

Tripura Police Bans On-Duty Social Media Posting to Ensure Uniformity

Agartala, Jun 15: In an era where social media heavily shapes public perception, the boundary between personal expression and professional decorum has become increasingly blurred. Addressing this digital-age challenge, the Tripura Police department has issued a strict directive prohibiting its personnel from creating, uploading, or sharing social media content while in uniform. The memorandum, issued by Namit Pathak, Superintendent of Police for the West district, comes in response to growing observations of personnel posting reels, videos, photographs, and other casual content across various online platforms while clad in their official attire. The departmental leadership expressed deep concern that frivolous, inappropriate, or objectionable online activities could inadvertently compromise discipline and erode the hard-earned public trust in the state's law enforcement agency.

The core philosophy behind this restriction lies in the profound symbolism of the police uniform itself. According to the department, the uniform is not merely work-wear; it is a powerful emblem

of state authority, strict discipline, unwavering integrity, and public confidence. When officers engage in casual or entertaining social media trends while wearing this symbol, it risks diluting the professional values that the force is duty-bound to uphold.



Consequently, the new mandate explicitly bans the use of police uniforms for personal promotion, entertainment, commercial endorsements, or any other digital activity that

could tarnish the institutional image. This comprehensive restriction applies universally across the board, covering all police personnel, including the elite members of the Tripura State Rifles (TSR) and various other specialized units.

To ensure that the directive is effectively implemented rather than remaining a mere piece of paper, the department has placed a heavy onus on its leadership hierarchy. Su-

pervisory officers have been formally assigned the responsibility of monitoring compliance within their ranks and actively educating their subordinates on the significance and proper representation of the police uniform. The memorandum establishes clear ac-

countability, stating that any observed misconduct or violation on social media must be promptly reported through official channels. The department has made it unequivocal-

ly clear that non-compliance will be treated as a serious breach of conduct, potentially triggering strict departmental proceedings and disciplinary actions under the prevailing service rules. Ultimately, this proactive stance by the Tripura Police serves as a vital

course correction, aiming to safeguard institutional dignity and reinforce the foundational principles of professionalism that define public service in the digital age.

Civic Collapse: Barchala Residents Call on New MLA

Tezpur, Jun 15: Residents across several regions of the Barchala Legislative Assembly Constituency (LAC) in Sonitpur district have formally appealed to their newly elected MLA, Ritubaran Sarma, to urgently intervene and address deep-seated civic issues. Despite its immense development potential, the constituency has lagged behind significantly, even after a ten-year tenure under former MLA Ganesh Kumar Limbu. Locals highlight a severe collapse in basic infrastructure, particularly regarding road connectivity, agricultural support, and the perennial threat of river-bank erosion.

Chief among the grievances is the deplorable state of major roadways, such as the Sagoli Ahot Tol-Khelmati Bandarmari road and the Bandarnari-Bindukuri route. These critical lines have transformed into hazardous death traps riddled with knee-deep potholes, causing several fatal accidents due to a total lack of timely maintenance. Furthermore, the arrival of the monsoon season triggers massive anxiety, as severe erosion by the Brahmaputra and its tributaries—specifically the

Gabharu and Belsiri rivers—routinely washes away vast stretches of fertile land in areas like Saraka Baligaon and Bihaguri Jaoni Gaon, leaving local farmers completely devastated. Agriculture remains the primary livelihood here, yet the absence of reliable irrigation facilities has severely crippled Sali cultivation, especially during recent summers marked by scanty rainfall. Compounding these hardships is the failure of the central government's clean water initiative; numerous local Jal

Jeevan Mission projects, built at the cost of crores of rupees, have turned entirely defunct due to substandard construction and poor maintenance. Additionally, residents have raised serious concerns over geopolitical security, alleging that large tracts of government and indigenous land in areas like Garuduba-Teligaon and Thelamara remain under the occupation of suspected illegal settlers. The community now looks to MLA Sarma to shift from administrative apathy to actionable governance.



Narrow-banded Wall: New Butterfly Species Identified in Northeast India

Guwahati, June 15: In a monumental breakthrough for global biodiversity, researchers have discovered a butterfly species previously unknown to science in the remote, high-altitude terrain of Mayodia Pass, located in the Lower Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh. Formally described in the prestigious international journal Zootaxa, the newly identified species has been given the scientific name Chonala albistricta (Kunte & Khan, 2026). It marks the tenth known species in the genus Chonala globally and only the second ever recorded in India. Due to a distinct, unevenly bent white band cutting across its forewing, the butterfly has been designated the common name "Narrow-banded Wall."



Himalayas and neighboring Asian ranges. Because they exist in small, isolated populations, fly for only a brief period each year, and live in treacherous mountain passes, studying them has historically proven to be a massive challenge. Scientists note that these remote habitats act as natural evolutionary islands, allowing isolated populations to diverge over millennia into unique lineages. While Chonala albistricta bears a close resemblance to Chonala masoni (commonly known as the Chumbi Wall), rigorous scientific scrutiny proved it to be entirely unique. The research team identified consistent differences in wing patterns, overall morphology, and intricate male genital structures, cementing its status as a distinct species. The landmark study was spearheaded by Dr. Krushnamegh Kunte, a premier butterfly biologist and faculty member at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) in Bengaluru, who is widely recognized for his work with the "Butterflies of India" citizen science initiative. Dr. Kunte was supported by co-author Fahim Khan,

who led extensive field observations, and Ujwala Pawar, who managed critical specimen curation and anatomical dissections. "Finding and documenting new species is more than an academic exercise — it is a crucial step towards understanding, protecting, and conserving the natural world." This breakthrough underscores the extraordinary, yet heavily underexplored, biological wealth tucked away in the Eastern Himalayas. Researchers firmly believe that numerous undiscovered species still await detection across the rugged, remote landscapes of Northeast India. At a time when global ecosystems face severe threats from climate change and accelerating habitat loss, the formal description of Chonala albistricta serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for conservation. Ultimately, this discovery stands as a major victory for Indian taxonomy, highlighting the vital importance of collaborative institutional research in mapping and safeguarding the country's magnificent natural heritage.

Monsoon Alert: 366 Landslide-Prone Areas Identified in Guwahati

Guwahati, June 15: With the official arrival of the monsoon season, the threat of devastating landslides has escalated significantly across the hilly and rugged terrains of Guwahati. In response to this looming seasonal crisis, the Kamrup Metropolitan District Disaster Management Authority has issued an urgent public safety advisory targeted at residents living in the city's most vulnerable zones. Recognizing the power of digital outreach during a crisis, the authority has taken the proactive step of releasing detailed video advisories across various social media platforms. These videos specifically highlight the most at-risk and landslide-prone neighborhoods, serving as an early warning system designed to help citizens prepare in advance, monitor weather conditions, and take all necessary safety precautions before disaster strikes. Official data compiled by the disaster management department

underscores the sheer scale of the risk, revealing that a staggering total of 366 locations under the Kamrup Metropolitan district have been pre-identified as highly susceptible to landslides. Among these numerous threatened zones, the administration has singled out Narakasur Hill as one of the most critically vulnerable areas in the city, issuing a direct plea to its residents to remain on the highest state of alert throughout the rainy season. To provide clarity and aid localized preparedness, the authority has released a meticulous area-wise breakdown of these 366 vulnerable locations, mapping out the risk across different neighborhoods. The comprehensive data indicates that Chunsali tops the hazardous list with 77 vulnerable spots, followed closely by Noonmati with 40, Kharguli with 37, Khanapara with 33, Narengi with 31, and Hengerabari with 30 landslide-prone locations.

The geographical spread of the danger extends deep into other prominent residential areas of Guwahati as well. The official report identifies Kahilipara as holding 25 hazardous spots, Santipur with 20, Narakasur with 14, Garbhanga with 9, Maligaon with 8, and Kalapahar with 7 highly sensitive locations. Furthermore, the administrative audit shows that Gotanagar and Nabagraha each contain 6 vulnerable locations, while Fatasil, Kamakhya-Nilachal, Koinadhara, and Sarania are marked with 5 risk zones each. The remaining danger spots are distributed toward the city margins, with the Jalukbari-Langkeswar stretch containing 2 identified areas and Sukreswar accounting for 1 spot. This micro-level data is being utilized by local emergency teams to plan quick-response strategies and evacuation routes.

In terms of emergency helplines and overall administrative pre-

paredness, the district administration has reassured the public that multiple teams from the State Disaster Response Force and local civic bodies are currently on high alert and fully equipped with rescue gear to handle any immediate crisis. To streamline communication during emergencies, the administration has urged residents to immediately report any landslide incidents, soil erosion, or blockages by dialing the District Disaster Management Authority's dedicated toll-free number at 1077. Alongside these institutional measures, the authority has strongly requested the cooperation of hill residents, advising them to ensure that all natural water channels, streams, and backyard drains around their houses are kept completely clear of garbage and debris, thereby allowing smooth rainwater flow and minimizing the catastrophic risks of waterlogging-induced slope failures.

MLA Padma Hazarika Inaugurates 10th Biswanath Wushu Meet

Jamugurihat, Jun 15: The 10th Biswanath District Wushu Championship concluded successfully on Sunday within the premises of the Sootea Inspection Bungalow amid a vibrant and enthusiastic sports atmosphere. Organized under the leadership of Uttam Nath, President of the Biswanath District Wushu Association, the day-long event commenced with the hoisting of the organizational flag. Before the main competitive matches began, the gathering paid solemn and deep tributes to Assam's iconic cultural maestro Zubeen Garg and the former president of the Biswanath District Wushu Association. Following the tribute, Sootea MLA Padma Hazarika



formally inaugurated the highly anticipated sports tournament by cutting the ceremonial red ribbon. The championship witnessed a massive and spirited participation of over a hundred emerging and talented young athletes from across the district, making the entire event a grand success. The tournament provided an excellent platform for budding martial artists to showcase their skills, further fostering the growth of Wushu in the region. The successful execution of the championship reflects the growing enthusiasm for sports in Biswanath and highlights the collective community effort to nurture young sporting talent for future state and national levels.

Three Injured in Fresh Gunfight Between Naga and Kuki Villages in Manipur's Kangpokpi

Imphal, Jun 15: Renewed violence erupted in Manipur on Monday as a heavy and sustained gunfight broke out between the neighbouring villages of Konsakhul, a Naga settlement, and Leilon Vaiphei, a Kuki village, in Kangpokpi district. The intense exchange of fire, which lasted for several hours, left at least three Kuki youths injured. The victims, identified as Genlenmang Vaiphei (18), Lunliandaw Vaiphei (20), and Paogou Lal (18), were evacuated to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Imphal, where one remains in critical condition. The Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body of the Kuki tribes, strongly condemned the incident, alleging that the attack involved the bombing of Leilon Vaiphei by the NSCN-IM and its

proxy outfit, ZUF-K. Describing the assault on civilians as "inhuman," KIM demanded the immediate arrest of the perpetrators and called for enhanced security measures to protect local residents. While the NSCN-IM and ZUF-K have not yet responded

to these allegations, security forces have intensified their deployment in the volatile area to contain the situation, prevent further escalation, and restore normalcy. The motive behind the fresh clashes remains unclear as tensions continue to run high.



NE/EAST

'Reject political turncoats' Slogan of tiny Tripura-based group, currently accepting TMC rebels

Agartala, Jun 15: A little-known political outfit that fielded four candidates in the 2023 Tripura Assembly elections with the slogan "reject political turncoats to save your rights" was catapulted into national spotlight on Sunday when a rebel faction of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) comprising 20 Lok Sabha MPs announced its merger with it. According to records, the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) contested four seats — Chawamanu, Ambassa, Karamchara, and Kailashahar — in the 2023 Tripura elections, with its candidates finishing either behind NOTA or receiving only a few votes more. The party's campaign posters carried the message: "To save your rights, reject political turncoats. Support social workers, not political personalities", urging voters to press the symbol of a pen nib, which appeared to have been allotted to it as a Registered Unrecognised Political Party. Its Chawamanu candidate, Barjeda

Tripura, who secured 536 votes in the election, was surprised when PTI contacted him after the merger announcement. "I contested the polls in 2023. What has happened now, three years later?" he asked, expressing disbelief after being told that a group of Lok Sabha MPs has joined the party that had fielded him. Barjeda said he is a daily wage labourer. "In 2023, a person called Krishna Debbarma reached out to me about the election. So I contested. Many years ago, I was a supporter of the Congress," he told PTI. Debbarma could not be reached for a comment. Barjeda's election affidavit shows that he was 62 years old in 2023, had studied till Class 8, declared assets worth Rs 4 lakh and listed his profession as that of a social worker. The Chawamanu seat was won by the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Sambhu Lal Chakma, who defeated TIPRA Motha's Hangsa Kumar Tripura by 2,899 votes. Barjeda finished fifth with

536 votes, narrowly ahead of the NOTA tally of 500. The other three NCPI candidates contested the polls from Karamchara, Ambassa and Kailashahar. While Karamchara and Ambassa were won by the TIPRA Motha, the Congress won Kailashahar.

The development came as the TMC rebellion appeared to reach a crescendo on Sunday, with dissident MPs announcing their merger with the NCPI and meeting Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to seek separate seating arrangements in the House. After meeting the speaker, rebel MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar said two-thirds of the TMC's Lok Sabha members have submitted a letter to Birla, seeking recognition as a separate group. "Two-thirds of the TMC MPs have given a letter to the speaker for a separate seating arrangement. We will merge with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India and support the NDA," Ghosh Dastidar said. Senior TMC leader and Lok Sabha MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay said the dissident camp has already merged with the NCPI, describing it as a regional party.

Registered unrecognised political parties are parties that are registered with the Election Commission (EC) but are yet to meet the criteria to be recognised as state or national parties.

Wild elephants ruin a home in Meghalaya's South West Garo Hills

Shillong, Jun 15: A herd of wild elephants destroyed a house in Meghalaya's South West Garo Hills area, forcing a family to flee to safety, authorities reported on June 14. The event occurred on June 13 night in Joyfar village, Betasing C&RD Block, near the India-Bangladesh border. According to authorities, the elephants invaded Ketaki Hajong's property and did considerable damage to the dwelling. The herd reportedly broke into the kitchen, destroyed cooking utensils and ransacked a room where food grains and other essential household supplies were stored. Despite the destruction, all six members of the family, including four children, managed

to escape unharmed. In a separate incident, an elephant was electrocuted in the Bordu area under the Mawsynram C&RD Block on June 11, officials said. Authorities noted that herds of wild elephants have been moving through several parts of the Mawsynram region after reportedly migrating from the Nankor area. The animals are suspected to have originated either from neighbouring Bangladesh or from the South Garo Hills region.

Forest and district authorities are monitoring the situation and have urged residents in vulnerable areas to remain vigilant as elephant movement continues across parts of the state.

Meghalaya to get Rs 3,214 crore highway boost as Nitin Gadkari sets the groundwork for six critical road projects

Shillong, Jun 15: Meghalaya will receive a significant infrastructure boost with the commencement of six highway projects totaling Rs 3,214 crore, Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma declared on June 15. The projects, which include four new National Highway developments and the upgrade of two existing highway stretches will be officially unveiled on June 15 during the North East Infrastructure Summit in New Shillong. Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, will attend the event.

The four new projects include: Pynursla Bypass (NH-206) – 7.76 km, Rs 564 crore, Dhumbri-Phulbari Bridge-Selsella Road (NH-127B) – 31.5 km, Rs 737 crore, Selsella-Goeragre Road (NH-206) – 31.7 km, Rs 504 crore, Tura Bypass (NH-217) – 29 km, Rs 951 crore. In addition, two existing highway stretches will be upgraded: Shillong-Dawki Road – 10.67 km, Rs 351 crore, Jowai Bypass – 5.44 km, Rs 106 crore. Sharing the development, Sangma said the projects would significantly enhance connectiv-

ity and support Meghalaya's economic growth. Officials stated that the road projects are expected to strengthen inter-district and interstate connectivity, improve transportation infrastructure, and facilitate trade, tourism, and economic activities across the state.

The initiative is being viewed as one of the largest road infrastructure investments in Meghalaya in recent years and is expected to improve travel efficiency and regional integration across the Northeast.

