydrated throughout the day.

Makes lips appear fuller and plumper.

Provides a youthful, fresh appearance.

Comfortable for daily wear.Smooths the appearance of fine lines on the lips.Perfect for achieving natural or dewy makeup looks.Easy to reapply.

Available in tinted, shimmer, and clear finishes.

When is glossy lipstick not ideal?

Glossy lipstick may require frequent touch-ups, especially during humid weather. It can also feel sticky in windy conditions, causing hair to stick to the lips.

Matte vs glossy lipstick: Which lasts longer?

Tips to make any lipstick last longer in the monsoon

Exfoliate your lips once or twice a week to remove dead skin.Apply a lightweight lip balm and blot away excess before lipstick.Use a lip liner to prevent feathering.

Apply lipstick in thin layers instead of one thick coat.

Blot with tissue between layers for better longevity.

Set matte lipstick lightly with translucent powder if needed.

Carry your lipstick for quick touch-ups after meals.When it comes to surviving monsoon humidity, matte lipstick is the clear winner. Its transfer-resistant formula, long-wear performance, and sweat resistance make it the ideal choice for rainy days. However, glossy lipstick remains unbeatable for hydration, comfort, and achieving naturally plump-looking lips.

Instead of choosing one over the other, consider your lip condition, skin type, and daily routine. If longevity is your priority, opt for matte formulas. If your lips need extra moisture and you love a luminous finish, glossy lipstick is an excellent choice. With proper lip preparation, both finishes can help you enjoy beautiful, comfortable lips throughout the monsoon season.

These handbags are designed to be both chic and functional, making them ideal for various occasions

A high-quality handbag is among the most essential accessories in any wardrobe. It holds your daily necessities, complements your outfit, and frequently becomes the item you rely on every day. Whether you are commuting to work, going to brunch, travelling, or just running errands, the ideal handbag should achieve an optimal balance between aesthetics and functionality. Ultimately, there is little value in possessing an attractive bag if it cannot adequately accommodate your laptop, wallet, water bottle, and all the other items your day requires.

This season, handbags are becoming more versatile than ever. Oversized totes, structured office bags, soft puffy silhouettes and eco-conscious designs are all having a major moment. Neutral colours continue to dominate because they pair effortlessly with almost every outfit, while thoughtful details like multiple compartments, detachable straps and lightweight materials make modern handbags far more functional than before. Whether your style leans towards classic elegance, quiet luxury, minimalism or casual chic, investing in a quality everyday

handbag instantly elevates your wardrobe. Here are eight stylish handbags that blend fashion with functionality and deserve a spot in your collection.

1. Miraggio Denice Large Tote Bag: If you’re looking for a handbag that can transition seamlessly from the office to after-work plans, the Miraggio Denice Tote is a solid investment. Designed with working professionals in mind, it features a spacious compartment that comfortably fits laptops up to 14 inches, notebooks, chargers and daily essentials without looking bulky.The structured silhouette gives it a premium, polished appearance, while the detachable shoulder strap offers versatility depending on your commute. Carry it by the top handles for meetings or switch to the sling strap when you’re constantly on the move.Why you’ll love it: Stylish enough to elevate your work wardrobe while remaining genuinely practical. Style it with: Oversized shirts, tailored trousers, loafers and minimalist gold jewellery.
2. VAYA Zaelia Office Tote Bag: This tote is built for women who carry their entire workday with them. Beyond the spacious main compartment,

it features dedicated storage, including an insulated section for lunch, making it ideal for long office hours.The structured shape helps the bag maintain its elegant appearance even when fully packed, while the removable shoulder strap provides added convenience. It’s the kind of handbag that effortlessly combines organisation with sophisticated design.

Why you’ll love it: One stylish bag that accommodates your laptop, lunch and everyday essentials.

Style it with: Co-ord sets, formal dresses or monochrome office wear.

3. Puffy Shoulder Tote Bag: Soft, oversized handbags continue to dominate fashion trends, and this puffy tote fits right in. The cushioned silhouette gives it a relaxed, contemporary aesthetic, while multiple compartments help keep everything organised.Unlike structured office bags, this tote feels casual and lightweight, making it perfect for shopping, airport travel, coffee runs or weekend outings. Why you’ll love it: Trendy, lightweight and comfortable enough for everyday use. Style it with: Wide-leg jeans, oversized T-shirts and chunky sneakers.



4. Lavie Mono Freya Monogram Tote Bag: Monogram handbags never really go out of style. This Lavie tote combines classic prints with a structured silhouette that feels polished enough for work while remaining versatile for casual wear.Its roomy interior easily accommodates your daily essentials, and the elegant finish instantly elevates even the simplest outfit.
- Why you’ll love it: A timeless handbag that works across seasons and occasions.Style

it with: Denim, shirt dresses, blazers or smart-casual co-ords.

5. Carrylux Soft PU Tote Bag: Sometimes all you need is a simple everyday tote that works with everything. This soft PU design offers generous storage without becoming overly structured or heavy. The adjustable strap also lets you carry it comfortably over your shoulder during busy days. Whether you’re heading to college, work or running errands, it’s a practical addition to any wardrobe.
- Why you’ll love it: Spacious,

lightweight and easy to style with everyday outfits.Style it with: Straight-fit jeans, cotton shirts and ballet flats.