The Naga Students Federation opposes the proposed Moirabari-Dimapur rail line, citing immigration issues

Kohima, Jun 15: The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) has strongly opposed a proposal to establish a new passenger train service connecting Moirabari in Assam's Morigaon district to Dimapur in Nagaland, citing concerns about illegal immigration, demographic changes, and indigenous rights. In a statement issued on June 12, the apex Naga student body questioned the necessity of the proposed railway service, which was reportedly requested by Laharighat MLA Dr. Asif Md. Nazar in a letter to the Divisional Railway Manager of the Northeast Frontier Railway's Lumding Division on June 1. The federation argued that rail connectivity between Assam and Dimapur already exists and sought clarification on the rationale behind introducing an additional passenger service. It questioned whose interests the proposed route was intended to serve and whether adequate consultations had been conducted



before the proposal was put forward. The NSF expressed concern that Nagaland is already facing significant challenges related to illegal immigration and demographic changes, issues that have remained at the centre of political and social discourse in the state for several years. According to the federation, Dimapur serves as the principal entry point into Nagaland and any move that increases direct connectivity without

corresponding mechanisms for monitoring, verification and regulation could further complicate existing concerns regarding undocumented migration. The student body maintained that the preservation of indigenous identity, traditional land rights, customs and socio-political interests depends on maintaining the demographic integrity of the state.

The federation also referred to ongoing concerns

surrounding the implementation of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system and identity verification mechanisms, arguing that any major infrastructure proposal with demographic implications must be carefully assessed. Calling for a comprehensive review, the NSF urged the Ministry of Railways, Northeast Frontier Railway, the Government of Nagaland and other relevant authorities to conduct detailed

studies on the potential demographic, security and socio-economic impact of the proposed train service before proceeding further. The organisation also demanded transparency regarding the basis of the proposal, including details of any studies undertaken, stakeholders consulted and the specific public benefits expected from the new service. Reiterating its stand, the federation stated that it would oppose any developmental initiative that it believes could adversely affect the security, identity and future of indigenous communities in Nagaland. It further warned that any measure perceived to compromise the demographic or socio-political interests of the Naga people would face democratic resistance. The proposed railway service has not yet received final approval, and no official response from the Ministry of Railways or Northeast Frontier Railway has been issued regarding the concerns raised by the NSF.

Arunachal Pradesh orders the release of salaries for 4,745 surplus workers

Itanagar, Jun 15: Following the findings of an investigation into unlawful recruitment across multiple ministries, the Arunachal Pradesh government has ordered the immediate payment of monthly wages to 4,745 extra casual, contingency, and work-charged workers as interim relief. According to an official statement, the

decision was made after a commission chaired by the Principal Secretary of the Public Works Department discovered 4,745 employees working outside the sanctioned labor level. The inquiry found that the excess workforce comprised 4,427 casual and contingency workers and 318 work-charged employees. The report noted that the

appointments had been made without adherence to established procedures and were not linked to government-sanctioned posts. The affected employees had not been receiving wages since February 24, when the government imposed a freeze on payments pending the outcome of the inquiry. Officials said the government decided to resume

salary payments on compassionate grounds while it continues to examine the committee's findings and formulate a long-term policy response.

The state government is also considering recommendations aimed at preventing future irregular appointments. These include enforcing a strict division-wise and Drawing and Disbursing Officer (DDO)-wise allocation of posts and restricting the transfer of personnel between zones, circles and divisions. The notification stated that district treasuries and sub-treasuries would release funds only after receiving a jointly signed notification specifying the formal distribution of posts. The verification process must be endorsed by both the concerned head of department and head of office. The government said consultations among departments are under way to determine further action on the issue highlighted by the inquiry report.

Disabled lady gives delivery onboard Silchar-Agartala train

Guwahati, Jun 15: A differently-abled mother gave birth to a baby on the Silchar-Agartala train after enduring intense labor pain, causing concern and disturbance among passengers. According to accounts, the woman went into labor while on the train and gave birth inside the carriage. Moments after the delivery, the compartment descended into mayhem as passengers screamed for aid, while the mother, in anguish, begged for rapid assistance. The incident came to the attention of Subir Dhar, known locally for his involvement in social service activities. Upon receiving information about the situation, Dhar immediately sent one of his associates to assist and

later reached the spot himself. With the help of railway and police personnel, he facilitated the rescue of the newborn and the mother and ensured their transfer to Silchar Medical College and Hospital for medical treatment and care. The incident created a stir at Silchar Railway Station, drawing the attention of passengers and railway authorities. However, the prompt response and humanitarian efforts of Subir Dhar were widely appreciated by members of the public. Many residents hailed his actions as an example of compassion and selfless service, saying the incident demonstrated that humanity and community spirit continue to thrive in times of need.

After looking into the death of an elephant calf, the Assam Forest Department lifts the Wildlife SOS

Digboi, Jun 15: Following the contentious death of an elephant calf in Doomdooa, the Assam Forest Department reportedly disengaged Wildlife SOS (WSOS) from elephant-related projects. Meanwhile, the department is under increasing scrutiny for failing to retrieve a severed elephant tusk in the Lakhpathar Range months after two suspects were arrested.According to high-ranking Forest Department officials, the decision was made after an internal review that was prompted by the death of a 13-month-old elephant calf that received medical attention during a Doomdooa Forest Division health check-up camp in April. According to reports, the calf passed away within 24 hours of the operation, which alarmed locals, wildlife advocates, and conservationists. While an official order is yet to be made public, sources maintained that the incident prompted a reassessment of the NGO's role in elephant conservation activities. The controversy had also led to demands for accountability and a departmental inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the animal's death. The ivory tusk purportedly severed by poachers from a wild elephant in the Lakhpathar Range close to Dhuli Gaon has not yet been found by Digboi Forest Division authorities. The lost ivory, which is regarded as an important piece of evidence and wildlife property, has ap-



parently gone missing months after two suspected suspects were taken into custody in connection with the case.Wildlife observers and conservation groups have criticized the failure to retrieve the tusk, claiming that arrests by themselves cannot be considered a total success if the key wildlife contraband is still out of the investigators' reach. They argue that the missing ivory may provide important information about a bigger network of poaching or trafficking. However, even as the department reportedly moves to distance itself from the Doomdooa fall-out, another unresolved elephant-related case continues to raise questions over enforcement effectiveness. Importantly, the current case has been compared to a previous elephant poaching inquiry that the Digboi Forest Division, then managed by DFO B.V. Sandeep, effectively handled.

According to forest authorities, the division conducted an aggressive operation in 2025 when a mature wild elephant was poached beneath the Lakhpathar Range. Within 19 days, the division retrieved a 1.6-foot-long ivory tusk that weighed about 1.8 kilos.

The principal accused Nitul Moran's home in Upper Mamorani hamlet is where the ivory was found. The recovery later assisted police in apprehending Ankur Moran, another suspected accomplice, and greatly bolstered the case, according to Lakhpathar Range Officer Montu Chetia, who oversaw the operation. The result was credited by officials to persistent intelligence collection, well-coordinated field operations, and vigorous post-arrest follow-up. In contrast, despite the arrest of two individuals and the passage of several months, the tusk taken from the elephant in the most recent Lakhpathar case has not been found, raising unsettling concerns about the speed and efficacy of the continuing inquiry.Because of this, the removal of Wildlife SOS following the death of the Doomdooa elephant and the continued challenge of recovering ivory from the Lakhpathar case have become significant issues that show broader issues with wildlife management, conservation efforts, and enforcement within the Forest Department.

DMK targets Vijay when a 3-year-old Tamil Nadu girl is sexually assaulted by a migrant and dies

Chennai, Jun 15: A three-year-old girl in Tamil Nadu died following a sexual attack in the Tiruvallur district, sparking indignation over the state's escalating rate of crimes against women and children.A migrant worker from Bihar has been detained in connection with this, according to the police. The child's family, who were also from Bihar, had made Gummidipoondi, a SIPCOT industrial area, their home. Yesterday, she was discovered in a woody location, abandoned and suffering from severe injuries. She was taken to the hospital right after, but she passed away today while receiving care.The girl knew the offender, according to the authorities, and he had enticed her with a biscuit. "The youngster was familiar with him. According to a senior police officer, "He offered her biscuits, took her away, and sexually assaulted her."According to reports, the culprit was apprehended by the community and turned over to the authorities. A few others were



attacked out of rage over the crime and suspicion that they might have been implicated as well.

However, the police rejected allegations that other people participated in the heinous act. "Gang rape is not the case here. The officer stated, "There was only one person engaged.The girl was at home when the accused reportedly enticed her, according to local resident Indumathi, who stated the child was playing next to her house. The man whisked her away after offering her biscuits. A woman who had gone there to urinate later discovered her abandoned in the woods. She

cleaned the child and realised her condition was serious," she said. Under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, the police had first filed a case. Murder charges are also likely to be brought after the child's death.

Concern over a recent surge in sexual offenses against women and children in Tamil Nadu is mounting at the time of the event. The topic has dominated public discourse and was a prominent talking point during the assembly election campaign. DMK leader TKS Elangovan demanded more government intervention and harsher pen-

alties for violators.Regarding these events, the government ought to be stern. Penalties ought to be harsh. This is a social problem. "The government should focus on it," he added, adding that members or employees of the ruling TVK had been implicated in a number of recent incidents. Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay announced the creation of a special women's safety unit called "Singappenn" shortly after taking office with the goal of bolstering safeguards for women and girls.

A few days ago, the initiative was formally introduced. Over 1.77 lakh cases of crimes against minors were reported nationwide in 2023 alone, according to the most recent crime statistics. Of these, the strict POCSO Act was used to register over 67,000 cases, or 38.2%.

The government's attempts to reduce crimes against women and children and provide prompt justice for victims are expected to come under further scrutiny as a result of the most recent tragedy.

All About the Nationalist Citizens Party, 20 Rebel Trinamool MPs' New Residence



New Delhi, Jun 15: After 20 rebel Trinamool Congress MPs announced their merger with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI), a little-known political group that had little electoral impact in the 2023 Tripura assembly elections has unexpectedly found itself at the center of national politics.The development has brought attention to the party's history, structure, leadership, and internal operations, turning the little-known Bengal-based party into a significant player in the Trinamool's ongoing political crisis.A few weeks prior to the Tripura assembly elections, on January 20, 2023, the NCPI registered with the Election Commission as a Registered Unrecognized Political Party (RUPP). The party decided to hold its first election in Tripura even though it was registered in Bengal. Records from the Election Commission show that the party only collected a total of Rs 1.13 lakh in donations.Shewly Kundu is listed as the treasurer in party documentation. Additional-

ly, she is a director of two organizations that are registered at the same address as the political party: the social work organization Paschim Banga Asangathita Mahila Karmi Association (director since October 2020) and Biswabazar Private Limited (director since November 2021).All three entities' registered addresses are in the Howrah district of Bengal's Banipur region. Shewly Kundu's husband, Uttiya Kundu, is the president of the party. Uttiya Kundu posted a photo of herself and West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari on Facebook.

NCPI leader Shantanu Dey told that the party's declared goal when it entered Tripura politics was to represent underprivileged tribal groups in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) area.

In seven constituencies, it fielded candidates. However, contenders' nomination papers for four seats were turned down. In the end, NCPI candidates ran under the party emblem in just

two constituencies. Chawmanu received 536 votes, while Kailashahar received 286 votes. It received only 822 votes overall. A third candidate, Krishna Kumar Debbarma, ran as an independent from Ambassa and received 376 votes, contributing to the broader NCPI-backed effort, which totaled 1,198 votes. None of the candidates approached victory. Several NCPI candidates in Tripura reported that the party ceased communication post-elections. Jahangir Ali, from Kailashahar, mentioned the lack of contact since the elections, while Barjeda Tripura noted that the party didn't request funds and prioritized having candidates without a proper campaign. Disputes over finances reportedly stalled the party's operational capacity, derailing plans for the 2023 West Bengal panchayat elections and further proposals for the 2026 West Bengal assembly elections. Despite its limited presence, NCPI has become associated with a coalition of nearly two-thirds of Trinamool MPs in the Lok Sabha. Following their split from Trinamool, rebel MPs pursued separate seating and submitted a request for recognition as a distinct parliamentary group. Trinamool leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay confirmed this rebel faction's merger with NCPI, elevating the latter's profile nationally.

Bengal woman rescued in Gurugram after being beaten, locked in, and made to work

Gurugram, Jun 15: After a fortuitous phone call to her family set off a concerted operation including police, district officials, and civil society organizations, a 39-year-old tribal woman from West Bengal's Birbhum district was saved from alleged bonded labor in Gurugram on Friday.The woman, Bhadu Mandi, was saved from a home in DLF Garden City, Sector 91, Gurugram, where she was allegedly employed as a domestic helper for over two years. Bhadu's family claims that after receiving an advance payment of Rs 40,000, she was transported to Delhi for domestic employment. According to her sister Lakshmi Tudu, Bhadu was frequently physically abused, made to labor more than 16 hours a day, and prohibited from leaving the house or interacting with her family.

According to the family, Bhadu had little freedom of movement because the flat had clever locking systems and she was frequently kept inside when-

ever her employers left. The case came to light when a service technician visited the apartment for repair work. Bhadu reportedly persuaded the technician to let her use his phone and managed to call her sister, informing her about her situation. The call prompted Lakshmi to seek help from authorities in West Bengal.Following her complaint, an FIR was registered at Illambazar Police Station on June 4 under provisions of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, and relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including Section 127(4) relating to wrongful exploitation and forced labour.

The NGO Nari O Sishu Kalyan Kendra (NOSKK) subsequently assisted the family by documenting the case and coordinating with officials in West Bengal and Gurugram. The matter was also taken up with the District Legal Services Authority and the Labour Department. Following an investigation,

the Labour Department determined that the case involved bonded labor and advised the Gurugram District Magistrate to take quick action. The Magistrate asked the Superintendent of Police to file a lawsuit and directed the administration to take action.While a team from West Bengal Police arrived in Delhi to help with the operation, Lakshmi also made the trip to Gurugram. In the end, West Bengal Police, Gurugram Police, and district officials worked together to save Bhadu. Bhadu reportedly told authorities during the rescue that her employer had repeatedly physically attacked her. She claimed that the beatings had caused her to lose hearing in her right ear and to be unable to lift her right hand. She further said that on the morning of the rescue, she was attacked once more and that she was afraid for her life.While the survivor receives support and medical care, authorities are anticipated to continue their investigation into the event.

The New Rajkot International Airport Increases Property Prices and Industrial Growth



Rajkot, Jun 15: The economic and topographical landscape of Rajkot and all of Saurashtra has significantly changed since

the Rajkot International Airport opened in Hirasar, Gujarat. The airport has increased connection and sped up development in

the surrounding districts. The Rajkot-Ahmedabad National Highway now has six lanes, making it easier to get to the airport. Around the airport, new approach roads, service roads, and traffic control have been re-enforced.Local companies like engineering, art jewelry, and Shapar-Veraval industries have substantially benefited from the airport's proximity to Hirasar and Kuwadva GIDC. The export of Rajkot's goods and Morbi's ceramic items will accelerate in the near future once the cargo terminal is fully functioning. Owing to the airport, sig-

nificant investments are being made in the travel logistics, hospitality, and warehousing industries, generating additional job possibilities locally.

The ability to operate large aircraft has made it possible to begin direct international flights in the future, which will benefit Saurashtra's businessmen and NRI friends.Property and land prices in the surrounding communities have doubled or tripled from the time the airport project was announced until it began, particularly in the previous three to four years.

A truck rams a bus in Madhya Pradesh, killing three and injuring twenty-nine

Katni, Jun 15: In Katni, Madhya Pradesh, an uncontrolled truck struck a car, a bus, and a bridge on Sunday, killing three of the bus's occupants and injuring 29 more, according to the police.Superintendent of Police Abhinav Vishwakarma told PTI over the phone that the accident happened close to the Industrial Area bridge within the boundaries of the Kuthla police station. The bus, which was carrying about 35 people, was traveling from Katni to Vijayraghavgarh when the truck was approaching from the opposite direction. According to preliminary investigations, the truck driver may have lost control of the wheel as a result of a brake failure. Several passengers were trapped as the vehicle overturned due to the collision impact. In an operation that took more than 35 minutes, a crane was utilized to raise the bus and save the passengers, he continued.Residents participated in rescue efforts alongside law enforcement and government representatives. According to authorities, the passengers who perished were Raju Choudhary, Neelam Prapapati, and Kishan Kol (30). While others are receiving treatment at the district hospital, a girl who suffered severe injuries has been transferred to the government medical college and hospital in Jabalpur divisional headquarters, according to Vishwakarma. The truck's driver sustained injuries as well.According to eyewitnesses, the crash caused panic, trapping people underneath and inside the overturned bus. Inside the truck's cabin, one individual was stranded.

High court cases against the Transgender Amendment Act are halted by the Supreme Court

New Delhi, Jun 15: A bench made up of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana issued the order on transfer petitions filed by the Center, which has argued that identical constitutional questions arising from the 2026 amendment are already pending before the Supreme Court and should be decided by a single forum.

On Monday, the Supreme Court stayed further proceedings before four high courts hearing challenges to the constitutional validity of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026, while issuing notice in response to the Union government's plea. After notifying petitioners who had challenged the statute before the high courts in Rajasthan, Delhi, Karnataka, and Kerala, the bench ruled that "further proceedings before high courts shall remain stayed."It is better that all matters are taken up either by one high court or we decide it," the bench said, indicating its preference to centralize the litigation.The hearing has now been scheduled for July.The order represents a major step forward in the expanding constitutional challenge to the amendment legislation, which has sparked litigation nationwide due to claims that it undermines the principle of gender self-identification recognized by the Supreme Court in its historic ruling in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India (2014). Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, speaking on behalf

of the Union government, informed the court that although the Supreme Court had already taken up the same challenge, several high courts were concurrently reviewing the constitutionality of the same legislation."This issue has already taken over this court. The 2026 Act's constitutionality is contested in the high courts' petitions, Mehta said.Concerns expressed by the Center's transfer appeal were initially brought up before the CJI-led bench on May 27, when it argued that concurrent procedures before various constitutional courts could lead to conflicting judicial rulings on the same law. The amendment is currently being challenged in at least four high courts. While the Rajasthan High Court is considering a challenge from Nai Bhor Sanstha, an organization that promotes the welfare of transgender people, the Karnataka, Delhi, and Kerala high courts each have two outstanding cases.One of the Delhi High Court petitioners, Chandresh Jain, came before the Supreme Court on Monday and argued that his case presents a thorough challenge to the law and shows why the revisions are unconstitutional.

A number of petitions contesting the statute have already been submitted to the Supreme Court by transgender activists, organizations, and community leaders. On May 4, a bench led by Chief Justice Kant notified the Center, all states, and Union Territories about those petitions and suggested that a large

bench could eventually need to take up the case. The fundamental idea established in the NALSA ruling—in which the Supreme Court acknowledged the right to self-identify one's gender as an aspect of dignity, autonomy, and personal liberty protected under Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Constitution—has allegedly been weakened by Parliament, according to the constitutional challenge. Petitioners argue that the 2026 amendment alters the previously established self-identification framework for transgender individuals to a more restrictive one, now reliant on medical conditions, state certification, and specific socio-cultural identities. A key issue highlighted is the new definition of "transgender person" under Section 2(k) of the Act, which shifts from a broad interpretation—where a transgender person is anyone whose gender identity differs from the gender assigned at birth—to a narrower set of categories tied to membership in designated socio-cultural groups (e.g., hijra, kinner, aravani, jogta, eunuch) or to medically identifiable congenital variations in sex characteristics.This revised definition, according to the petitioners, excludes many individuals who identify as transgender but do not fit into these specified categories or have no medically diagnosable conditions. Additionally, the amendment introduces requirements for certification from government authorities and

petitioners assert re-establish the "medical gatekeeping" that the Supreme Court had previously denounced in the NALSA ruling.The petitioners also contest alterations to the penal provisions of the law. They argue that while existing offenses, such as forced labor and denying access to public spaces, continue to attract lighter penalties, the amendments create new offenses with severe punishments (ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment) for actions that compel individuals to undergo surgery or coercively present as transgender. The petitioners allege that this further stigmatizes transgender identities by linking them with criminal behavior and results in unconstitutional distinctions within the law.Following the amendment's presidential assent on March 30, the Supreme Court recently decided against a stay of its operation, indicating that the associated constitutional questions necessitate a thorough review. During previous hearings, Chief Justice Kant emphasized the need to balance self-identification principles against potential abuses of rights reserved for transgender individuals. Justice Joymalya Bagchi noted that Parliament retains the authority to modify legal frameworks influenced by judicial decisions, as long as they stay within constitutional boundaries. The Centre maintains that the amendment does not impede voluntary gender-affirming treatments and aims primarily to regulate coercive or forced practices.

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Editorial

SpaceX IPO highlights Indian market gaps

SpaceX's \$75-billion stock listing in the US on Friday shattered several records. With a valuation of \$1.77 trillion, the reusable rocket company surpassed Saudi oil company Aramco's 2019 public offering as the world's biggest and made its largest shareholder Elon Musk the world's first trillionaire. Two other American tech giants—Claude maker Anthropic and

ChatGPT maker OpenAI—filed for IPOs this month and are likely to tap the market later this year with valuations of over \$1 trillion each. Such significant fundraising comes when India and several other emerging markets are witnessing persistent foreign capital outflows. India's IPO market is also buzzing, but as a Reuters study showed, rather than raising dollars.

Legislature awaits legal clarity

Calcutta High Court's Justice Krishna Rao on Thursday posed a pertinent question on whether West Bengal Assembly Speaker Rathindra Bose was right in recognising Ritabrata Banerjee as Leader of Opposition in the House without the consent of the Trinamool Congress after his expulsion from the party. He was hearing Trinamool's challenge to the recognition of Ritabrata as LoP instead of the official Mamata Banerjee group's nominee, Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay. Ritabrata had the numbers—58 of the Trinamool's 80 legislators—but had been expelled by 'Didi' a day before the rebel group propped him as its legislative leader. Justice Rao also sought to know if the Speaker had issued any formal order recognising the LoP, and adjourned the matter to June 16, two days before the Assembly is due to convene. The judge's poser stemmed from a Supreme Court case law set in the Shiv Sena split verdict. Writing for a five-judge Constitution bench in 2023, the then Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud ruled that it is the political party—and not the legislature party—that is authorised to appoint the leader and the whip in the House. Assuming the 2023 verdict holds ground, it could arrest similar defections and put a question mark on the merger of seven out of AAP's 10 Rajya Sabha members with the BJP. Besides, there is little clarity on the split in the Trinamool parliamentary party. Meanwhile, Trinamool national general secretary and Mamata's nephew Abhishek Banerjee is in a pickle, as at least seven rebel MLAs complained to the Assembly Secretariat alleging their signatures had been forged on the party's resolution appointing Sobhandeb as LoP. Abhishek was on Thursday grilled by the state Criminal Investigation Department in the signature forgery case. Widespread discontent against Abhishek's authoritarian leadership is the focal point of Trinamool's dramatic disintegration, which is also blamed on the ruling BJP's intimidation, coercion and inducement. However, Mamata continues to command respect, including from the rebels. It's up to her to quickly take corrective action to stem the

legislative haemorrhage. Her exploratory exercise at the INDIA bloc meeting in Delhi—where Congress leader Sonia Gandhi offered a warm hug—was the starting point of repairing the bridges she had burnt during her long tenure as chief minister. The battle for control of the Trinamool Congress's legislative wing is set to move to the courts, with the party deciding to challenge the West Bengal Assembly Speaker's recognition of rebel leader Ritabrata Banerjee as Leader of the Opposition. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Friday evening, where senior leaders reviewed the fallout of a rebellion by a section of the party's MLAs that has plunged the organisation into its deepest crisis since its formation. Party MP Kalyan Banerjee said the TMC would approach the Calcutta High Court on Monday, arguing that the Speaker's decision violated established parliamentary procedures. "We have decided to move court against the decision of the Speaker. We think the decision is against established norms and parliamentary procedures. Rules have been violated," Kalyan Banerjee told reporters after the meeting. The legal challenge comes against the backdrop of an unprecedented split within the TMC. On June 3, the party suffered the first formal division in its 28-year history when 58 rebel MLAs broke ranks, elected expelled leader Ritabrata Banerjee as Leader of the Opposition, wrested control of the legislature party and secured recognition from Assembly Speaker Rathindra Bose. The development marked the most serious challenge yet to Mamata Banerjee's authority and plunged the party into its gravest internal crisis since its inception. Ritabrata Banerjee, however, dismissed the TMC's allegations and insisted that his faction had complied with all constitutional and procedural requirements. "All norms have been followed. Today, there was a meeting convened by Mamata Banerjee. Please go and see how many legislators attended that meeting," he told reporters, claiming that the majority of elected representatives remained with the rebel camp.

The strategic stalemate: A deep look at the ongoing United States-Iran conflict

President Donald Trump's decision to back off from striking Iran, just hours after threatening to seize the country's Kharg Island, underscores the dilemma he faces in dealing with Tehran. Mr. Trump, who launched the conflict with his ally Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel on February 28, now wants to end it through talks. But Iran, which survived 40 days of U.S.-Israeli bombing and now controls the Strait of Hormuz, appears unwilling to hand him a diplomatic victory. Caught between an uncontrollable Israel, whose bombing of Lebanon threatens the fragile U.S.-Iran ceasefire, and an emboldened Iran that has become increasingly defiant and intransigent, Mr. Trump reverted to his familiar playbook of using military pressure to alter Tehran's negotiating position. On Wednesday he ordered strikes on Iran after confirming that a U.S. Apache helicopter had been shot down over the Strait of Hormuz. Iran retaliated by striking U.S. bases in Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan. After two nights of tit-for-tat strikes, Mr. Trump backed off on Thursday, claiming progress in talks. Over the past two months, he has claimed dozens of times that a deal with Iran was within reach. In the war's escalation cycle, Mr. Trump takes one step forward, two steps back. When Mr. Trump despatched his "armada" to Iran's shores in February, he wanted to force Tehran into submission through military pressure. The U.S. and Israel had an ambitious list of demands, including dismantling Iran's nuclear programme, degrading its missile capabilities and ending its support for non-state militias. When the U.S. and Israel launched the war, they wanted regime change in Tehran. More than three months later, the war, which failed to achieve any of its declared objectives, has hardened



Iran's positions. If Iran was willing to make concessions on its nuclear programme on February 27, it now insists that any discussion on the nuclear file can take place only after the U.S.-Israeli hostilities cease and the blockade is lifted. The war has fundamentally altered the strategic reality of the region. Yes, Iran has absorbed significant military and economic costs, but it has emerged strategically stronger by taking control of the Hormuz Strait and effectively trapping the U.S. in a costly stalemate. Rather than chasing a delusional Iranian surrender, Washington should adopt a phased, realistic diplomatic approach. The priority should be to enforce and extend the ceasefire in good faith and lift the blockade in exchange for Iran reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Once stability is restored, both sides can return to substantive talks on Iran's nuclear programme and work towards a durable end to the conflict. The geopolitics

of the Middle East have been pushed into uncharted and highly volatile territory following the outbreak of the 2026 Iran War. What began in late February as a devastating, coordinated military campaign by the United States and Israel—code-named Operation Epic Fury—has devolved into a complex, multi-layered strategic stalemate. Despite an initial wave of high-intensity airstrikes that fundamentally altered Iran's leadership structure, the conflict has reached a critical impasse where neither side can claim total victory, nor can they easily retreat. The theater of war has shifted from overt, full-scale bombardment to a high-stakes game of brinkmanship, economic blockades, and volatile diplomatic negotiations. As both Washington and Tehran stick to uncompromising positions, the international community watches with mounting anxiety, acutely aware that this fragile truce could collapse into regional chaos at

any moment. The current crisis erupted on February 28, 2026, following months of soaring tensions regarding Iran's accelerated nuclear enrichment and its severe crackdowns on domestic protests. In a dramatic escalation, U.S. and Israeli forces launched a massive wave of nearly 900 airstrikes within the first 12 hours. The primary objective of Operation Epic Fury was decapitation of the regime and the structural degradation of Iran's military capability. The opening strikes successfully targeted and killed Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, along with dozens of top military and government officials. From a purely tactical standpoint, the initial phase achieved significant objectives: air defenses were dismantled, missile silos were shattered, and the core of Iran's command structure was thrown into disarray. However, the assumption that a sudden, devastating blow would force an immediate Iran-

ian capitulation proved to be a severe miscalculation. Instead of fracturing, the remaining Iranian state apparatus—predominantly consolidated under the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)—quickly securitized and centralized its power. Rather than retreating, Iran launched an asymmetric, wide-reaching counter-strategy designed to make the war too economically and politically costly for the West to sustain. Iran's most potent retaliatory move was the immediate, de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz—the world's most vital energy artery, through which 20 to 30 percent of global oil shipments pass. By utilizing extensive naval mining, drone swarms, and shore-to-ship ballistic missiles, Iran effectively halted commercial maritime transit. The closure triggered an immediate global fuel crisis, spiking energy prices and disrupting international supply chains. Simultaneously, Iran and its regional proxies, most notably Hezbollah in Lebanon, unleashed hundreds of missiles targeting Israel, U.S. military installations across the Gulf Arab states, and regional shipping lanes. In response to the economic strangulation of the Strait, the United States established a rigid naval blockade of its own, isolating Iranian ports and choking off Tehran's maritime oil exports. This "dual blockade" has left thousands of global sailors stranded and created an economic zero-sum game. The United States holds clear political and conventional military superiority, but Iran holds the leash to a chokepoint that can plunge the global economy into recession. By early April 2026, the immense toll of the conflict forced both sides to the negotiating table, resulting in a precarious, interim ceasefire mediated primarily by Pakistan.

Supreme Court rejects Meenakshi Natarajan's plea over Rajya Sabha nomination cancellation

The rejection of Congress leader Meenakshi Natarajan's nomination for the Rajya Sabha election from Madhya Pradesh raises questions of institutional integrity and procedural fairness, going beyond the fate of a single candidate. Party MP Kalyan Banerjee said the TMC would approach the Calcutta High Court on Monday, arguing that the Speaker's decision violated established parliamentary procedures. "We have decided to move court against the decision of the Speaker. We think the decision is against established norms and parliamentary procedures. Rules have been violated," Kalyan Banerjee told reporters after the meeting. The legal challenge comes against the backdrop of an unprecedented split within the TMC. On June 3, the party suffered the first formal division in its 28-year history when 58 rebel MLAs broke ranks, elected expelled leader Ritabrata Banerjee as Leader of the Opposition, wrested control of the legislature party and secured recognition from Assembly Speaker Rathindra Bose. The development marked the most serious challenge yet to Mamata Banerjee's authority and plunged the party into its gravest internal crisis since its inception. Ritabrata Banerjee, however, dismissed the TMC's allegations and insisted that his faction had complied with all constitutional and procedural requirements. "All norms have been followed. Today, there was a meeting convened by Mamata Banerjee. Please go and see how many legislators attended that meeting," he told reporters, claiming that the majority of elected representatives remained with the rebel camp.



cluding Ms. Natarajan. The RO's decision to use this as grounds for the rejection of the nomination reeks of extreme arbitrariness, and even a conspiracy. The law regarding the disclosure of cases is unambiguous. Section 33A of the Representation of the People Act requires disclosure only of those cases that carry a punishment of two years or more and, above all, only of those cases in which charges have been framed. Framing of charges is a judicial step, which follows the filing of a charge sheet. The RO's position that material facts had been concealed and the nomination papers were incomplete is not merely a misinterpretation of the law, but an insult to common sense. Going by that logic, a candidate could be disqualified for failing to list notices of traffic violations too. The disclosure regime has been designed to ensure trans-

parency regarding candidates' criminal antecedents and pending cases. What makes Ms. Natarajan's case starkly arbitrary is that in the same election cycle, another candidate was asked by the RO to amend the affidavits to meet mandatory requirements. The Election Commission of India has the sacred constitutional duty of ensuring free and fair elections. It is failing in that duty, damaging democracy in the process. The capture of a Rajya Sabha seat by the ruling BJP in complete disregard for the law is a severe setback for election integrity. The integrity of democratic institutions does not collapse in a single, cataclysmic event; rather, it chips away through the subtle, systemic erosion of procedural fairness. The shock cancellation of senior Congress leader Meenakshi Natarajan's nomination for the June 2026 Rajya

Sabha election in Madhya Pradesh stands as a grim case study of this erosion. What should have been a routine legislative selection devolved into a bitter battle over institutional neutrality, legal semantics, and administrative overreach. When the Returning Officer (RO) rejected Natarajan's candidacy based on a hyper-technicality raised by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), it set off a chain reaction. The subsequent dismissal of her urgent appeal by the Supreme Court effectively handed all three of Madhya Pradesh's Rajya Sabha seats to the ruling BJP unopposed. This rapid sequence of events bypasses the spirit of fair electoral competition and raises uncomfortable questions about the state of regulatory impartiality in the world's largest democracy. The controversy erupted during the scrutiny phase of the nomination papers.