6. Recycled Non-Woven Felt Tote Bag: Sustainability meets practicality with this recycled felt tote. Despite its lightweight construction, it offers excellent durability, making it suitable for carrying laptops, books, groceries or travel essentials.
- Its minimal design also fits perfectly into capsule wardrobes where functionality is just as important as aesthetics.
- Why you’ll love it: Eco-conscious, sturdy and surprisingly spacious. Style it with: Linen co-ords, cotton kurtas and neutral-toned outfits.
7. Waterproof Heavy Duty Tote Bag: If your daily commute includes unpredictable weather, a waterproof tote becomes incredibly useful. This heavy-duty design protects your belongings from unexpected rain while offering ample room for office essentials, gym clothes or shopping purchases.
- Its durable construction makes it an excellent everyday companion, particularly during the monsoon season.
- Why you’ll love it: Practical,

weather-resistant and built for everyday use.

Style it with: Casual workwear, athleisure or travel outfits.

8. ZOUK Women’s Office Essential Bag | Jute | Vegan Leather Handcrafted Tote Bag With Double Handle Shoulder Strap: While the listed product code appears unavailable, ZOUK’s office totes remain a popular choice for women who prefer handcrafted aesthetics. Their signature combination of traditional Indian prints, jute-inspired textures and vegan leather details creates handbags that feel unique without sacrificing functionality. Why you’ll love it: Perfect for those who appreciate handcrafted design and earthy aesthetics. Style it with: Cotton sarees, linen dresses and Indo-western outfits.



Aly, Jannat lift laughter chefs trophy

Mumbai : The wait is finally over! After weeks of laughter, competition and culinary chaos, Laughter Chefs season 3 has crowned its winners. Aly Goni and Jannat Zubair emerged as the winners of Laughter Chefs 3 during the grand finale, which was aired last night, on July 26. While the duo stole the show to become this season's champions, Tejasswi Prakash-Arjun Bijlani and Elvish Yadav-Karan Kundrra emerged as the runners-up.

After winning Laughter Chefs 3, Jannat Zubair shared an Instagram post celebrating the victory with Aly Goni. Sharing pictures of them lifting the coveted trophy, she penned a heartfelt note expressing her joy. "And bittus are the winners of Laughter Chefs!!! Couldn't have, and wouldn't have wanted to do this with anyone else but my Bitti. This journey gave me my best buddy, and we got to win it together. Thank you for all the loveeeee every-oneeeee!!! Love, BITTUS." Check out her post below! Meanwhile, ETimes quoted Jannat Zubair as saying, "Laughter Chefs is one of those unique shows where there isn't just one winner or one winning team. While Aly and I may have lifted the trophy, I truly believe every single person associated with this show is a winner. We've all celebrated each other, laughed together, grown together, and that sense of togetherness is what makes this journey so special. When I look back, I won't remember just one dish or one challenge. I'll always remember the fun we had on the sets and the support we got from everyone." The third season of Laughter Chefs premiered on November 22, 2025. It was hosted by Bharti Singh and judged by Harpal Singh Sokhi. The reality show concluded with its grand finale on July 26, 2026, bringing an exciting season to a memorable close.

Munawar Faruqui & Mallika Sherawat confirmed for 'the traitors' season 2



Mumbai : Filmmaker Karan Johar is back as a host for the second season of 'Traitors'. On Monday, the makers unveiled the show's promo and announced that it will hit Prime Video on August 13.

The Traitors is an Indian adaptation of the internationally acclaimed thrilling reality format. Collaborating with leading independent distributor All3Media In-

ternational for the local adaptation of IDTV's BAFTA and Emmy Award-winning global format, season two is produced by Dharmatic Entertainment.

Speaking about the new season, Nikhil Madhok, Director and Head of Originals, Prime Video, India, said, "The response to the first season of The Traitors exceeded all expectations--it didn't just enter-

tain; it became a cultural moment." "The Traitors has become one of Prime Video India's most defining reality franchises, transforming the genre with its unique blend of intelligent gameplay, psychological strategy, and riveting entertainment. Audiences across the country were hooked by its emotionally charged mind games and raw, unfiltered drama. With season two, the stakes are higher, the gameplay is sharper, the drama is more intense, and the new line-up of players will keep audiences on the edge of their seats at every turn. We're thrilled to have Karan Johar return as the host and master orchestrator, and we can't wait for audiences to experience another extraordinary season," he added.

Kumar Sanu's scary encounter with underworld don in Dubai



Mumbai : Veteran play-back singer Kumar Sanu has spoken about one of the most unsettling experiences of his career, revealing that he once had to perform at a private party hosted by an underworld don in Dubai. Looking back at the period when organised crime allegedly had a strong influence over the Hindi film industry, the singer admitted that the situation left him fearing for his safety.

Speaking on Subhjit Ghosh's podcast, Sanu recalled that there was little

room to refuse such requests during that time. Opening up about the incident, Kumar Sanu said the atmosphere in the industry was vastly different during those years."Darr toh laga tha. Kyunki us samay kuch chal raha tha — aisa ek system tha," he said, admitting that he genuinely felt frightened.

The host pointed out that the period was marked by several shocking incidents, including the murder of music baron Gulshan Kumar. Responding to this, Sanu said he had wit-

nessed enough to understand the risks involved and chose not to resist when asked to perform at certain events. According to the singer, agreeing to such requests often felt like the only practical option. Sanu shared that over time, some of these influential figures developed a friendly equation with him and even offered to protect him if he ever faced trouble.

However, the singer maintained that he never encouraged such involvement. Recalling his response, he said he would tell them, "Mujhe dekhne ki zaroorat nahi hai, main khud ka dekh lunga," making it clear that he preferred handling his own affairs instead of relying on anyone from the underworld. Apart from reflecting on his past, Kumar Sanu has also been in the news over his legal battle concerning his personality and publicity rights.