Acting on a formal complaint filed by Mahesh Keat, the BJP's third candidate, the Returning Officer disqualified Natarajan on the grounds that she had deliberately suppressed material information regarding a pending criminal matter in Telangana. The affidavit (Form 26) submitted by candidates requires the disclosure of criminal antecedents. The RO ruled that Natarajan's omission rendered her affidavit incomplete. However, a closer examination of the legal reality reveals a vast gulf between the RO's interpretation and established jurisprudence: The "criminal case" in question was actually a private, pre-cognisance complaint filed in 2025 by a former political worker before a magistrate court in Hyderabad. The complaint was not even directly aimed at Natarajan for committing an offense; rather, it named her as a respondent in her administrative capacity as the then-AICC in-charge of Telangana, alleging that she failed to act against another worker accused of inappropriate behavior. Crucially, no First Information Report (FIR) had been registered against Natarajan by the Telangana Police. The magistrate court had merely issued a preliminary notice under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) to seek her response and determine whether there were even grounds to initiate a formal case. No judicial mind had taken cognisance of

an offense, and no charges had been framed. The law regarding what an election candidate must disclose is highly unambiguous. Section 33A of the Representation of the People Act mandates that a candidate must declare pending criminal cases only under specific conditions: By weaponizing a preliminary inquiry notice as an undisclosed "criminal case," the Returning Officer did not merely stretch the law; they fundamentally upended it. Under such an expansive and distorted rationale, an individual could be disqualified from public office for failing to declare a standard notice for a minor traffic violation, a civil tax query, or a frivolous neighborhood dispute. The disclosure regime was enacted by the Supreme Court to filter out hardened criminals from the legislative halls, not to provide partisan actors with a procedural tool to eliminate political rivals. What transformed this bureaucratic misinterpretation into a severe democratic concern was the apparent lack of procedural equity. In the exact same election cycle, other candidates facing technical discrepancies or omissions in their affidavits were reportedly granted an administrative window to rectify their paperwork. The Election Commission's guidelines explicitly encourage Returning Officers to grant candidates a reasonable opportunity to fix curable defects, ensuring that democratic contests are decided on technical dismissals.

Coastal Road network will decongest Western Express



Mumbai: After reviewing the progress of the project, Fadnavis said the Bandra-Versova sea link is targeted for completion by March 2028. The Versova-Bhayandar stretch and associated connectors are expected to be completed by December 2028. The Chief Minister said nearly 60 per cent of Mumbai’s traffic currently depends on the Western Express Highway, making an alternative signal-free corri-

dor essential for the city’s future mobility needs. Why Mumbai needs a parallel corridor Mumbai’s linear geography has long concentrated traffic movement along a limited number of north-south routes. The Western Express Highway remains the primary road link connecting the island city with the western suburbs and neighbouring regions. necessary to handle growing traffic volumes.

Malabar Group’s Hunger Free World showcases measurable social returns from CSR investments

Mumbai: Malabar Group has highlighted the growing role of corporate social investment in addressing complex social challenges with the release of a new impact report that demonstrates how a simple daily meal can generate long-term social and economic value.

Released on World Hunger Day, the report, “Impact Stories: How a Daily Meal Opens the Door to a Transformed Life”, details the outcomes of Hunger Free World, the group’s flagship humanitarian initiative. Implemented by Thanal, the Street Meal Distribution Programme has expanded beyond hunger relief to become a platform for healthcare intervention, rehabilitation, shelter access, dignity restoration and family reunification.

The initiative currently operates across 20 states in India and nine countries, including six GCC nations, the United States, the United Kingdom



and Zambia. Through its Street Meal Distribution Programme and Micro Learning Centres, Hunger Free World reaches approximately 1.43 lakh beneficiaries, reflecting the scale of the programme’s social footprint.

According to the report, regular engagement with beneficiaries has enabled field teams to identify individuals requiring urgent support and

connect them with rehabilitation services. Impact stories cited include the relocation of an elderly man in Nagercoil to a care home, rehabilitation support for a bedridden man in Kumbakonam, assistance for a distressed woman in Chennai, family reunification between Udupi and Chennai, and medical intervention and shelter placement for a physically challenged

senior citizen in Tiruchirappalli. “A meal may appear simple, but when it is delivered consistently and with human attention, it becomes much more than food,” said M. P. Ahammad, Chairman of Malabar Group. He noted that trust developed through sustained outreach often serves as the foundation for healthcare access, emotional support and long-term recovery. The initiative forms part of Malabar Group’s broader CSR framework, under which the company allocates five per cent of its net trading profit towards social responsibility programmes spanning hunger eradication, education, healthcare, housing, women empowerment and environmental sustainability. The report underscores an emerging trend in corporate India, where businesses are increasingly focusing on measurable social impact alongside economic growth and stakeholder value creation.

Google Andhra discom bid may herald mega-scale power networks

Mumbai: would a technology company want to become a power distributor? The answer lies in the exploding electricity needs of the AI era. “This is indeed a watershed moment. The licence provides greater control over power procurement and infrastructure planning, enabling Google to build a dedicated power ecosystem tailored to its reliability and clean-energy requirements,” she said. The Andhra Pradesh model is also being viewed as an investment attraction strategy at a time when countries and states are competing to secure AI and cloud infrastructure investments. “Andhra Pradesh’s latest policy incentivises data centres to set up and operate in the state, bringing investment and wider economic spillover benefits,” Tay said.

Industry experts believe states with abundant renewable energy resources, coastal connectivity, transmission infrastructure and large industrial land banks could closely watch Andhra Pradesh’s experiment. States such as Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Odisha are seen as particularly well positioned to emulate similar frameworks as competition intensifies to attract hyperscale investments. Deloitte India believes the trend could gather momentum rapidly. “The policy is likely to be adopted across multiple states and become the norm for large data centres in the country,” said Anujesh Dwivedi, Partner at Deloitte India. Google’s decision to secure a private power distribution licence for its proposed 1 GW data centre campus in Andhra Pradesh reflects a growing reality for hyperscalers: electricity is no longer merely an operating expense but a strategic asset. As power-hungry artificial intelligence workloads drive unprecedented demand for round-the-clock electricity, data centre operators are increasingly seeking direct control over power sourcing, renewable energy procurement and supply reliability. Industry experts say Andhra Pradesh’s move could become a template for future hyperscale investments, prompting other states to consider similar policies and potentially reshaping the relationship between large consumers and state-owned discoms. The Andhra Pradesh cabinet recently approved a distribution licence for Google subsidiary Raiden Infotech for its upcoming Visakhapatnam campus. While the approval relates to a single project, analysts say its significance extends far beyond one data centre. Industry experts stress that the move does not necessarily indicate dissatisfaction with India’s grid. In fact, Moody’s notes that India is better positioned than much of South and Southeast Asia to accommodate rising data centre demand because of its track record in expanding generation and transmission infrastructure. India also offers competitively priced renewable energy and an established corporate power market that allows direct procurement of clean energy. “Power costs are a significant component of data centre operating expenses, often accounting for 20-40% of total operating costs,” said Vibhuti Garg, Director South Asia at IEEFA. “For AI-focused hyperscale data centres, where power-intensive GPUs are deployed at scale, electricity costs become even more critical. Access to reliable, affordable and clean power has become a key strategic consideration,” she said. According to Garg, hyperscalers increasingly require 24x7 clean power and extremely high reliability standards because even brief interruptions can result in substantial operational and financial losses. Dedicated power



arrangements also help address transmission bottlenecks that often delay access to renewable energy projects. He noted that India is among the few countries globally where GW-scale data centres can potentially secure 100% green power within two to three years, making the country an attractive destination for global hyperscalers. The implications extend beyond the technology sector. If more operators such as Microsoft, Amazon Web Services, Meta, AdaniConneX, Yotta and CtrlS seek similar arrangements, demand for renewable energy, battery storage and dedicated transmission infrastructure could accelerate sharply. At the same time, it could revive debate over the future role of discoms, which rely heavily on commercial and industrial consumers for revenue and cross-subsidy support. Yet experts argue that hyperscale campuses represent entirely new electricity demand rather than existing consumers exiting the grid. A single 1 GW campus consumes power comparable to a medium-sized city while creating jobs, investments and ancillary infrastructure demand. For Andhra Pradesh, Google’s licence is a bet on capturing a larger share of the global AI investment wave. For India’s power sector, it may be remembered as the moment when data centres stopped treating electricity as a utility service and started treating it as core digital infrastructure. India’s data centre industry is entering a phase of explosive growth. Capacity is expected to rise from around 1.5 GW in 2024 to nearly 6-7 GW by 2030, supported by over 15 GW of announced projects and investments estimated at around \$35 billion. Some industry estimates place the figure even higher as AI adoption accelerates. India is already among the fastest-scaling data centre markets globally, supported by cloud adoption, digitalisation and data localisation requirements. For data centres, the race for computing power is increasingly becoming a race for electricity. “Power availability, grid reliability and permitting processes are key considerations for data centre capacity expansion,” said Ray Tay, Associate Managing Director, Project and Infrastructure Finance, Moody’s Ratings. Unlike traditional data centres located near major urban centres, Google’s proposed campus is a large greenfield development. “Google’s plans involve a large greenfield hyperscale campus that is not near traditional load centres in India. Google and its partners may view it as more expedient to manage power requirements in an end-to-end manner,” Tay said.

India showcases innovation and investment potential: Modi at Bharat

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday underscored India’s growing stature as a global hub for innovation, technology, and manufacturing, inviting international investors to collaborate with India in shaping the next chapter of global progress. Speaking at the Bharat Innovates 2026 summit in Nice, France, Modi highlighted the country’s strong foundation of talent, scale, stability, and reforms as key drivers of growth. India as a global innovation destination

Addressing venture capital leaders and investors, PM Modi said India has emerged as one of the world’s most attractive destinations for investment and innovation. He emphasized that the country’s growth is powered by “talent, scale, stability and reform,” making it a natural partner for global innovators. He noted that the current decade is defined by both disruption and development, with challenges such as conflicts and climate change creating new opportunities for innovation. Modi identified artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology, space technologies, and advanced materials as transformative fields that will shape humanity’s future. “The world today is looking for technologies that are trusted, inclusive, human-centric and focused on global good,” he remarked,

stressing India’s priority of “technology for humanity.” Reform momentum and startup ecosystem In his address, PM Modi assured investors that India’s reform momentum will continue unabated. He pointed to the country’s emergence as the world’s third-largest startup ecosystem, built over the past 12 years through initiatives such as Startup India, patent filings, incubation networks, and policy support. “The number of startups in India will continue to grow as the country remains committed to reforms and innovation-driven development,” he said, inviting global innovators to collaborate with India’s young talent in developing solutions for global challenges. Modi highlighted that India’s startup ecosystem is not only expanding but also producing innovations with the potential to benefit humanity at large. “Come, collaborate with India and develop technological solutions for the world,” he urged. Technology for humanity The Prime Minister reiterated that India’s digital revolution has been built on human-centric innovation and digital public infrastructure. He described technological revolutions as opportunities that also bring responsibilities, calling for innovation that is inclusive and globally beneficial. He emphasized that



India’s approach to technology is rooted in trust and inclusivity, aligning with the global demand for responsible innovation. India-France partnership Modi also underlined the special partnership between India and France, describing it as a relationship built on “connection, conviction, innovation, inspiration, shared values and a common vision for the future.” He noted that the two nations have jointly launched initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance and dialogues on artificial intelligence, while strengthening cooperation across security and sustainability. “On the foundation of this very relationship, we have together launched new initiatives, given direction to new ideas, and made every possible effort to find solutions to global challenges,” Modi said.

Telecommunications companies are experiencing a significant increase

Mumbai: The rising cost of cybersecurity and national security compliance is emerging as a significant burden for India’s telecom operators, as surging data consumption, increasingly sophisticated cyber threats and expanding law-enforcement requirements compel carriers to invest heavily in monitoring, storage and network-security infrastructure. Industry estimates suggest telecom operators have collectively spent about Rs 2,500 crore over the past five years to meet obligations related to lawful interception systems, data retention, traffic monitoring, location-based services and other security mandates. The spending comes even as operators continue to invest aggressively in 5G rollouts, fibre expansion and broader digital infrastructure, industry executives said. With digital traffic expanding rapidly and security requirements becoming more stringent, industry stakeholders argue that many of these obligations serve wider public policy and national security objectives. They have increasingly sought mechanisms through which at least a part of the compliance burden linked to law-enforcement and security requirements can be shared or compensated. A significant portion of these costs stems from supporting requests from law-enforcement agencies (LEAs) and national security authorities. Industry estimates indicate that around 60 LEAs across the country generate roughly 3,000 lawful interception requests every month, covering about 20,000 unique targets. Operators also process nearly 500,000 requests for



call detail records (CDRs) and internet protocol detail records (IPDRs) each month, resulting in the sharing of around 2.3 million records with enforcement agencies. Maintaining the infrastructure required for law-enforcement access is itself becoming expensive. Industry estimates indicate that lawful interception systems cost operators around Rs 12 crore annually, while internet traffic tapping infrastructure accounts for a further Rs 75-100 crore a year, highlighting the scale of investment needed to support expanding security and compliance requirements.

“The rising costs are being driven by a dramatic shift in how telecom networks are used. A decade ago, operators primarily handled voice calls, text messages and relatively modest amounts of data traffic. Today, a wide range of digital applications and use cases are driving significantly heavier traffic on telecom networks,” a telecom executive said. Average monthly

mobile data consumption has risen from around 62 MB per subscriber in 2014 to nearly 20 GB in 2024, while the subscriber base has expanded from about 933 million to nearly 1.2 billion users. This surge in traffic has significant implications for security compliance. Operators are required to store and process vast quantities of call records, internet records and network logs for extended periods. Supporting these requirements requires dedicated lawful interception platforms, location-based service systems, traffic-monitoring infrastructure and large-scale storage capabilities. Expert estimates suggest operators have invested around Rs 150 crore in CDR/IPDR infrastructure alone over the past four years, in addition to recurring operating expenditure. Industry executives said the growing complexity of cyber threats is adding another layer of expenditure at a time when telcos are also exploring new avenues for growth.

Rupee-dollar fluctuations driven by global, domestic factors: FM

New Delhi: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said fluctuations in the rupee against the US dollar are driven by multiple global and domestic factors, including geopolitical uncertainties, foreign capital movements and India’s import dependence on crude oil, fertilisers and gold. She underlined that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) intervenes only to curb excessive volatility and not to maintain a fixed exchange rate. Addressing reporters at Devanahalli near Bengaluru during a programme marking 12 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA government, Sitharaman said exchange rates were influenced by a range of external developments and market conditions. “Whenever there is a severe fluctuation or volatility, the Reserve Bank intervenes in the market not to fix a price. Only to stop any kind of fluctuation. The Reserve Bank comes into picture, stabilises it, and comes out, for which it uses foreign exchange from the Reserve. So it does it sparingly,” she said. The finance minister said factors such as US Federal Reserve policy decisions, global currency movements and foreign investment outflows affected the rupee. “The rupee and its fluctuations are because of various factors: uncertainties outside, the US Fed talking about increasing or decreasing interest rates in their country, the Japanese



yen crashing against the dollar and the Korean won crashing. So there are several reasons which determine the exchange rate between countries and currencies,” she said. Sitharaman said direct institutional and foreign investors booking profits and shifting funds due to developments in the US also impacted reserves and currency movements. She added that India’s need to import crude oil, fertilisers and gold required substantial dollar payments, making foreign exchange management critical. Highlighting fertiliser subsidies, she said, “Since the time of Covid, we have been giving a bag at Rs 300. After Covid, when we imported it from foreign countries, the same quantity, which is one bag, touched Rs 3,000, which means per farmer, per bag, we are giving anywhere between Rs 2,700 as subsidy.” On allegations by the Karnataka

government that the Centre was not providing the state’s due share of funds, Sitharaman said allocations were determined by the Finance Commission and not by the Union government. “Who sets the principle? Not PM Modi, not Government of India. There is a Finance Commission which goes around all states and decides on the basis of some metrics. That once decided, for the next five years, come what may, the central government will have to pay the state,” she said. Rejecting the argument that states should receive back all the taxes they contribute, she said, “If Bengaluru, Karnataka contribute and I need to get all the money back, the principle doesn’t work like that.” On the economy, Sitharaman said official data and global institutions consistently showed India as the fastest-growing major economy. “Repeatedly

last five, six years, India is the fastest growing economy. And this year, when the GDP numbers came, every sector right from manufacturing to agriculture, service, logistics, transport, every sector has shown substantial growth,” she said. On employment, Sitharaman said unemployment was declining, according to official surveys and pointed to government initiatives such as internships, skilling and AI-based training programmes. On state guarantee schemes, she said But don’t give if you don’t have the money and then blame the Centre saying, the Centre is not giving me money,” she said. She urged Karnataka to utilise central budget provisions for cold storage and warehousing projects through Farmer Producer Organisations, noting that no proposals had yet been received from the state.