Last year, the singer approached the Delhi High Court seeking protection over the

Delhi HC orders removal of 'kala hiran' teaser in relief to Salman Khan

New Delhi : The Delhi High Court on Monday came down heavily on the makers of Kala Hiran: The Battle for Legacy and said it would pass an order directing the teaser's removal from social media within 24 hours. The court was hearing Salman Khan's plea seeking protection of his personality rights after alleging that the film is based on the 1998 blackbuck poaching case and portrays him in a defamatory manner.

Justice Jyoti Singh said that if the producer failed to remove the teaser, platforms including X and YouTube would be directed to take down the content. As per Bar and Bench, during the hearing, the court strongly criticised the conduct of the film's producer, Amit Jani, observing that the teaser and



related content continued to harm Salman Khan's reputation. "What kind of contents are these. You seem to get emboldened by the fact that no order was passed last time. Your client thinks he is above the law. He is getting worse day by day ... Every minute it is on public domain it is harming the reputation of the plaintiff (Khan) here. I was mild with you but your are incorrigible ... You can't do

this even to a common man. It cannot get worse than this even for a common man."

After watching the teaser in court, Justice Singh also observed that portraying events that are still pending before courts could amount to contempt. "Reputation is built with great effort; once it's lost, it's lost. Even if this is played for 24 hours, someone suffers." Salman Khan has sought protection of his per-

sonality rights, alleging that Kala Hiran: The Battle for Legacy is based on the 1998 blackbuck poaching case, proceedings of which are still pending before the Rajasthan High Court and the Supreme Court.

According to the actor, the film falsely portrays him as having links with the underworld. He also alleged that the poster features a character who closely resembles him and wears a bracelet associated with the actor. Salman Khan argued that the film violates his right to a fair trial because the criminal proceedings are still sub judice. The court directed Salman Khan's counsel to prepare a list of all allegedly infringing links so that further takedown orders could be passed.

Salman Khan celebrates Vamshi Paidipally's birthday on SVC63 sets



Mumbai : Director Vamshi Paidipally is celebrating his birthday, and wishes have been pouring in for the filmmaker on social media. The director, who has been busy shooting for his upcoming film, tentatively titled SVC63 with Salman Khan and Nayanthara, celebrated his special day on the film's sets. Salman attended the celebration, and a photo of the director-actor duo is going viral on social media.

Photos from Vamshi Paidipally's birthday celebration on the sets of SVC63 have been shared by the production house Sri Venkateswara Creations on their Instagram handle. The first photo shows Salman Khan warmly hugging the director. Another photo shows the cake-cutting ceremony during the celebration, although Salman is not seen in that picture. Sharing the photos, the makers wrote, "Team #SalmanKhanVamshiPaidipally"

lyFilm wishes our National Award-winning Director @directorvamshi garu a very Happy Birthday. The world isn't ready for the storm he's crafting."

That's not all! Dil Raju also shared a special BTS video from the making of the film, which shows Vamshi's dedication, with the director seen guiding the team and overseeing every detail. The video also offers a glimpse of him sharing warm hugs with the film's stars, Salman Khan and Nayanthara. Check out the video below! Salman Khan

is currently busy with the shoot of his upcoming untitled action entertainer, which also stars Nayanthara. Tentatively titled SVC63, the film marks Salman's first collaboration with director Vamshi Paidipally and producer Dil Raju, adding to the anticipation surrounding the project. While the makers have kept the film's key details tightly guarded, it has already created a strong buzz among fans. The audience is particularly excited to see Salman return in a high-octane action avatar.

Rishab Shetty starrer 'the pride of Bharat' casts Bhumi Pednekar as warrior queen



Mumbai : Bhumi Pednekar has joined the cast of The Pride of Bharat: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The actress is all set to play Belawadi Mallamma, the warrior queen of Karnataka, in the historical drama starring Rishab Shetty, who will portray Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Sharing her excitement about the project, Bhumi said she feels honoured to be part of a film based on the life

and legacy of the legendary Maratha king. She added that playing Belawadi Mallamma is a privilege and she looks forward to bringing the brave warrior queen's story to the screen.

Times Of India quoted the actress saying, "I'm honoured to be part of a film on the life and legacy of the great Maratha warrior-king, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. It's a privilege for me to play Kar-

nataka's brave warrior queen, Belawadi Mallamma, and bring her to life on screen. I am a huge Kantara fan, and Rishab Shetty's stunning performance blew me away. So, the moment Sandeep narrated the film, the actor in me instantly said yes. This is unlike anything I've done before, and I'm grateful to the makers for seeing me in a completely new light."

Directed and produced by

Sandeep Singh, The Pride of Bharat: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj will be released as a two-part historical saga. The film also features Arjun Rampal and Vivek Oberoi in key roles and is expected to begin production later this year. The film's music will be composed by Amit Trivedi. The makers brought him on board after Pritam decided to take a break from mainstream music.

Meanwhile, last year several reports claimed that Vivek Oberoi will play Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in Sandeep Singh's historical drama The Pride of Bharat: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Though an official announcement from the makers is still awaited, the project has already generated significant buzz. The film is said to chronicle the journey of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, his valour, strategic brilliance, and devotion that laid the foundation of Swarajya.

Ohh My Dog delayed: Pankaj Tripathi starrer pushed to August 7



Mumbai : Pankaj Tripathi's upcoming family entertainer Ohh My Dog has been postponed by a week. The film, which was originally scheduled to release on July 31, will now arrive in cinemas on August 7. The makers announced the last-minute change along with the cancellation of the planned press show, adding that a new date for the screening will be announced soon.

The production team also

apologised for the inconvenience caused by the sudden schedule change and expressed hope that members of the media would join them for the rescheduled event. According to industry sources, the makers decided to postpone the release after learning that The Odyssey and Dhamaal 4 would occupy a significant share of cinema screens during the same weekend. The revised release date is expected to provide Ohh

My Dog with better screen availability and greater visibility at the box office. The film stars Pankaj Tripathi and Maahi Rai in pivotal roles and is directed by Amit Rai.

More than just a film about pets, Ohh My Dog explores the emotional bond between humans and dogs and the life lessons that emerge from that relationship. The makers describe it as a story about compassion, empathy, and coexistence, with canine companionship serving as its emotional core. One of the film's biggest highlights is the presence of over 250 real dogs, making it one of the largest ensemble casts of animals seen in an Indian feature film. Director Amit Rai has said the film celebrates the unconditional love, loyalty, and innocence that dogs bring into people's lives while encouraging a more compassionate outlook towards animals.

Bhumi urges Assam aid, CM responds



Mumbai : Assam is going through some troubling times due to the ongoing floods. Today, the death toll rose to 68 after two more people lost their lives. However, more than 5.24 lakh people remain affected across five districts, according to an official bulletin. The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) has said that over 5,24,700 people have been impacted all over Assam.

Amid this, Bollywood actress Bhumi Pednekar has spoken up, urging citizens to support Assam during the floods. She also recalled the cumulative relief efforts in Punjab last year. Bhumi even shared pictures of flood-hit areas of Assam. In her Instagram video, Bhumi Pednekar said, "There have been a lot of bad floods in Assam. The situation is so bad that 7.5 lakh people have been evacuated. More than 40 people have died, and the death toll is increasing. Entire villages have been washed away, and animals have been washed away. Whatever they had, everything is finished. Not many people are talking about it, but I have complete faith."

Kajal Aggarwal's The India Story struggles at box office, mints Rs 41 lakh in two days

Mumbai : Kajal Aggarwal and Shreyas Talpade's The India Story was released in cinemas on July 24, 2026. The film, based on the battle against the pesticide crisis, is struggling to see audience in the theatres. It is performing poorly at the box office as of now.

According to Sacnilk, The India Story earned an estimated Rs 25 lakh net in India on its second day, taking its two-day domestic

total to Rs 41 lakh net. The film's worldwide gross collection has reached Rs 46 lakh after two days in cinemas. While the film registered a slight jump from its opening day, the overall box office performance remains underwhelming. Despite the weekend advantage, the collections have fallen short of expectations, with the film yet to witness the kind of growth usually seen on Saturdays.

The India Story was made on a budget of around Rs 20 crore to Rs 30 crore. The India Story: Slow Poison in Progress is a Hindi-language drama directed by Chetan DK and produced by Sagar B. Shinde. Starring Kajal Aggarwal and Shreyas Talpade in the lead roles, the film also features Murali Sharma, Manish Wadhwa, Trisha Sarda, Atul Tiwari, Kamlesh Sawant and Sham Mashalkar in piv-

otal roles. Principal photography began in Pune, Maharashtra, in January 2025 and wrapped up in October the same year, with several sequences also shot in Kolhapur. Released in theatres on July 24, 2026, the film hit the big screen in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu languages.

The film explores the theme of the use of pesticides in farming and how it affects health.



Exam Reforms Will Come From The Testing Body’s “Build New NTA” LinkedIn Post

New Delhi, July 27: The top testing company in India, which administers competitive admission examinations like JEE and NEET, is hiring. As part of the most extensive institutional strengthening in its history, the National Testing Agency (NTA) is seeking applicants for four senior leadership positions. The decision to “build new NTA” comes after a panel of subject matter experts was established to counsel the government on updating the NTA in order to implement exam changes in response to widespread complaints over paper leaks. “NTA is undertaking the most extensive institutional upgrading in its history in response to the recommendations of the High-Level Committee of Experts (HLCE), which is led by Prof. K Radhakrishnan. In a LinkedIn post, the NTA stated, “We are rebuilding the Agency to serve crores of candidates with the credibility they deserve across academic rigor, technology, security, operations, and governance.” The four openings listed were for the positions of general managers for assessment (R&D and psychometric), test centre network and operations, information security (chief information security officer), and vigilance, investigation and forensics.The NTA described the roles as key to improving how the country selects, nurtures, and deploys its human capital.The agency has also invited young professionals who have taken civil services exams for 12 positions in academic research, two in legal research, and two in finance and accounts research. Those interested have been asked to write to the NTA.The hirings are part of the government’s effort to bring in massive structural reforms in how competitive exams are held across the country, especially for medical and engineering courses. The NTA holds the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), and Common University Entrance Test (CUET), besides other key entrance tests.Prime Minister Narendra Modi had yesterday announced a high-powered task force led by Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani to look into how to improve India’s examination systems. Comprising some of India’s top minds, it has been tasked with ensuring the reliability of upcoming competitive examinations.The revamp follows month-long protests for accountability over paper leaks that ended with the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as the education minister.The Centre also announced several other measures to improve exam systems, including bringing an anti-paper leak law. A fast-track court has also been formed to hear such cases.