Globally significant volcanic event formed Giant’s Causeway, scientists find

London: for centuries, the tale has been passed from generation to generation: how the Irish giant Finn McCool built the Giant’s Causeway in Northern Ireland to fight Benandonner, his Scottish rival, by hurling chunks of the Antrim coastline into the sea.Now, scientists have revealed it was intense volcanic activity during a “major globally impacting volcanic event” – and not a legendary battle between two destructive giants – that led to the formation of the coastline’s 40,000 distinctive interlocking basalt columns about 60m years ago.Geochronologists investigating how the Giant’s Causeway was created have discovered it was formed over 5.5m years, 8m years less than previously estimated.

They also found the processes that formed the Giant’s Causeway were linked to a globally significant volcanic event recorded in rocks as far away as Greenland. For the first time, they were able to definitively connect the first lava flows on the Northern Irish plateau to the same volcanic activity that formed the giant basalt columns in Fingal’s Cave on the Scottish Hebridean island of Staffa – rocks that were previously thought to have formed millions of years after the Causeway.Rock formations on the nearby Mourne mountain range and on the Hebridean isle of Rùm, as well as magmatic activity on Skye, can also be linked to this volcanic activity, placing the formation of the Giant’s Causeway within a more precise, global geological context for the first time and enabling scientists to



create a new timeline for volcanic activity across Northern Ireland.Dr Simon Tapster, a geochronologist at the British Geological Survey (BGS), said: “Fundamentally, what we’ve done is by piecing together this tapestry of volcanic rocks all across the North Atlantic, but focusing on Northern Ireland, we have been able to reassess a major globally

impacting volcanic event.

“In doing that, and in reassessing the timescales, we have shown that actually it occurred in a much shorter duration.”The Giant’s Causeway is a Unesco world heritage site and has been named one of the greatest natural wonders of the UK. According to Irish folklore, Finn McC-

Cool created the causeway so he could cross to Scotland to confront Benandonner, who was threatening his homeland – but retreated back to the island of Ireland, chased by his Scottish rival, when he saw the Scot was a much larger and more impressive giant. Legend has it that it was Oonagh, Finn’s quick-thinking wife, who then saved the day. She disguised Finn as a giant baby so that Benandonner, scared into believing the infant’s father would be large enough to beat him in a fight, rushed back across the causeway to Scotland – destroying as much of the crossing as he could on his way

Although visitors to the dramatic landscape may prefer to believe the legend, scientists have shown the Causeway was formed when thick molten rock rose through cracks in the Earth’s crust.

As the lava cooled and contracted, stress and tension built up in the rock, forcing it to fracture into mostly hexagonal columns, although some of the rocks have four, five, seven or more sides.Tapster’s research is part of a wider initiative at the BGS to improve the understanding of the UK’s geology through better quantifying geological time in the rocks around us.He said: “By looking at the timescales and the high-resolution timeline, we’re able to match it up with various other locations, particularly in the Inner Hebrides in Scotland, the volcanics of Mull, Rùm, the Isle of Skye, and taking a bigger view, looking at Greenland and the Faroe Islands.”

Discontent Iranian hardliners regarding the conditions of the agreement reached

Iran: Hardliners have mounted a rearguard rejection of a deal with the US as they say it does not guarantee sanctions relief, compensation or control of the strait of Hormuz.“The fact that they say we won and America has retreated is a blatant lie,” said the Iranian MP Kamran Ghazanfari. Meysam Nili, the managing director of Rajanews and brother-in-law of the hardline former president Ebrahim Raisi, called the deal on the table a catastrophic capitulation. He urged Iranians not to sit quietly.Faced with the onslaught, Iranian officials led by Mehdi Mohammadi, an adviser to the head of the negotiating team, Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, mounted a detailed rebuttal in an audio message insisting the deal would end the war, including Israel’s offensive in Lebanon, and that Tehran has not been required to make any new commitments on its nuclear programme, leaving the means of disposal of its highly enriched uranium – including down-blending inside Iran – to future discussions lasting 60 days.Mohammadi also said that by referring to “Iranian arrangements”, the text would allow Iran and Oman to charge fees for passage through the strait of Hormuz, and would even prevent Israeli commercial ships using the waterway. The hardliner’s criticism may help Donald Trump as the US president seeks to justify the deal as better than Obama’s. The two deals are not directly comparable, however, because the 2015 deal was

be freed.”The Khorosan newspaper expressed concern at the licence given to the critics of the proposed agreement. “If the regime is going to grant freedom of speech and assembly to this group so that they can chant slogans against the negotiations and the negotiators, similar freedom must be given to those in favour of the agreement so that they can also gather and march in support of the regime’s decision to end the war, sign the agreement, and even resume relations with the United States,” it said.“Then it will become clear that the majority of the Iranian people support the regime’s will for the agreement, and the minority cannot impose its will on the regime and the nation through shouting, using the national radio and television, abusing the gatherings. Shariatmadari wrote in an open letter: “We must ask Mr Ghalibaf and Mr Araghchi, wasn’t closing the strait of Hormuz one of our country’s main levers in the Ramadan war, and wasn’t closing the strait blocking the enemy’s commercial and economic breathing space and bringing it close to suffocation?! With what logical justification and acceptable explanation are these gentlemen going to give up this fateful lever?!“They say ‘we will charge service fees from passing ships’! That’s it?! America and its allies have martyred former supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the Islamic world shed the blood of dozens of nuclear scientists and high-ranking military commanders, hundreds of



a specific and detailed arms control agreement while the memorandum is focused on the preconditions for a ceasefire.Trump, who faces accusations that he has only achieved an agreement through a disruptive, expensive and illegal war that he could have reached through diplomacy, needs evidence that it is superior to the one Obama struck and from which he withdraw the US in 2018.The US had fought hard to have the phrase “Iranian arrangements” excluded, he claimed, and in the second phase of the deal had agreed to lift primary sanctions for the first time. His explanation is sharply at odds with the critics on points of fact and interpretation, which he said was because they were working from outdated drafts. On the nuclear programme, Mohammadi said the only statement in the text was that Iran would not build or purchase nuclear weapons, which he said was “what we have been saying for years”. The opponents have mounted protests outside the foreign ministry in Tehran, and launched a “we will not accept” hashtag. Government supporters say the Paydari Front is opposed to any deal and is not representative of ordinary Iranians, who know wars against superpowers rarely end in outright victory. The hardline Shia cleric and MP Hajatoleslam Naboyan, who acts as the de facto foreign affairs spokesman for the Paydari Front, appeared incredulous that the proposed agreement appeared to allow free commercial shipping in the strait. “Will Israeli commercial ships also be freed? It is the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” he said. “From now on, all Israeli ships, not military, all hostile countries, their ships and their movement in the strait of Hormuz must

innocent people and oppressed students. They have caused hundreds of billions of dollars in damage ... and now by opening the strait of Hormuz and charging service fees (!) from passing ships, we are going to release their economic and commercial bottleneck?!“He said the proposed deal was better for Iran than the 2015 nuclear pact agreed under Barack Obama that lifted sanctions in return for limits on its nuclear activities, because Tehran had shown it could control the strait of Hormuz. “This time, it is not like we will shut down the nuclear programme and wait for them to lift the sanctions,” he said. “There is no such wishful thinking. The strait is in our hands, we can close it any time we want at an hour.”He acknowledged that the text on the release of half of Iran’s frozen money held abroad, roughly \$12bn (£9bn), had not been finalised. “We know that America will not give us money,” he said. “The Arab countries have pledged this money and are forced to give it, because we are above them and they have seen our power in the region and have tasted our power. One of the implications of this agreement is that the Arab countries have been forced to accept Iran’s sovereignty and superiority and participate in making concessions.Critics in Iran aiming their fire at Ghalibaf and the foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, are from a group in the parliament coalesced around the Paydari Front including Mahmoud Nabavian, a hardline member of the national security committee, commentators such as Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor-in-chief of the Kayhan newspaper, and a senior commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps who worked alongside Russia in Syria.

U.N. Report: Armed Groups in Gaza Have Beaten, Maimed and Executed Dozens of Palestinians

London: A new report by the United Nations says armed groups and police units in Gaza have beaten, maimed and publicly executed dozens of Palestinians. The U.N. documented hundreds of cases of extrajudicial punishment, including “kneecapping, bone-breaking with metal pipes or cement bricks and beatings.” Al Jazeera has reported that certain armed groups in Gaza have been known to serve as Israeli agents, and that Israel has provided weapons and other assistance for these groups to oppose Hamas.In related news, Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza who was detained by Israeli forces in December 2024, has been reportedly transferred to another prison and placed in solitary confinement, according to the Israeli group Physicians for Human Rights. Abu

Safiya has reportedly faced torture, starvation and denial of medical care as his health worsens after over 500 days of Israeli imprisonment without charge.Meanwhile, a separate U.N. report has found Israeli forces are directly involved in settler attacks that have killed, wounded and displaced Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, while Israeli soldiers protect settlers. This comes as France has banned Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich from entering the country for promoting the annexation of the occupied West Bank and Gaza.In related news, Italian prosecutors have launched a probe against far-right Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir over reports of torture by members of the Gaza humanitarian aid flotilla who were abducted by Israeli forces last month.

Trump Says Iran Is Taking Too Long to Negotiate a Ceasefire Will Now Have

London: This morning, President Trump posted on Truth Social that Iran has taken too long to negotiate a ceasefire deal and will now have to “pay the price.” This comes as the U.S. military said it had completed strikes against Iran that were reportedly in response to the downing of a U.S. Apache helicopter near the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian state media is reporting that around 20,000 Iranians have lost access to drinking water after two reservoirs were reportedly hit by U.S. strikes. Two U.S. officials told CNN the Apache helicopter was brought down by an Iranian drone, and said it was unclear whether the helicopter was intentionally targeted. An Apache helicopter costs between \$52 million to over \$100 million, while an Iranian Shahed drone costs

roughly \$35,000 to produce. Iran said it launched retaliatory strikes on U.S. targets in the region. This morning, Iran’s Revolutionary Guards said they had carried out missile and drone attacks on U.S. military bases in Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain. In Lebanon, Israeli strikes killed at least eight people in the city of Tyre, despite Iran warning it would resume attacks against Israel if the strikes continued. The Israeli military issued new evacuation orders for Tyre, including its Christian quarter for the first time. Across southern Lebanon, Israeli air and artillery strikes killed at least 13 people on Tuesday. Since March, Israel has killed at least 3,600 people according to the Lebanese Health Ministry. A fifth of the population has been displaced, over 1 million people.

Kenyan Police Forces Fatally Shoot a Man During Protest Against U.S. Ebola Facility

New Work: In Kenya, police forces fatally shot a man as hundreds of people gathered to protest an Ebola quarantine facility for U.S. citizens in the town of Nanyuki. Witnesses told Reuters the man was seen with a bullet wound to the head as his body lay motionless in the back of a police vehicle. This came after Kenyan police on Tuesday fired tear gas and detained several residents who are protesting the U.S.-backed facility.Regina Njeri: “As a resident, I can say that we don’t have the capability of dealing with this disease. So, what we want is to be heard as the residents of Laikipia constituency or Laikipia at large and the whole country, because if it starts here, we believe that the whole country will get the disease, and we won’t have a way to

deal with it. We don’t have civic education on safety measures.” In Northern Ireland, anti-immigration riots are roiling Belfast after an asylum seeker from Sudan was charged with attempted murder in the stabbing attack of a man. Firefighters and emergency responders escorted immigrant families from their homes, after cars and garbage cans were set on fire and used to create roadblocks around the city. Michelle O’Neill, the first minister of Northern Ireland, said in a statement, “Groups of masked men burning families out of their homes is nothing less than disgusting cowardice. This has nothing to do with community. This is outright thuggery.”A World Cup referee from Somalia returned home on Wednesday after being denied en-

try into the United States just days before the start of the tournament. Omar Artan was due to be the first referee from Somalia to officiate at a World Cup and has been named one of Africa’s top referees. Artan had flown into Miami International Airport from Turkey and was reportedly told by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents that he was inadmissible to the U.S. Artan arrived in the Somali capital Mogadishu earlier today, where he was welcomed by soccer fans.Abdi Yusuf: “Our referee is an international standard. He has officiated international matches in Africa and Asia, and he was on his way to officiate global football matches. It would have been his first time participating in the world football stage. We

are saddened by the way he was discriminated against, and we strongly condemn this act.” A federal judge permanently blocked Alabama from executing 49-year-old inmate Jeffrey Lee by nitrogen gas, ruling the method violates the U.S. Constitution’s ban on cruel and unusual punishment. Lee was scheduled to be executed Thursday at an Alabama prison. Alabama’s attorney general said the state is appealing the decision, which means the case could end up before the U.S. Supreme Court.Trump’s immigration crackdown and visa restrictions have disrupted travel into the U.S. for scores of World Cup fans and players from qualifying nations, with advocates around the world condemning his policies.

A comprehensive introduction to purchasing couture

Acquiring your inaugural piece of couture is a uniquely significant experience. It transcends mere clothing; it frequently connects to a milestone, a cherished memory, or a moment of personal expression. However, in addition to the thrill, the initial couture purchase should be a deliberate choice, embodying both individual style and enduring worth. Choose longevity over trends

“One of the first things I share with those entering the world of couture is that not all couture holds value equally,” said Anu Mehta. Longevity and resale can vary significantly depending on the silhouette and the design house. She advises beginning with a timeless silhouette from a house whose craftsmanship and relevance have endured, rather than choosing something purely trend-driven. The strongest first couture purchase is often the one that still feels relevant years later. Treat fittings as non-negotiable

Anu highlighted that fittings are one of the most important parts of the couture journey. Couture is sized to the body, not to a label, and much of its value lies in the fitting process itself. When fittings are rushed or overlooked, buyers often miss the very thing that makes couture special — precision, comfort, and personalisation. Understand the craft before the surface

“Before falling in love with embellishment or surface detail, I encourage people to ask questions,” said Anu Mehta. How was the piece constructed? What handwork is involved? How



many hours went into creating it? Craft literacy protects you and helps distinguish true couture value from visual excess. Buy with intention, not impulse

Anu said, “What I find most interesting today is that younger luxury consumers are becoming far more intentional. They are choosing one meaningful piece over several lesser ones.” According to her, you should ask yourself: whether the piece earns its place in a wardrobe that already works, not whether it works for just one occasion.

Comfort is part of luxury First-time couture enthusiasts often focus entirely on how a piece photographs or appears at an event, but comfort matters just as much. Couture should feel empowering, not restrictive. You should be able to move, sit, and wear it with confidence. A beautiful garment that feels uncomfortable rarely becomes a piece you return to.

Comfort and wearability are part of luxury, not separate from it. Think beyond one occasion

“I encourage people to think about rewear value from the very beginning. Some of the strongest couture investments are pieces that can be styled differently over time — through layering, separates, or changing accessories,” said Anu. The conversation is shifting from ‘Where will I wear this once?’ to ‘How can this evolve with me?’ Couture today is increasingly moving toward versatility and repeat styling. Let personal style lead

Trends will always exist, but your first couture piece should feel like an extension of your own identity rather than a response to what is momentarily popular. “I often advise people to choose what feels authentic to their wardrobe and personality, because that is usually what remains timeless. Buy for self-expression, not social pressure,” said Anu.

Affordable airport-inspired looks you can easily replicate

Airport attire has now officially emerged as a distinct fashion category.

The era when travel outfits merely consisted of the most comfortable clothing is behind us. Nowadays, airport fashion focuses on achieving an ideal equilibrium: garments that are soft enough for extended flights, practical for managing luggage, yet stylish enough to shine in those spontaneous travel photographs. The best airport outfits usually have three things in common: relaxed silhouettes, breathable fabrics, and easy layering. Think coordinated sets, oversized fits, sneakers, roomy bags, and outfits that look intentional without feeling like you tried too hard. You don’t need a celebrity budget to recreate those effortlessly stylish airport looks. These budget-friendly picks bring the same comfort-meets-style energy.

1. GRECILOOKS Rayon Co-ord Set: A coordinated set is probably the easiest way to nail airport style because it instantly looks put together. This rayon co-ord set combines comfort with a relaxed silhouette, making it ideal for long flights and travel days. The matching pieces remove the stress of outfit planning, while the lightweight fabric

keeps things comfortable when you are spending hours travelling. Style it with: White sneakers, a crossbody bag, and oversized sunglasses for an effortless celebrity-inspired airport look.

2. Shasmi 3-Piece Co-ord Set: For those who love a more fashion-forward airport outfit, this three-piece set brings a trendy layered feel. Featuring a button-front shirt, tube top, and wide-leg pants, it creates a stylish silhouette while keeping comfort intact. The loose fit makes it practical for travel, while the layered styling gives the outfit more personality. Style it with: A tote bag, chunky sneakers, and minimal jewellery.

3. WEET Printed Cotton Tracksuit: Nothing says travel comfort quite like a tracksuit. This cotton set combines ease and practicality, making it perfect for early morning flights or long journeys. The printed design adds a fun element so the outfit feels more styled rather than just like basic loungewear. Style it with: A baseball cap, sneakers, and a sleek backpack.

4. TOPLOT jumpsuit Co-ord Set: A jumpsuit-style airport outfit solves one major travel problem: deciding what separates to pair together. This one-piece silhouette



gives a clean, streamlined look while allowing easy movement. The breathable feel and comfortable fit make it a great choice for flights, road trips, and vacation days. Style it with: White sneakers and a structured handbag for a polished travel look.

5. GRECILOOKS Textured Lycra Blend Co-ord Set: If you want something that feels a little more elevated, this textured co-ord set is a great option. The matching top and bottom combination creates a sleek outfit while the stretchy fabric keeps it travel-friendly. It works well for airports because it looks stylish without sacrificing comfort. Style it with: Layered necklaces, a tote bag, and sunglasses.

6. TOPLOT Notch Neck

Co-ord Set: This relaxed co-ord set focuses on easy dressing. The notch neckline and loose-fit silhouette give it a contemporary feel, while the comfortable shape makes it perfect for long hours of sitting. It is the kind of outfit you can wear straight from the airport to exploring a new city. Style it with: Comfortable trainers and a lightweight jacket.

7. TYSORT Oversized Co-ord Set: Oversized airport outfits continue to dominate because they combine comfort and style so well. This set features a relaxed top and baggy pants that give the outfit a cool, effortless vibe.

It is ideal for travellers who prefer a street-style-inspired look. Style it with: Chunky sneakers, a cap, and a large carryall bag.

Face washes designed for oil control help maintain the vitality of your skin



People with oily skin encounter numerous challenges, especially during the summer season. In fact, individuals with oily skin often struggle with excessive shine, clogged pores, acne outbreaks, and a perpetually greasy appearance throughout the day. This highlights the necessity of using a facial cleanser specifically formulated for oily and acne-prone skin. Choosing the right face wash for oily skin is important for maintaining healthy, balanced skin. A good face cleanser for oily skin helps remove dirt, excess oil, sweat, and impurities without making the skin overly dry or irritated. These face washes are typically infused with ingredients like salicylic acid, niacinamide, tea tree oil, charcoal, or neem that help control excess sebum production, cleanse pores deeply, and reduce acne-causing bacteria.

While these face washes are great at removing excessive oil and germs, causing bacteria, it is worth noting that over-washing your face with these face washes can lead to dryness or irritation. That is why we have curated this list of 7 face washes that are perfect for people with oily skin.

Top 7 oil-control face washes:

1. The Derma Co 2% Sali-Ci-

namide Anti-Acne Face Wash | With 2% Salicylic Acid & 2% Niacinamide: The Derma Co 2% Sali-Cinamide Anti-Acne Face Wash is specifically formulated for people with oily, acne-prone skin who need deep cleansing without excessive dryness. This face wash is powered by 2% Salicylic Acid and 2% Niacinamide that help unclog pores, reduce acne, fade spots, and control excess oil while soothing irritated skin. Its lightweight gel texture feels refreshing and leaves skin clean, smooth, and balanced after every wash. It also contains calming ingredients like Cica and Allantoin, making it suitable for daily skincare routines focused on clearer and healthier-looking skin.

Customer Reviews

Customers appreciate this face wash for effectively reducing pimples, controlling oil, and keeping the skin fresh throughout the day. Many users with acne-prone skin mentioned visible improvement in breakouts within a few weeks of regular use. A few users also liked the lightweight gel consistency and refreshing feel.

However, some reviewers with dry or sensitive skin felt the formula was slightly drying when used twice daily.

2. Tea Tree Pimple Control Face Wash: Mamaearth Tea Tree Pimple Control Face Wash combines Tea Tree Oil, Neem, and Salicylic Acid to cleanse and control oil production gently. Salicylic acid in this face wash unclogs pores and fights pimples. Its refreshing formula helps remove dirt, impurities, and excess oil while supporting clearer-looking skin over time. It also contains niacinamide that evens out the skin tone. This face wash has a mild foaming texture that feels soothing and works well for daily use without making the skin feel overly tight. The face wash is especially popular among teenagers and young adults looking for a natural-inspired skincare option to manage pimples, blackheads, and occasional acne flare-ups.

Customers frequently praise this cleanser for reducing acne and keeping oily skin under control. Many users noticed clearer skin and fewer breakouts after consistent use. Buyers also appreciated its refreshing texture and profound cleansing effect. However, some reviewers felt that the formula could be slightly harsh for dry or sensitive skin types, especially during winter. Overall, it is considered a dependable acne cleanser for people struggling with oily skin and recurring pimples.

4. Cetaphil Pro Oil Control Foam Wash - 236ml – Daily Foaming Face Wash for Oily & Acne-Prone Skin: Cetaphil Pro Oil Control Foam Wash is a gentle foaming cleanser is a Hypoallergenic & Non-Comedogenic Oil-free wash, and specially made for oily and sensitive skin. It effectively removes excess oil, dirt, and impurities while maintaining the skin’s natural moisture balance. Its soap-free and non-comedogenic formula cleanses without causing irritation or dryness,

commonly appreciated as a beginner-friendly face wash for oily skin.

3. Neutrogena Oil Free Acne Wash | 2% Salicylic Acid Deep Cleansing Face Wash for Oily Skin: Neutrogena Oil Free Acne Wash is a dermatologically-tested cleanser formulated with Salicylic Acid to target acne, clogged pores, and excess oil, and it deep cleanses without over-drying your face. Its lightweight foaming formula deeply cleanses the skin while helping prevent future breakouts. This face wash has MICROCLEAR® technology, clinically proven to boost delivery of salicylic acid to unclog congested pores. It is widely known for its effective acne-fighting performance and refreshing after-wash feel. This face wash is suitable for oily and acne-prone skin and works well for people looking for a strong yet easy-to-use skincare solution. With regular use, it helps maintain cleaner, clearer, and smoother-looking skin without leaving a greasy residue. Customer Reviews

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dependable acne cleanser for people struggling with oily skin and recurring pimples.

5. Cerave Blemish Control Cleanser with 2% Salicylic Acid & Niacinamide for Acne Prone Skin, Controls Acne & Spots : CeraVe Blemish Control Cleanser is a skincare-focused cleanser formulated with Salicylic Acid, Niacinamide, and Ceramides to help manage blemishes, acne, and reduce oil production while supporting the skin barrier. Its gel-based formula gently exfoliates, removes impurities, and controls excess oil without stripping the skin of essential moisture. Its dermatologist-developed formula is suitable for acne-prone and combination skin types. The inclusion of ceramides in this face wash helps maintain hydration and skin comfort, making it a balanced cleanser for those who want acne care with added barrier protection and long-lasting skin health.

making it suitable for daily use. Its soft foam texture provides a soothing cleansing experience and leaves the skin feeling fresh, balanced, and comfortable. This cleanser is ideal for people seeking mild yet effective oil control with dermatologist-tested skincare support.

Customer Reviews

Customers appreciate this face wash for being gentle yet effective for oily and sensitive skin. Many buyers reported reduced shine and a balanced skin feel after regular use. Customers especially liked that it cleanses well without making the skin feel tight or dry. Some users dealing with severe acne felt the formula was too mild for noticeable acne treatment. Overall, it is highly rated for comfort, softness, and daily oil control.

6. The Body Shop The Body Shop Tea Tree oil face wash: The Body Shop Tea Tree Skin Clearing Facial Wash is a refreshing cleanser enriched with Community Fair Trade Tea Tree Oil. It is designed to cleanse oily and blemish-prone skin while leaving it feeling purified and refreshed. The lightweight gel texture creates a cooling sensation and effectively removes excess oil and impurities from the skin’s surface. Enriched with salicylic acid, this face wash helps reduce oil production and unclogs pores. It is suitable for daily use and is loved for its natural tea tree aroma and clean finish. It helps maintain a shine-free look and supports clearer skin with regular use.

Customer Reviews

Customers often praise this cleanser for balancing acne treatment with hydration. Many users noticed smoother skin texture and fewer clogged pores after consistent use. Buyers with sensitive skin appreciated the fragrance-free formula and non-stripping feel. Some reviewers mentioned that visible acne improvement may take a few weeks. Overall, users consider it a high-quality cleanser

that supports both acne management and skin barrier health.

7. Blue Nectar Honey & Neem Face Wash for Oily & Acne Prone Skin | Natural Cleanser for Acne and Oil Control: Blue Nectar Honey & Neem Face Wash blends Ayurvedic-inspired ingredients like Neem, Honey, and Aloe Vera to cleanse oily and acne-prone skin gently. The formula helps remove dirt, impurities, and excess oil while keeping the skin soft and hydrated. Honey supports moisture retention, while Neem helps purify and refresh the skin naturally. The cleanser creates a soothing cleansing experience and leaves the skin feeling clean without excessive dryness. It is suitable for people looking for a herbal skincare option that balances cleansing with nourishment.

Customer Reviews

Customers often appreciate this face wash for its gentle and soothing cleansing experience. Many users liked the combination of Neem and Honey, saying it leaves the skin soft and refreshed after washing. Customers with oily skin reported reduced greasiness and a healthy glow over time. Some reviewers mentioned that while it works well for mild acne and daily cleansing, it may not provide dramatic results for severe acne conditions. Overall, it is valued for its natural feel and skin comfort.



ENTERTAINMENT

Meet Nidhaa Bhatt, wife of Urmila Matondkar’s ex-husband Mohsin Akhtar



Mumbai : Ever since Urmila Matondkar’s ex-husband Mohsin Akhtar shared pictures from his wedding, social media users have been eager to know more about the woman who has become a part of his new journey. While the newlywed couple has largely stayed away from the spotlight, fans have already begun flooding the comments section with warm wishes and heartfelt messages.

Nidhaa Bhatt, who recently married Mohsin Akhtar, maintains a relatively private presence online. Very little verified information about her is publicly available, and her social media accounts offer only limited details about her personal and professional life. Following Mohsin’s wedding announcement, several followers took to Instagram to express their happiness for the couple. One user wrote, “@mohsinakh Seeing

you here, so beautifully happy and fulfilled, brings tears to my eyes. You have always deserved the absolute best, and I am so incredibly grateful that you found it in @nidhab. Seeing the way she loves you and how you both look at each other is everything we ever prayed for. Finally, your beautiful new chapter begins. @nidhab we are so incredibly blessed to officially welcome you into our family and our hearts. We love you both so much.” Another admirer of the couple commented, “Masha Allah @nidhab seeing you so happy fills my heart with joy. May Allah bless your Nikah, protect your love, and grant you a beautiful life together filled with barakah, peace, and endless happiness. Ameen.” While Nidhaa has not publicly shared many personal details, a look at her private Facebook profile reportedly suggests that she is from Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. However, information regarding her profession and background has not been independently verified.

Peddi producer stresses importance of analyzing US collections

Chennai : Ram Charan and Buchi Babu Sana’s much-hyped sports drama Peddi may be holding steady in the Telugu states, but its overseas performance has emerged as a major concern for the makers. As the film enters its second week, its North American run has turned out to be particularly disappointing. Trade reports indicate that buyers in the region could end up facing losses of nearly 40%, making it one of the biggest setbacks for the film outside India. Producer Satish Kiluru openly addressed the issue while interacting with the media. Acknowledging the underwhelming overseas performance, he admitted that the US market continues to remain a puzzle for filmmakers.



"We have to study the US collections," the producer said, adding that the team is still trying to understand why the film failed to connect with audiences there. He also noted that market dynamics appear to be changing, though he did not elaborate further. The

Hindi version has also struggled to generate momentum. Commenting on the film's performance in North India, Satish stated that only a handful of films manage to ignite widespread excitement among audiences and that the team is unsure why Peddi could not

create a similar impact as it just managed to garner Rs 11 crore plus in the North market. At a time when many producers prefer to avoid discussing box-office setbacks publicly, Satish's candid interaction with the media has drawn appreciation from industry observers. His willingness to address the film's performance openly has been viewed as a refreshing departure from the norm. According to a distributor, despite its overseas challenges, Peddi continues to post respectable numbers in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has garnered Rs 112 crore share till date. "The film is gradually slowing down in some centres, but it still has the potential to perform well in the Telugu states.

Haunted 3D: echoes of the past scares up ₹3.60 crore in opening weekend

Mumbai : While much of the weekend conversation centred around big names and high-profile releases, one horror film quietly continued to attract audiences across theatres. Vikram Bhatt’s latest offering has emerged as a surprise performer, holding its own in a competitive box-office race. Released on June 12, Haunted 3D: Echoes Of The Past has maintained a steady upward trend through its opening weekend. The film arrived in cinemas alongside Kangana Ranaut’s Bharat Bhagya Viddhaata and Main Vaapas Aaunga, featuring Diljit Dosanjh, Sharvari and Vedang Raina, but has managed to stay ahead of both titles in terms of



collections. According to industry tracker Sacnilk, the horror sequel earned ₹3.60 crore net on its third day in theatres. The Sunday figure represents a growth of 10.8 per cent over Saturday’s ₹3.25 crore collection. With three days completed, the film’s India net earnings

have reached ₹9.35 crore, while its India gross collection stands at ₹11.03 crore. The movie is currently running across 4,130 screens nationwide. The strong weekend performance is particularly notable given the film’s relatively modest promotional

campaign before release. Despite limited pre-release buzz, the sequel appears to have benefited from audience curiosity and the popularity associated with the original Haunted 3D, which was one of the most successful horror films of its time when it hit theatres in 2011. Although the makers have not officially disclosed the film’s production cost, several reports suggest that Haunted 3D: Echoes Of The Past was made on an estimated budget of ₹15 crore. Directed by Vikram Bhatt, the film stars Mahaakshay Chakraborty, popularly known as Mimoh Chakraborty, alongside Chetna Pande and Hemant Pandey.

Music maestro Pritam signals shift, says it’s time for new journeys

Mumbai : Music composer Pritam, known for delivering chart-topping Bollywood soundtracks, recently celebrated his 55th birthday on June 14. Post that, he shared a post on Instagram thanking fans for their wishes. However, what caught attention was his statement that he has decided to “gift himself a few years” to live life differently and catch up on what he has missed. In his cryptic note, he wrote that ‘mainstream’ has been a great ride, but it’s now time to set off on ‘new journeys’. His post left fans wondering whether he is retiring from Bollywood music. This comes months after singer Arijit Singh announced his retirement from playback singing. Sharing black-and-white photos of himself on Instagram, Pritam wrote, “Thank you for all the wishes. Can’t answer everyone individually, but please accept my sincere gratitude.”