Jhandu Kumar, a para powerlifter, arrives in Delhi after winning bronze in CWG 2026



Scotland: When Indian para powerlifter Jhandu Kumar arrived at Delhi Airport after winning a bronze medal in the men’s heavyweight division at the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games (CWG), he was warmly welcomed. In an interview with media, the CWG 2026 bronze winner acknowledged his sadness at not winning the gold medal while also expressing his joy at winning India’s first medal at the Games. “I sincerely appreciate all of your love. It’s a wonderful feeling. I raised our national flag and won India’s first medal. It’s a wonderful feeling, but I’m a little disappointed that I was unable to bring home the gold for the nation. I’ll concentrate on the few areas that require improvement. My coach was positioned a little too far away, and there was a small technological malfunction that led to the problem,” Jhandu Kumar explained.In the men’s

heavyweight powerlifting competition at the SEC Armadillo in Glasgow, Jhandu Kumar won bronze. On his second try, the 28-year-old competitor in Group B achieved his greatest lift of 190 kg, collecting 130.9 points. Para powerlifting medals at the Commonwealth Games are determined through a bodyweight coefficient system, rather than solely on the weight lifted. Competitors from various bodyweight categories participate together in the lightweight and heavyweight divisions, with the final rankings calculated based on an athlete’s bodyweight and highest successful lift.Jhandu began with a successful 181 kg lift before raising his mark to 190 kg on his second attempt. The 28-year-old then attempted 196kg in his final lift, a weight that would have eclipsed the Commonwealth Games record set at Birmingham 2022.However, he was unable to complete the lift and eventually finished third to claim the bronze. =The medal also marked India’s first podium finish in para powerlifting at the 2026 Commonwealth Games.After Day 4, India is at the eighth position in the medal tally with two silvers, one gold and a bronze medal. Australia is leading the chart with 39 medals, including 17 gold, nine silver and 13 bronze medals.

Despite a great performance, Aishwary Pratap Tomar and Niraj Kumar do not place on the podium

Despite a great performance, Aishwary Pratap Tomar and Niraj Kumar do not place on the podium

Hangzhou: The ISSF World Cup (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun) on Sunday left the Indian rifle shooters in joint seventh place on the medals table with only a single silver. Despite having two shooters in the men’s 50m rifle 3-positions final, they once again returned empty-handed. Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, the silver medalist from the World Championship, and Niraj Kumar, the silver medalist from the Asian Championship, both made it to the eight-man final but were unable to turn their impressive qualifying scores into podium results. Aishwary ended sixth with 314.3, while Niraj finished seventh with 303.4.China’s Olympic champion Zhang Changhong produced a sensational performance to clinch the gold medal with a world record score of 363. Hungary’s Istvan Peni took the silver, while Individual Neutral Athlete (AIN) Matvei Potapov secured the bronze.Earlier in qualification, Niraj delivered one of the best performances of the day, shooting an outstanding 595 to finish second, tied with Zhang on the same score but behind on count-back.Aishwary, despite not being at his fluent best, managed 589 to scrape into the final in eighth place.The third Indian in the event, former world champion Rudranksh Patil, shot 587 to finish 18th, missing out on the final by a comfortable margin.With the rifle shooters unable to end India’s medal drought, the hopes of adding to the tally now rest largely on the women’s 25m pistol shooters.

A Bihar police officer was suspended after being caught on camera firing an AK-47 at protesting students

Bihar, July 27: After a video of a Bihar police officer wielding an AK-47 rifle on demonstrating students during the July 25 “Bihar Bandh” protests in Siwan district went viral, the officer was suspended.Large-scale protests by student organizations took place throughout numerous districts throughout the statewide closure, and there have been reports of altercations between demonstrators and police in several sites.

Official reports state that the Bihar Police Headquarters suspended a police constable after taking serious notice of the widely shared video purportedly showing him shooting



an AK-47 during the demonstration. The three injured protestors are being treated at Jayprabha Medanta Hospital in Patna, and their condition is said to be stable. One of the injured

is 15-year-old Md. Arif, who works at a neighborhood business, according to his family. According to his family, he was hit in the neck by a gunshot during the disturbance while

going home after shutting the store during the bandh. His status is now said to be stable after the bullet was successfully removed during surgery. Tejashwi Yadav, the leader of opposition in Bihar, called for action against guilty officials and posted a video of the incident, where a cop can be seen firing at the students. According to police authorities, upholding law and order is the force’s core duty, and any transgression of established protocols is regarded very severely. They also stated that a thorough departmental investigation has been started and that the results would be used to decide on further steps.

Total Vehicle Prohibition During Kanwar Yatra on the Delhi-Haridwar Highway August 4–12

Muzaffarnagar, July 27: Due to the Kanwar Yatra, heavy vehicle traffic on the Delhi-Haridwar National Highway and the Ganga Canal road will be limited starting on July 30. From August 4 to August 12, all vehicles will be prohibited from using these roads, police announced on Monday. The Kanwar Yatra, which takes place from July 30 to August 11, will see millions of pilgrims gather holy water from the Ganga in Haridwar to present at Shiva temples back home.A portion of the Delhi-Haridwar National Highway would be set aside just for Kanwaris during the yatra, according to Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Atul Kumar Chaubey.

Heavy vehicle traffic on the Ganga Canal route and the Delhi-Haridwar Nation-



al Highway will be banned starting on July 30 in order to facilitate the annual pilgrimage. He stated that from August 4 to August 12, all cars will be prohibited. To protect pilgrims, police divers would be stationed at all significant bathing locations along the Ganga Canal route, District Magistrate Umesh Mishra informed reporters.For the

Kanwar Yatra, a makeshift police station has been set up at Rampur Tiraha on the Delhi-Dehradun National Highway.Sub-Inspector Subhash Chand will serve as the SHO of the temporary police station in Rampur Tiraha, and about 20 police officers will be stationed there, according to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sanjai Kumar.

Ajit Agarkar was instructed to open up to Rohit Sharma and choose Vaibhav Sooryavanshi for ODIs



Harare: Before the 2027 World Cup, veteran India cricketer Farokh Engineer believes that teen star Vaibhav Sooryavanshi could be put into the ODI team as an opener with Rohit Sharma. Shubman Gill, the other half of the present opening duo with Rohit, can bat at No. 4, providing the middle order more flesh, according to the former wicketkeeper batsman. Shubman Gill and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi are in the best position. Gill participates in class. I believe that Gill is now the team’s top batsman. Gill should thus arrive around four, the engineer informed PTI. “Gill is not a guy who lifts the ball. So, a left-right combination would be ideal in ODIs. So, if Rohit is playing, and I think he should be playing, let him open with Sooryavanshi.”A batsman like him (Sooryavanshi) is much better at opening because he finds bigger gaps in the field. Virat Kohli can come third. Gill can come fourth and then we’ve got a solid batting line-up,” he said.Soorayavanshi bagged the Player of the Series award in the just-concluded three-match rubber against Zimbabwe, scoring 151 runs with two fifties.Engi-

neer felt that the 15-year-old had done enough to merit a place in the 50-over version.“This is probably the right time to draft Sooryavanshi into India’s ODI side. I don’t know why people distinguish so much between ODI and T20 because for me, a half-volley is a half-volley. He’s been getting runs and he’s got the confidence to open the innings.“He’ll win more matches for you than lose you. When he gives a start like that, the other players can have time to consolidate the innings and put on a big score,” Engineer noted. The 88-year-old stated that because Sooryavanshi is a superior match winner, the Indian team ought to stick with him.According to Suryavanshi’s curve, everything that is a little too short would receive a six. He has learnt to control himself after learning from his failures. Don’t over-coach him, though. He is not from the outdated MCC handbook.“He is a genius. Viv Richards wasn’t either. I’ve never seen a better batsman than Viv. But with Sooryavanshi, keep going. He would be a great contribution to India, he declared.

The CRPF is in charge of investigations against police officers who used pellet guns on demonstrators

Zimbabwe: The alleged use of pellet guns on young protestors amid the widespread unrest over exam paper leaks in the nation’s capital is being investigated by an investigative team from India’s top paramilitary force. According to sources, a CRPF team’s report on the illicit usage of pellet weapons is anticipated within the next week.An official with knowledge of the investigation has identified the Rapid Action Force (RAF) members who used such deadly force on demonstrators.The Central Reserve Police Force’s (CRPF) riot-control wing, the RAF, is equipped with shock batons and pellet guns. The inquiry team will also find out the circumstances under which pellet guns were fired and the locations they were used, sources said, adding that further action will be taken based on that report. A government hospital had earlier confirmed pellet wounds on one victim, with Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi demanding to know if the government had approved the use of pellet guns.The alleged use of excessive force on student protests pertains to the July 20 events, when a march was taken out to Parliament on the first day of Monsoon Session to seek Dharmendra Pradhan’s resignation as education minister.The police used tear gas and lathi-charge



after violence erupted during the march. The students alleged they also used pellet guns, but the police denied it. “Delhi Police neither possess pellet guns nor do they use them in the ongoing protest,” officials said. A 28-year-old demonstrator claimed to have 30 pellet wounds on his body. The little red punctures on his torso have been identified as pellet injuries by the government-run Safdarjung hospital. According to his hospital case record, he experienced “darkened skin around wounds, pellet shards stuck to skin and tenderness on impact sites.”These pellets, which are made of rubber or metal and spread at a speed of 1,000 feet per second, have the potential to inflict tissue damage and are required to be shot below the waist. However, in this case, the pellet injuries were to his elbow and back. “I saw a policeman pointing his pellet gun at me. I ran and the pellets got stuck in my back

and hand. If I had not been aware, it would have hit me in the front,” the victim quickly pointing out he wasn’t sure if he was from the police or RAF. Alongside Sahil Lohchab, another pellet gun victim, Rahul Gandhi shared a video that he said demonstrated the abuses committed against the kids. “The administration has to quit lying. “They have opened fire on India’s future,” he said.Additionally, the Leader of the Opposition wrote to Home Minister Amit Shah on what he called a “barbaric assault” on a nonviolent demonstration and questioned whether he had considered using “lethal force.”When Parliament reconvened this morning, the opposition brought up the matter once more. The Rajya Sabha’s Leader of the Opposition, Mallikarjun Kharge, denounced the abuses of the police. In the midst of pandemonium, the House had to be adjourned.

Tamil Nadu’s Raja secures dream spot at Glasgow CWG

Chennai: Five years ago, Muthupandi Raja fell off the weightlifting platform while trying a snatch lift and injured his right thumb. A part of the national camp then, Raja’s right elbow started hurting due to the injury in days to follow which made him visit Pune and meet the expert, who advised him surgery. The Tamil Nadu weightlifter already had surgery in his left elbow in 2019. He had torn ligament of his left elbow while lifting 123kg in the snatch section during the Commonwealth Championships. The surgery kept him out of action for almost two years and Raja didn’t want to undergo the same trauma once again, especially with the qualifiers for the 2022 Commonwealth Games scheduled to start soon. Desperate to represent India at the CWG, Raja competed at the 2021 national championships only to finish third. He then competed in the selection trials to earn a spot in the national team for the two CWG qualifiers. As fate would have it, his name was struck off the list for the two qualifiers forcing him to miss the Birmingham CWG. Having made his international comeback with the 2025 Commonwealth Championships held in Ahmedabad, Raja caught up with time as he won a silver medal in the 65kg in Glasgow on Sunday. He failed to lift 126kg in his first attempt in the snatch section but completed it in the next to stay in the hunt for a medal. He could not complete the third and final attempt of 129kg but ended in second place behind



Malaysia’s Aznil Bin Bidin Muhamad, whose best was 133kg. Raja then failed to lift 158kg in his first attempt in the clean and jerk section but heaved 160kg in his next attempt to maintain his second position. The Malaysian lifter won the gold with a total lift of 299kg (133+166) setting Games record in both sections and also the overall lift. Morea Baru of Papua New Guinea finished third with 282kg total lift (125+157).
Hailing from Kovilpatti town in Tuticorin, Raja’s parents are daily wage labourers. His father works with the matchbox industry while mother does the confectioner’s shop. His elder brother also pursued weightlifting but left it after a few years and now works as a labourer.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino slams World Cup critics in a detailed 15-page note