He further shared that he is embarking on new journeys, hinting that he might take a break from ‘mainstream’ music. “Today, I have decided to gift myself a few years to live life differently. To catch up on what I’ve missed. Time to set off on new journeys, which have been kept on the back burner for long. Mainstream is a great ride. But I’ve always been more curious about the roads unexplored. Thank you for all the love & support. Always,” he wrote. Check out his post below! Netizens are convinced Pritam is taking

a break from Bollywood music. One fan commented, “I think you are also taking break from music industry. I will miss new songs of Pritam, specially arijit+ Pritam combination,” while another one wrote, “First Arijit, then you...taking a break from mainstream Bollywood Music. It will be loss for them, but for a true music lover it will be boon in disguise. Waiting for some magical & musical experience....perhaps with Arijit again!” A third comment read, “Now dada coming in indie scene.” Last year, around the release of Metro... In Dino, Pritam told Screen that he wanted to “pull back from commercial music a bit” to spend more time with his children, who were preparing to move to the US for higher studies. However, he continued to take on new projects, composing music for several films, including his latest, Cocktail 2.

25 years of lagaan: Javed Akhtar once called script ‘Atrocious’



Mumbai : Ashutosh Gowariker’s Lagaan completed 25 years since its release recently. The makers held a special event recently commemorating the occasion, and it was attended by several prominent Bollywood celebrities. During the event, a lot of stories and anecdotes related to the film came up, and one of those was that Javed Akhtar had found the script atrocious. Lagaan became one of the biggest hits in Hindi cinema and even bagged an Academy Award nomination. Aktar recalled his initial reaction to the script and shared that the

film challenged a lot of industry assumptions prevalent at the time. He revealed what he told actor Aamir Khan back then and said, “I said, ‘What are you doing? The film you are making is not going to work at all. The script is atrocious.’ In other words, everything that shouldn’t be in a film is in it. People say films where the hero wears a dhoti don’t work anymore; times have changed. We didn’t even let Gabbar Singh wear a dhoti. People say period films don’t work. You are making a period film. People say cricket is not cinematic at all- it’s such a

slow game.” He continued that he also did not like the situation of the songs in the film. “What is the situation for songs in your film? The first situation is that it is about to rain. The second situation is that it may rain. The third situation is, when will it rain? The fourth situation is -what if it doesn’t rain? These are your situations. What am I supposed to write songs for in all this?” However, Aamir Khan’s faith never wavered. He told Akhtar that the film will turn out to be very good and it is going to work. Khan’s instincts were ultimately right because Lagaan became a huge success. Back then, it was the third Indian film to be nominated for the Academy Awards, after Mother India and Salaam Bombay! It was also the most-awarded film at the 47th Filmfare Awards with eight wins. Lagaan starred Aamir Khan, Gracy Singh, Rachel Shelley, Paul Blackthorne, Suhasingi Mulay, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Rajendra Gupta, Raghubir Yadav, Rajesh Vivek, and Aditya Lakhia.

Kangana Ranaut’s Bharat Bhagya Vidhata fails to gain momentum on Sunday

Mumbai : Kangana Ranaut’s latest big-screen outing continues its run in theatres amid a crowded release calendar. While the film has attracted attention for its subject matter and recent tax-free status in two states, its box office journey is yet to find strong momentum. Directed by Manoj Tapedia, Bharat Bhagya Viddhaata earned an estimated ₹1.58 crore net on Sunday, according to industry tracker Sacnilk. With this, the film’s total India net collection has reached ₹4.03 crore after three days in cinemas. The reported India gross collection currently stands at ₹ crore. The Day 3 figures suggest that the film witnessed only marginal improvement despite the weekend advantage. After opening with ₹1 crore net on Friday, the film registered a healthy rise of nearly 45 per cent on Saturday, collecting ₹1.45 crore net. However, it was unable to build significantly on that growth during its first Sunday. The film also



saw a notable reduction in screenings. Its show count reportedly dropped from 1,956 on Saturday to 794 on Sunday. Occupancy levels also slipped to around 14 per cent, compared to approximately 17 per cent the previous day. In an effort to draw more audiences to theatres, the makers introduced a nationwide Buy One Get One (BOGO) ticket offer during the weekend. Despite the promotional campaign, the film’s collections remained largely steady, indicating that the offer had limited impact on boosting footfalls. The Kangana Ranaut-star-

rer faced stiff competition from multiple releases at the box office. It arrived in theatres alongside Main Vaapas Aaunga, starring Diljit Dosanjh, Governor featuring Homi Bhabha, and Haunted 3D: Echoes of the Past directed by Vikram Bhatt. Away from the box office numbers, the film has received support from state governments. During its opening weekend, Bharat Bhagya Viddhaata was declared tax-free in both Delhi and Haryana. Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini announced the decision after attending a special screening in Chandigarh with Kangana

Ranaut, while Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta had extended the same benefit earlier. Released on June 12, the film revisits the events of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks from a lesser-known perspective. Instead of focusing on the more widely documented locations, the story highlights the extraordinary bravery displayed by healthcare workers at Mumbai’s Cama Hospital during the crisis. Inspired by the real-life experiences of nurse Anjali Kulthe and her colleagues, the film follows doctors, nurses and hospital staff who put themselves in danger to protect patients caught in the midst of the terror attack. Particular attention is given to their efforts to safeguard pregnant women, newborn babies and critically ill patients as the situation unfolded. Apart from Kangana Ranaut, who also co-produced the project under the Manikarnika Films banner, the film features Girija Oak, Smriti Tambe and Esha Dey in important roles.

Munawar Faruqui stands by Pranit more

Mumbai : Pranit More has been on the receiving end ever since a clip from his recent stand-up show went viral. While Munawar Faruqui had earlier questioned the discussion that happened during the show, he has now urged social media users to calm down. Faruqui has requested netizens to stop channeling hate towards the people involved in the conversation and said that an FIR has been filed against them and they will bear the consequences legally; spreading hate isn’t the right way. Taking to his Instagram account, Munawar Faruqui shared, “Mujhe lagta hai ab hum sabko tham jana chahiye. Comedian ne bahut galat baat boli, crowd work mein bhi bahut galat baat hui. Us ladki ne bhi jo bola, main usse disagree karta hoon. Unhone jo bola, mujhe sunna pasand nahi hai, lekin ek level hota hai. (I think all of us need to stop now. The comedian said something very wrong, and what happened during the crowd-work segment was also deeply problematic. I also disagree with what that woman said. I did not like hearing any of it, but there has to be a limit.)” Faruqui further added, “FIR ho gayi, job chali gayi, career khatam ho gaya, samaj mein izzat chali gayi, sab ho gaya. Unke saath unki baaton ke liye bahut bura hua hai, lekin ab tham jao. Content ke naam par jo unhe nichoda ja raha hai, bas karo bhai. (An FIR has been filed, jobs have been lost, careers have been damaged, and their reputation in society has been ruined; all of that has already happened.



Kriti Sanon shields Rashmika Mandanna in crowded Pune mall, video goes viral

Mumbai : A promotional event for Cocktail 2 in Pune turned chaotic after Shahid Kapoor, Kriti Sanon and Rashmika Mandanna were mobbed by an overwhelming crowd at a mall. What was meant to be a fan interaction soon became difficult to manage, with several videos from the venue now going viral on social media. While the crowd surge created panic around the stars, one particular moment featuring Kriti Sanon and Rashmika Mandanna has caught everyone’s attention. In a video from the event, Kriti is seen stepping forward and shielding Rashmika

ward and shielding Rashmika with her arms as they try to make their way through the crowd. Several clips from the Pune event show the stars surrounded by fans and security personnel as the crowd pushes closer to them. In one video, Kriti Sanon is seen staying calm amid the commotion and carefully protecting Rashmika Mandanna as they move through the packed venue. The video quickly went viral, with fans praising Kriti for her presence of mind and protective gesture. Many social media users appreciated the way she looked out for Rashmika



during the chaos. One user wrote, “Kriti, you are a good sister.” Another comment read, “Kyaa baat hai... Kriti protect kar rahi hai Rashmika ko.” A third user wrote, “The way Kriti is

protecting Rashmika — pure bond.” As per reports, the situation became difficult after fans allegedly broke barricades and rushed towards the actors. The organisers reportedly struggled to control the

crowd, following which the event was cut short and the stars were escorted away urgently. In another video from the event, Shahid Kapoor is seen losing his cool amid the rush, while Kriti continues to maintain her composure and helps navigate the situation. Cocktail 2 stars Shahid Kapoor, Kriti Sanon and Rashmika Mandanna in the lead roles. The film is directed by Homi Adajania and is one of the most awaited romantic dramas of the year. The film wrapped its shoot in January. Announcing the wrap, Homi had shared a fun picture with the lead cast and written,

“Cocktail 2 shoot wrapped. I may be biased, but this one feels a tad special. Big love to my fab crew & cast for tolerating the absurdity that I am. Love you guys.” The film comes after the 2012 romantic drama Cocktail, which starred Saif Ali Khan, Deepika Padukone and Diana Penty. While Cocktail 2 is expected to have a fresh story and new characters, Kriti had earlier said that the new film carries a similar contemporary energy. Speaking to Zoom, Kriti had said, “When you watch Cocktail 1, something about it still feels today. It doesn’t

make you feel like it’s, what, 12 years old or something, you know? And you still feel like it’s today’s film. And I think that’s how even this film is. It’s very refreshing, the visuals are stunning, and it’s got a take on modern equations and relationships. Very relevant to what it speaks about.” She had also opened up about working with Shahid, Rashmika and Homi Adajania. “And I’ve had a blast shooting with Shahid and Rashmika, and of course, Homi is mad, so his craziness kind of keeps us all going for a fun ride,” Kriti added.

Supreme Court stays HC pleas against transgender rights amendment



New Delhi, June 15: The Supreme Court on Monday stayed further proceedings before the high courts on petitions challenging the provisions of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026. A bench of Chief Justice Surya

Kant and Justice V Mohana agreed to hear the Centre's petition seeking to consolidate and transfer all pending pleas challenging the Act from various high courts to the apex court.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the

Centre, told the bench that the issue relates to constitutional validity of a central Act. "Issue notice," the bench said, adding, "further proceedings before the high courts shall remain stayed". On May 27, Mehta had mentioned the matter before the top court

and sought an urgent listing of the transfer petitions. The top law officer had said that since multiple high courts were currently seized of the matter, there was a significant risk of "divergent views" and conflicting judicial rulings on the validity of the federal legislation.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026, has come under intense legal scrutiny from human rights activists and members of the LGBTQ+ community. The primary bone of contention is the removal of the concept of "self-identification" of gender, a right previously upheld by the Supreme Court in its landmark NALSA judgment. The 2026 Amendment reportedly mandates medical or administrative interventions for gender recognition, which the petitioners argue violates the

right to dignity, privacy, and bodily autonomy.

On May 4, the apex court had sought responses from the Centre and others on separate pleas challenging the validity of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026. On March 25, Parliament passed a bill to amend the law on the protection and rights of transgender persons, which excludes social orientations from the ambit of the statute. It received the President's assent on March 30. The Act provides for graded punishment based on the gravity of harm inflicted on such people. The petitioners challenging the validity of the Act have referred to the apex court's 2014 judgement which had upheld the transgender persons' right to decide their self-identified gender.

World cup racism monitor urges FIFA to drop official over gesture

Geneva, June 15: FIFA's discrimination monitor at the World Cup called Monday for a video review official to be removed for appearing to make a hand gesture resembling a white supremacist sign.

When the official broadcast of Germany's opening game against Curaçao on Sunday cut pre-game to show the team of video review analysts, Shaun Evans from Australia made an "OK" symbol with his right hand in front of his right leg. Though the game was played in Houston, video officials work in Dallas at the World Cup broadcast center. In 2019, the gesture — with thumb and forefinger touched in a circle and other fingers outstretched — was designated a hate symbol by the New York-based Anti-Defamation League. "Advice from our experts is that the gesture used clearly resembles an



upside down 'OK' hand symbol used as a 'white power' symbol in global far-right circles," the Fare network, a long-time partner of FIFA and European soccer body UEFA to monitor racist and discriminatory chants, flags and symbols at international games, said in a statement.

"Clearly this official should have no further role to play in this World Cup," Fare said in a statement, describing the gesture as "neo-nazi." FIFA was asked

for comment. In Australia, the Professional Football Referees Association and governing body Football Australia were contacted for comment. It was unclear if Evans, working at his first game at the World Cup, was making a political gesture or playing a children's game prank. The "gotcha" or "circle game" is where someone flashes an upside-down OK sign below their waist and punches in the shoulder anyone who looks at it.

Hyderabad seen as launchpad for India's rugby, says Rahul Bose

Hyderabad, June 15: Any sport needs the oxygen of fan support and sponsor support and that invariably happens if you are available to be watched on mass media. In this case of course it is television, digital and so that would be a big accelerator in creating fan support and sponsor support and to a large extent RPL is the one avenue through which we can put this sport out into the eyes and hearts and minds of the general public.

We think the biggest milestone for Indian rugby in the last five years has been in the professionalizing of approaches, whether it's at the grassroots level and where the upskilling of coaches and PT teachers is concerned, giving assistance to all our state federations in that effort, and there are much larger efforts going to play out in the next five years, and also the professionalizing of approach in how you are nurturing and caring for your players at the

high performance level, which is at the national level. And that we have instituted what we call a 360 degree support of high performance to our players, starting with psychology, nutrition, strength and conditioning, players insurance, and even paying players for attending national camps and national duty. So that 360 degrees has been created so that our players can walk onto the field with absolutely the least amount of pressure and the maximum amount of comfort, both physical, mental and psychological. The evolution of the women's Indian team has been very heartening. Like all team sports, it is a slow progress and it is something that can't be measured in a linear fashion. But overall, the federation is very happy with the progress our women's teams are making.

This is buttressed and supported, not least by the fact that our age grade, under 18, under 20, players who are



women are being looked after better. So are the men, of course. But with the women, we are finding results a little bit quicker because the nation pool in international women's rugby is a little smaller and also the professionalization with which women's rugby was started in India was a few years after we started men's rugby. So they have the ad-

vantage of processes that have been tried and trusted and have been approved and we are using them to move forward. As we all know, if you want to build a sport which a nation can perform at the highest level, then you have to spot, scout and pick children from school. In rugby, because it is a physical game, we first start with touch rugby in schools, where

the kids are as young as 10, 11 and 12. And then of course, we move into semi-contact rugby for the under-15s, and then into full-contact rugby after that.

So, already the entire grassroots system is based around outreach to schools, communities, and in the districts, maybe a cluster of schools, where the intervention happens with a

cluster of schools and not just one school. And of course, through the coaches, as well as upskilling PT teachers to get them to buy-in to including rugby in their programme. So, right now, all the thrust has been in schools, in rural areas, in the hinterlands, but gradually, the plan is to move also into schools in urban areas, so that they will also begin to pick up the sport. And with the RPL, there are also cities that these players, these first-time trios of rugby can get behind their teams and create a kind of a support base for their teams, and also watching their teams play will give them wind beneath the wings to continue their sport. Hyderabad is in any case the main focal point of rugby development in Telangana. And from there, all the efforts spread out across the entire state. So, as far as the state association is concerned, of course, it plays a very important role. But since there is a Hyderabad Heroes team in the RPL, there is even

more impetus for the sport to gain traction in the city. And as I said earlier in the earlier question, there is going to be a schools outreach, starting with the six cities where the RPL is based. So, that will further increase the importance of Hyderabad in contributing to Indian rugby.

I won't call it our ambition but our biggest hope for Indian Rugby in the next decade is for both our teams to gain entry into the Olympics and for that we have to reach at least the top two in Asia. Our women are ranked sixth in Asia right now so they have to move up four places and we are hoping they will do that by 2032 Olympics and our men are ranked 12th in Asia and we have built a pathway for them to hopefully proceed and make the top two in Asia by 2036 Olympics. The city can expect the best rugby on the planet, at least in and around these few months. The city can expect the best players in the world, playing with

the best Indian players in the country. Our men and women are participating this time in RPL men and women's. This time there's not only RPL men, there's RPL women. So, everybody is very excited to give the women's game the same importance as the men's game is given. That has always been the creed within Rugby India and we want to spread that creed into the RPL. The game is very easy to understand. The game is very exciting. It's very, very fast. It's very physical. So, there is something happening every few seconds in a sevens rugby game. And since a game is four minutes of four quarters each, a total game is about 20-22 minutes. So, it isn't something that you have to sit and wait for something to happen over a long period of time. There is a score in sevens rugby every 90-120 seconds. So, it's continuous excitement, easy to understand with the best players in the world. So, it's a win-win-win.

Sweden crush Tunisia 5-1, dominate world cup group



Monterrey, June 15: Sweden crushed Tunisia 5-1 on Sunday to leave the North African nation's defensive reputation in tatters and seize control of World Cup Group F.

Graham Potter's men took the lead in Guadalupe in the seventh minute courtesy of Brighton midfielder Yasin Ayari's thunderbolt from outside the box, following a mix-up at the back. The celebrations of Ayari, who is of Moroccan and Tunisian descent, were muted despite his fine finish. Sweden

doubled their lead on half an hour after a rapid break freed Alexander Isak on the left.

The Liverpool forward raced forward and cut inside before unleashing a shot, which goalkeeper Mouhib Chamakh failed to keep out, even though he got a hand to the ball. Tunisia did not concede a single goal in qualifying, becoming the first side to achieve that feat, subsequently matched by Ivory Coast and England. Sweden threatened to overwhelm their oppo-

nents but the match changed complexion minutes before half-time when Omar Rekik headed home Hannibal Mejbri's teasing cross.

However, the Scandinavian nation restored their two-goal cushion in the 59th minute after another defensive calamity for Tunisia. Midfielder Ellyes Skhiri was caught in possession on the edge of the box by Isak, who fed Viktor Gyokeres and the Arsenal man fired home. Substitute Mattias Svanberg made it 4-1 late on after VAR ruled he was on-

side. And there was still time for another stunning goal from Ayari from outside the penalty box.

Sweden reached the quarter-finals of the 2018 World Cup in Russia but did not qualify for the tournament in Qatar four years later. Tunisia were the first African team to win a World Cup match when they beat Mexico in 1978, but they have never progressed beyond the group stages. Earlier in Group F, Japan scored late to draw 2-2 against the Netherlands.

Congress criticizes Modi's 'blind devotion' to Israel, seeks balanced policy

New Delhi, June 15: The Congress on Monday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy approach, accusing the government of showing "blind devotion" to Israel and arguing that India's national interest requires a more balanced stance in West Asia.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said reports of an upcoming agreement between the US and Iran to halt hostilities in the region were welcome, though official details remain awaited. "The news that the US and Iran will be signing an agreement on June 19 in Geneva to halt hostilities in West Asia is to be welcomed, even though the full details are yet to be made public officially," Ramesh said in a post on X. "There is universal hope that the two countries (as also Israel) will abide by the accord, even though it is of an interim nature and that the accord will lead to a more permanent normalization," he added.

Ramesh said the unrestricted re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz would bring relief to India but cautioned that deeper economic challenges remain unresolved. "While the unrestricted re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz will certainly bring great relief to India, it does not mean the structural problems the economy faces will soon be surmounted," he said. The Congress leader argued that India's economic concerns predate the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which he said began shortly after Modi's Israel visit. "These concerns clearly predate the current war in West Asia that began just two days after Prime Minister Modi's visit to Israel. The rupee has been under considerable pressure for over a year and the gap between the demand and supply of dollars had



been growing. Rates of private investment -- a most crucial determinant of GDP growth -- have been tepid for many years," Ramesh said.

He further criticised the government over wages, Chinese imports and the investment climate. "This is the result of sluggish growth in demand that, in turn, is the outcome of stagnation in real wages over the past decade; Modi Government's failure to check the dumping of imports from China that has resulted in a record trade deficit and endangered growth of job-generating MSMEs in particular; overall investment climate vitiated by unchecked powers given to tax authorities and investigative agencies," he said. Ramesh also raised concerns over Pakistan's growing diplomatic position and its strategic ties with China. "Pakistan, which had been successfully isolated by India after its orchestration of the terror attacks in Mumbai in November 2008, now seems to have acquired a new regional and global influence," he claimed. "This, coupled with China's deep embedding in Pakistan's strategic apparatus, poses a formidable geo-political challenge for

India's foreign policy," Ramesh said.

Targeting Modi's approach towards Israel, Ramesh said India needed to adopt a more balanced position. "It is too much to expect Modi to rethink his blind devotion and unconditional support to Israel. But humanitarian considerations and long-standing commitments apart, our national interest demands greater balance than Modi has shown," he said. Ramesh's remarks came after Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that a peace deal between the US and Iran had been reached and would be formally signed in Switzerland on June 19.

In a post on X, Sharif said, "Following intensive talks, we are pleased to announce that the Peace Deal between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran has been REACHED." He added that both sides had agreed to the "immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon." Sharif also thanked Qatar for its role in mediation efforts and appreciated both Washington and Tehran for pursuing diplomacy.

Harmanpreet Kaur backs opener Richa Ghosh after her brilliant cameo against Pakistan

New Delhi: Harmanpreet Kaur was full of praise for Richa Ghosh and even floated the idea of using her as an opener after her impactful cameo against Pakistan. On Sunday, June 14, Richa starred with a blistering 34 off 17 balls, including five fours and a six, as India won by 64 runs at Edgbaston in Birmingham to begin their Women's T20 World Cup campaign on a high. Batting at No.6, Richa provided the late-innings surge India needed, shifting momentum with her fearless stroke play. Harmanpreet admitted that, if it were up to her, she would have loved to promote Richa to the top of the order. However, she also clarified that Richa has a defined role in the middle order, and the team is satisfied with the impact she continues to deliver in that position. "If it's in my hand, I would love to send her on the first ball. But I think she has some role to play and she's doing really well and really happy the way she played today," Harmanpreet said after the match. Richa produced a match-defining cameo against Pakistan, turning momentum India's way with a fearless display of power-hitting in the middle and death overs. She began with intent from the



moment she arrived at the crease, announcing herself with a crisp boundary off Sadia Iqbal, backing away and cutting square past point with authority. From there, Richa only grew in confidence, taking on the spinners and seamers alike. Against Tasmia Rubab, she unleashed her range, swivelling for a powerful pull, slicing a thick edge over backward point, and then clearing long-on with a clean six that lifted

India's scoring rate dramatically. She followed it up with more boundaries through cover and mid-wicket, ensuring Pakistan's bowlers were forced onto the defensive. Even when Nashra Sandhu tried to slow things down with clever variations, Richa showed composure, rotating strike and waiting for the loose balls. At the death, she added further impact with a mix of aggressive strokes and controlled improvisation, including a

swept boundary and a couple of well-judged runs under pressure. Her innings eventually ended when Fatima Sana's clever leg-cutter beat her swing and crashed into off stump in the final over. But by then, Richa had already done the damage, injecting late momentum and pushing India well past a par total with her explosive, game-changing cameo. Richa Ghosh delivered a powerful 34-run cameo off 17 balls, including five

fours and a six, helping India secure a 64-run victory over Pakistan in the Women's T20 World Cup opener at Edgbaston. Batting at No.6, her fearless stroke play shifted momentum late in the innings. Captain Harmanpreet Kaur praised her impact and considered promoting her to opener, though Richa currently plays a vital middle-order role. Her aggressive and composed hitting was pivotal in India's dominant performance. Indian spinners applied a ruthless spin choke to set up a commanding 64-run win over Pakistan, marking a dominant start to their Women's T20 World Cup campaign. On Sunday at Edgbaston in Birmingham, Smriti Mandhana provided the ideal platform with a classy half-century, before the spin duo of Deepti Sharma and Shree Charani turned the contest decisively in India's favour, leaving Pakistan completely outplayed in familiar conditions. In front of a record crowd of 18,814, the highest ever for a Women's T20 World Cup group-stage fixture, Deepti Sharma produced a career-defining spell, picking up her second five-wicket haul in T20Is as Pakistan were bowled 17 overs.

Manpreet Singh equals Dilip Tirkey's historic India cap record as controversy officially ends



New Delhi: Manpreet Singh has equalled the Indian record of 412 international caps of former India captain and Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey as he took the field during the FIH Pro League game against the Netherlands in Rotterdam on Sunday, June 14. This finally puts an end to the chatter around suggestions that the midfielder will be held back from breaking Tirkey's record earlier in the year. Manpreet is the only active player currently in the club of stars with 400-plus international appearances. He played a key role as captain and guided India to the bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics. Despite his age, the midfielder remains a vital cog in the Indian team. Tirkey congratulated Manpreet on the achievement and the HI president said he wants

to see the midfielder play more matches for India. "I congratulate Manpreet on reaching this significant milestone, which is a remarkable achievement and reflects his dedication, commitment, and consistency over the years. I wish him the very best for the matches ahead and hope to see him play on many more occasions. We are grateful for his continued contributions to Indian hockey," said Tirkey in a statement from Hockey India. It was reported in January that Manpreet could be on the chopping block this year, as there were rumours that he won't be considered for the national team in a crucial year. India will be playing in the World Cup and the Asian Games. There were suggestions that coach Craig Fulton was ready to walk away from his role

due to the interference from HI. However, Manpreet somewhat put a rest to the allegations when he told the media during the Hockey India awards that Tirkey had given his blessings to him to go and break the record. "A lot of things happened. I have spoken to Dilip sir personally as well. He told me he does not have any problem if I play the 412th game. He wants me to break the record. He wants me to become the first Indian to play 500 games. That's what he wants. He said that he would be very happy if I break the record," Manpreet said. India will be playing Netherlands and Germany twice each during their Rotterdam leg of the Pro League. They will be facing Germany on June 17 and 18, which will present Manpreet with a chance to go record.

Neeraj Chopra returns after 275 days to start season at Doha



New Delhi: 2-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra is set to make a return to the javelin scene after spending almost a year away from professional competition. Neeraj, who has been recovering from a back injury, is set to make his return at the Doha Diamond League 2026, which will be held on June 19. Neeraj last competed at the World Championships 2025 in Japan, where he failed to finish on the podium. Neeraj was knocked out early in the finals after finishing with a throw of 84.93m, which was the eighth-best effort in the 12-man field. Neeraj later revealed that he was dealing with a back injury, sustained just before the day of

the final. Between September 2025 and June 2026, Neeraj parted ways with his coach, legendary Jan Zelezny, and took control of his own training. Neeraj also ended his association with JSW Sports, who had managed him as a client since the very beginning of his javelin journey. Neeraj returns to professional competition after he was provisionally named in India's Commonwealth Games squad. Athletics Federation of India spokesperson Adille Sumariwala said that Neeraj will be confirmed in India's CWG squad only if he is able to participate in a couple of competitions and breach the qualification mark ahead of the event.

After lighting up the IPL, teenage prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi now searches for second gear

New Delhi: Just a few weeks ago, 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was the toast of Indian cricket. Fresh off a historic Orange Cap-winning season in IPL 2026 and armed with a maiden senior India call-up, the prodigy appeared unstoppable. Yet cricket has a brutal way of leveling even the loftiest expectations. As the India A Talent Tri-Series unfolds in Dambulla, the teenage opener is experiencing his first genuine lean patch in the fast lane. After dominating the IPL, Sooryavanshi is perhaps finding the transition to 50-over cricket more challenging than expected. The ODI format demands a different balance between aggression and accumulation, and the youngster is still searching for that equilibrium in Sri

Lanka. The narrative of Sooryavanshi's tournament has become frustratingly predictable: explosive, breathless starts that fizzle out before they can be converted into something substantial. Across three innings, he has managed scores of 14, 44 and 21. For most players, those would qualify as useful contributions. For a batter of his talent and growing reputation, they represent missed opportunities. Monday's encounter against Sri Lanka A at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium perfectly encapsulated his current struggle. Asked to bat first, India A watched their young opener begin in familiar fashion. Sooryavanshi looked determined to break free from the pattern that has defined his campaign. He



dismantled pacer Chamika Gunasekara in the second over, launching a six and two boundaries with effortless power as he raced to 21 from just 14 deliveries. The crowd settled in for what seemed another exhibition of fearless strokeplay, but Sri Lanka A had done their homework. Recognising

the left-hander's vulnerability when forced to generate his own pace against spin, captain Sahan Arachchige introduced himself into the attack as early as the fourth over. The move paid off immediately. Arachchige floated one full and temptingly wide outside off stump, inviting the

lofted drive. Sooryavanshi took the bait and attempted an ambitious inside-out stroke. However, the ball gripped and turned just enough to beat the middle of the bat. The resulting slice ballooned towards point, where Wanuja Sahan completed a comfortable catch.

Real Madrid complete rare signing of a former Barcelona La Masia player

New Delhi: Real Madrid made a rare move into Barcelona territory on Monday after signing Spain left-back Marc Cucurella from Chelsea, bringing in a player developed at La Masia in the club's first acquisition since Jose Mourinho returned as manager. The transfer marks one of the unusual occasions where Real Madrid have signed a footballer with deep Barcelona roots. Cucurella came through Barcelona's famed academy system before building his senior career elsewhere and establishing himself as one of Europe's leading left-backs. The left-back spent two separate stints at Barcelona once between 2017 and 2019 before getting loaned out to Eibar and then between 2019-2020 where he was loaned out to Getafe. Real Madrid and Chelsea did not disclose financial details, although British media reported that the deal could rise to 51.8 million pounds. The 27-year-old signed a six-year contract with the



Spanish club. "Real Madrid and Chelsea FC have reached an agreement for the transfer of the player Marc Cucurella, who will be linked to our club for the next six seasons, until June 30, 2032," Real said in a statement. Real are looking to strengthen after a disappointing 2025-26 season, in which they missed out on the

LaLiga title and were eliminated from the Champions League in the quarter-finals. Club president Florentino Perez, who recently extended his reign by four more years, had promised to bolster Real's defensive options during his re-election campaign. Cucurella joined Chelsea from Brighton & Hove Albion in 2022 in a

deal reportedly worth up to 63 million pounds and went on to make 163 appearances in all competitions for the west London club. The defender endured a difficult first season at Stamford Bridge and struggled for consistency before re-establishing himself as a regular under manager Enzo Maresca.

Livano Comenencia makes history with Curaçao's first-ever World Cup goal

Houston: Livano Comenencia etched his name into Curaçao football history on Sunday after scoring the nation's first-ever FIFA World Cup goal against four-time champions Germany. The 22-year-old defender turned unlikely hero in Houston, producing a moment that briefly made the smallest nation in World Cup history dream of an upset for the ages. The dream, however, did not last long. Germany responded with the ruthlessness expected of a football superpower, stretching their lead to 3-1 before Jamal Musiala made it 4-1. For Curaçao, what began as a historic World Cup debut filled with belief slowly turned into a harsh lesson against one of the sport's biggest giants. Curaçao arrived at the FIFA World Cup 2026 as the smallest nation ever to qualify for the tournament, with a population of around 158,000. Facing a German side packed with elite talent and



led by veteran goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, few expected them to make headlines in their opening match. Yet for one unforgettable moment, they did exactly that. After Borussia Dortmund midfielder Felix Nmecha had given Germany the lead inside six minutes, the contest appeared to be following the expected script. Germany dominated possession, controlled territory and looked comfortable. Then came the moment that changed the mood inside Houston's NRG Stadium. A Curaçao attack found its way into the German box before Leandro Bacuna's effort was

blocked. The loose ball broke kindly for Comenencia, who arrived from deep and struck a fierce effort that took a slight deflection before flying past Neuer. The celebrations were immediate and emotional. Curaçao's players sprinted towards the corner flag, while supporters celebrated a goal that will forever occupy a special place in the country's sporting history. As commentator Ian Darke perfectly summed it up: "History in Houston. A nation of scarcely more than 100,000 souls has just silenced millions." Born on February 3, 2004, Comenencia is a Dutch-born

footballer who currently plays for Swiss Super League club FC Zurich and represents Curaçao internationally. The right-back developed through PSV Eindhoven's highly regarded academy before earning a move to Juventus in 2023. While in Italy, he featured for Juventus Next Gen, the club's Under-23 side, where he gained valuable experience in senior football. In August 2025, he completed a transfer to FC Zurich, continuing a steady rise through European football. Before committing to Curaçao, Comenencia represented the Netherlands at youth level, featuring for both the Under-18 and Under-19 national teams. He later chose to represent his Caribbean roots, becoming part of the generation that guided Curaçao to its first-ever FIFA World Cup appearance. Now, he owns perhaps the most important goal in the nation's football history.