New Delhi: FIFA president Gianni Infantino has hit back at critics in the aftermath of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, urging them to “meditate, pray or watch a football match” instead of “spending time hating” the governing body. In a lengthy social media statement, Infantino defended FIFA’s handling of the tournament and insisted the World Cup should be remembered for bringing people together rather than the controversies surrounding it. The FIFA chief, who did not address the media during or after the tournament, said the competition showcased “humanity at its best” and accused sections of the media and critics of overlooking the joy experienced by billions of football fans across the globe. “If you have some extra time, instead of spending it hating, meditate, pray, smile, spend it with your loved ones, or watch a football match.” “To all of you who missed watching kids, babies, grandparents, and parents come together for the beautiful game, I say sorry that the matches are now over and sorry that you missed all that joy and togetherness.” Sorry that you were so consumed by

hate and criticism that you missed it all.” Infantino also defended FIFA’s work during the tournament, saying the organisation remained focused on delivering the biggest sporting spectacle in the world despite constant scrutiny. Infantino described the World Cup as a celebration of football that attracted billions of viewers worldwide and praised the efforts of volunteers, host nations and security personnel. He claimed the tournament passed off safely and argued that isolated refereeing and disciplinary controversies should not overshadow the success of the event. He also rejected criticism surrounding FIFA’s disciplinary decisions, saying similar calls are routinely accepted in domestic leagues across the world. Despite Infantino’s glowing assessment, the tournament was overshadowed by several off-field issues. Fans and officials from countries including Iran, Senegal, Haiti and Ivory Coast faced visa restrictions because of US travel policies, while FIFA also came under investigation over ticket pricing. The governing body was further criticised after United States for-



ward Folarin Balogun’s suspension was overturned before the Round of 16, prompting allegations of political interference after US President Donald Trump revealed he had spoken to Infantino about the case. UEFA, the Belgian football federation and several European lawmakers questioned the decision, while UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin boycotted the World Cup final in protest over FIFA’s handling of several issues. Infantino’s post also omitted references to some of the tournament’s biggest controversies, including the deaths of four fans during World Cup

celebrations in Mexico City and ongoing legal challenges related to Iranian supporters. Even so, the FIFA president maintained that the competition had fulfilled its primary objective of uniting people through football and should be remembered for its global impact rather than the criticism that followed. FIFA President Gianni Infantino responded to criticism of the 2026 World Cup by urging detractors to focus on unity and joy rather than hate. He defended FIFA’s management, highlighting the tournament’s success in bringing billions together and praised volunteers and host nations.

Mirabai Chanu fasted two days before winning Commonwealth Games gold



Glasgow: Mirabai Chanu revealed she had not eaten for two days before clinching India’s first gold medal at the Commonwealth Games 2026, producing another remarkable display to dominate the women’s 48kg weightlifting event in Glasgow on Sunday. The Tokyo Olympic silver medallist overcame missed opening attempts in both the snatch and clean and jerk before rewriting the Commonwealth Games record books with a total lift of 190kg. It was Mirabai’s third successive Commonwealth Games medal and India’s third medal overall at the Games. Still catching her breath after stepping off the podium, where she broke down during the national anthem, Mirabai had an unexpected ad-

mission for reporters. “Jaldi jaldi karo, maine kuch khaaya nahi hai 2 din se (Please do this quickly, I haven’t eaten in two days),” Mirabai said with a smile. The 31-year-old later turned emotional while speaking about the support she received from her family and long-time coach Vijay Sharma. “They have supported me through thick and thin.” “I was under a lot of pressure from family and friends, so happy to win third gold for India.” Mirabai also revealed that she had not intended to push herself too hard in Glasgow, especially with the Asian Games less than two months away. I was not going to put too much effort in these Games but I failed my first attempt. Coach and I had thought that

I would do two lifts each.” Mirabai’s competition began only after the rest of the field had completed their attempts, underlining the gulf in class between her and the other competitors. Despite failing her opening snatch at 82kg, she immediately recovered to clear the same weight before lifting 85kg to set a new Commonwealth record. There was another brief scare in the clean and jerk when she missed her first attempt at 105kg, but she responded in typical champion fashion by completing the lift on her second try. The successful 105kg effort not only sealed the gold medal but also established new Commonwealth Games records in the clean and jerk and overall total with 190kg. Having already secured victory, Mirabai skipped her final attempt to avoid unnecessary strain ahead of the Asian Games. Mirabai finished a staggering 22kg ahead of Nigeria’s Ruth Asuquo Nyong, who claimed silver with a total of 168kg, underlining her dominance in the competition. It also marked another memorable day for Manipuri weightlifting, with compatriot Rishikanta Singh adding a silver medal in the men’s competition. Although he matched the Commonwealth Games snatch record with a superb 121kg lift, two failed clean and jerk attempts left him with an overall total of 264kg and denied him a shot at gold. For Mirabai, however, Glasgow added another golden chapter to an already glittering career, reinforcing her status as one of India’s greatest weightlifters ahead of another major challenge at the Asian Games.

Laxman sees Sooryavanshi’s maturity as India’s main Zimbabwe takeaway



New Delhi: India’s interim head coach VVS Laxman believes Vaibhav Sooryavanshi’s biggest transformation over the past six months has not been his strokeplay, but his maturity. After the 15-year-old capped a remarkable Zimbabwe tour by winning both the Player of the Match and Player of the Series awards, Laxman said the teenager’s game awareness had “skyrocketed”, allowing him to thrive under pressure. Sooryavanshi finished the three-match T20I series with 151 runs at

an average of 50.33, including a match-winning 81 in the final game as India completed a 3-0 clean sweep. The performances marked a stunning turnaround after the youngster endured a difficult debut series against England, where scores of 13, 14 and 15 saw him dropped for the final T20I. Laxman, who is leading India in Gautam Gambhir’s absence, said Sooryavanshi’s rapid growth has been evident both on and off the field. “What is really impressive is the way he’s evolved as a person. The

maturity level, the understanding, and the awareness over the last six months has actually skyrocketed. And that’s why he’s been able to handle tough situations.” The former India batter also pointed to Sooryavanshi’s rise over the past year, from the Under-19 World Cup to dominating the IPL before announcing himself on the international stage. “He played Under-19 World Cup and in a matter of four to five months, he dominated the IPL. We know how tough IPL competition can

be.” “Taking on the best of bowlers from not only India but around the world, the way he evolved, the way he progressed as an international cricketer and he showed what kind of potential and class and talent he has.” Laxman said he was never surprised by Sooryavanshi’s comeback after the disappointing England series, insisting the teenager had already shown he possessed the temperament to excel on the biggest stages. Any IPL match is equivalent to an international match.

Yash Dayal joins Chhattisgarh for domestic cricket amid POCSO case



New Delhi: India pacer Yash Dayal is set to begin a fresh chapter in his domestic career after deciding to leave Uttar Pradesh and represent Chhattisgarh in the 2026-27 season. The move comes months after the left-arm pacer was suspended by the Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association (UPCA) following criminal cases, including one under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. According to ESPNcricinfo, Dayal’s no-ob-

jection certificate (NOC) is currently being processed and he has already joined Chhattisgarh’s pre-season camp in Alur, Karnataka, under new head coach Amay Khurasiya. The switch marks his return to a domestic setup after a prolonged absence from competitive cricket. Dayal has not played a competitive match since the IPL 2025 final. Although Royal Challengers Bengaluru retained him ahead of IPL 2026, the franchise chose not to include

him in the squad because of his ongoing legal situation. RCB director of cricket Mo Bobat had explained the decision before the season began. “It wasn’t in Yash Dayal’s or RCB’s best interests to pick him due to his personal situation.” The move to Chhattisgarh follows Dayal’s exclusion from the Uttar Pradesh setup. While he had initially been retained by the Gorakhpur Lions for the UP T20 League and had begun training with the franchise, his name was missing when the team announced its final squad after the auction. The UPCA declined to comment on his omission, but it is understood that Dayal had anticipated missing out and had already started exploring opportunities outside the state. Under BCCI regulations, a player who obtains a no-objection certificate can represent another state asso-

ciation while still remaining eligible to feature in franchise-based T20 competitions in his home state. Dayal has already linked up with Chhattisgarh’s pre-season camp, where he is training alongside experienced domestic cricketers, including India off-spinner Jayant Yadav and veteran all-rounder Dharmendrasinh Jadeja. Dayal’s cricketing future remains intertwined with the outcome of two ongoing criminal cases. In Ghaziabad, he faces allegations of sexually exploiting a woman under the false promise of marriage. An FIR was registered under Section 69 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), although the Allahabad High Court has granted him interim protection from arrest. His legal team has denied the allegations and claimed he was being targeted through blackmail and extortion.

Commonwealth Games 2026: Full July 27 schedule, fixtures, medal events, and timings for India

Glasgow: India’s campaign at the Commonwealth Games 2026 continues on Monday, July 27, with medal opportunities in weightlifting, athletics, para athletics, artistic gymnastics and swimming, while the boxing contingent returns to the ring for another busy day in Glasgow. After Mirabai Chanu’s historic third consecutive Commonwealth Games gold and Raja Muthupandi’s silver on Sunday, India will look to carry that momentum into another packed day featuring several medal contenders. The biggest medal hopes lie in weightlifting. Gyaneshwari Yadav (women’s 53kg), Bindyarani Devi (women’s 58kg) and Ajaya Babu (men’s 79kg) will all compete in their respective finals as India aim to add to their medal tally.

Athletics also promises an action-packed day. Olympian Murali Sreeshankar begins his long jump campaign in the qualification round, while Gurindervir Singh races in the men’s 100m heats. Tejas Shirshe will compete in the men’s 110m hurdles heats and Lokesh Sathyanathan will feature in the second long jump qualification group. Later in the evening, Tejaswin Shankar, Sarvesh Anil Kushare and



Aadash Ram Jothi Shankar will contest the men’s high jump final, while Sharmila Dhankar and Shilpa Kan-chugarakoppalu Shyla will compete in the women’s F57 shot put final. In para athletics, Rakeshbhai Bhatt and Shreyansh Trivedi will race in the men’s T38 100m final. In the pool, Olympian Sajjan Prakash begins his campaign in the men’s 200m butterfly, Swatik Patil competes in the men’s 100m breaststroke SB9 heats before a possible final later in the night, and Aryan Nehra takes to the pool in the men’s 800m freestyle final. India’s boxing campaign

continues with Sachin (60kg), Ankush (80kg), Sakshi (51kg) and Sumit (70kg) all in Round of 16 action, while Protistha Samanta will compete in the women’s vault final. Putul Sonowal will also return for his final men’s singles sectional match in lawn bowls. India’s 2026 Commonwealth Games campaign on July 27 features medal prospects in weightlifting, athletics, para athletics, gymnastics, swimming, boxing, and lawn bowls. Following Mirabai Chanu’s historic third consecutive gold and Raja Muthupandi’s silver, India aims to maintain momentum.