

Senior Citizens Association Nagaland mourns passing of peace builder Niketu Iralu

Kohima, Aug 21: The Senior Citizens Association Nagaland (SCAN) has expressed deep sorrow over the passing of renowned peace builder Niketu Iralu, describing his death as an irreparable loss to the state and the wider Northeast. Niketu Iralu, widely respected for his lifelong commitment to dialogue, reconciliation, and non-violence, passed away earlier this week, leaving behind a legacy that transcends political and social boundaries. As one of Nagaland's foremost advocates for peace, he consistently championed the cause of understanding between communities, urging leaders and citizens alike to embrace dialogue over confrontation. In its condolence message, SCAN highlighted Iralu's pivotal role in fostering conversations around the Naga political issue, his efforts to bridge di-



vides between civil society and political stakeholders, and his unwavering belief in the power of grassroots initiatives. "Niketu Iralu's vision of peace was rooted

in compassion, inclusivity, and moral courage. His absence will be profoundly felt, but his teachings will continue to guide us," the association noted.

Iralu's work extended beyond Nagaland, earning him recognition across India and internationally. He was often invited to speak at forums on conflict resolution, where he emphasized the importance of listening, empathy, and respect for diverse perspectives. His writings and speeches reflected a deep conviction that sustainable peace could only be achieved through collective responsibility and moral leadership.

SCAN members recalled his humility and accessibility, noting that he remained deeply connected to ordinary citizens even while engaging with national and global leaders. His ability to inspire trust and confidence made him a bridge between generations, communities, and institutions. The association has called upon younger citizens to carry forward Iralu's vision,

stressing that his life's work must not end with his passing. "We must honor his memory by continuing to nurture dialogue, reconciliation, and unity in our society," SCAN urged. Leaders from across Nagaland, including church representatives, civil society organizations, and political figures, have joined in mourning his demise. Tributes have poured in, recognizing him as a moral compass and a voice of conscience during turbulent times.

Niketu Iralu's funeral is expected to draw widespread participation, reflecting the respect he commanded across communities. His legacy as a peace builder will remain a guiding light for Nagaland and the Northeast, reminding future generations of the enduring value of dialogue and compassion in building a just society.

Tato gets modern DUDA market to boost hygiene, vending

Itanagar, Aug 21: In a major boost to local commerce and public health, the town of Tato in Shi-Yomi district has inaugurated a modern DUDA market complex, designed to promote hygiene, organized vending, and sustainable livelihoods. The initiative, spearheaded by the Department of Urban Development and Housing (DUDA), reflects the state government's commitment to improving civic infrastructure in remote districts.

The new facility replaces the scattered, unregulated vending practices that often led to congestion and unhygienic conditions. Equipped with designated stalls, waste-management systems, and improved sanitation facilities, the market aims to provide both vendors and consumers with a cleaner, safer environment. Officials highlighted that the project is part of a broader push to modernize small-town markets across Arunachal, ensuring that rural communities benefit from



structured economic spaces.

Local entrepreneurs and vendors have welcomed the development, noting that organized vending will not only enhance customer experience but also improve earnings by attracting more footfall. The market's design incorporates provisions for fresh produce, meat, and essential goods, while maintaining strict hygiene standards. Authorities emphasized that the facility will also serve as a hub

for women vendors, empowering them with secure and dignified spaces to conduct business. The DUDA market project is expected to stimulate local agriculture and small-scale industries by providing a reliable platform for producers to directly reach consumers. By reducing dependence on informal roadside vending, the initiative also addresses long-standing concerns about traffic safety and environmental cleanliness.

Miglung in East Siang declared chemical-free village

Pasighat, Aug 21: In a significant step toward sustainable agriculture, Miglung village in the East Siang district was formally adopted and declared a Chemical-Free Village by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), East Siang. The initiative aims to transition the local farmers away from synthetic fertilizers and chemical pesticides toward eco-friendly, biological farming practices.

The formal declaration was announced by local MLA Ninong Ering during an awareness programme organized by KVK East Siang. The event was attended by Zilla Parishad Member Tabir Tatan, East Siang District Agriculture Officer Dana Moyong, and Prof. P. Debnath from the College of Horticulture and Forestry, CAU. Dr. Brijendra Singh, Principal Scientist and Head of KVK East Siang, outlined the structured roadmap designed to improve soil health through green manuring and organic soil management. Technical sessions conducted by KVK subject matter specialists educated 51 participating villagers on chemical-free vegetable nursery raising, organic livestock management, and soybean cultivation. To support immediate field adoption, farmers received biological inputs, including soybean seeds, Rabi-season Pusa seeds, Beauveria bassiana bio-pesticides, and CAU liquid biofertilizers.

Ayi: Ke Ekum celebrates World Senior Citizens Day at Pasighat

Itanagar, Aug 21: Pasighat-based elder-care NGO Ayi: Ke Ekum celebrated World Senior Citizens Day at the IGJ Government Higher Secondary School Auditorium in Pasighat, East Siang district. The program brought together local dignitaries, community members, and senior citizens to highlight the vital importance of dignity, social connection, and health security for the region's aging population.

Chief Guest Tapi Darang, HMLA of 38-East Pasighat, formally launched the official logo of Ayi: Ke Ekum during the gathering. Commending the organization for establishing a supportive ecosystem for citizens aged 70 and above, Darang emphasized that loneliness remains a primary challenge for senior citizens in fast-changing societies. He noted that family members and civic institutions share a collective responsibility to ensure that elders spend their later years with active companionship, respect, and proper care.

The event featured a cultural performance by senior citizens, who showcased Ka:do Ponnung, an age-old traditional song. General Secretary Tigul Megu outlined the vision behind Ayi: Ke Ekum, explaining that the platform encourages elders to



share their life experiences and mentor younger generations. Guest of Honour M. T. Padung, Deputy Director (ICDS), praised the founders and urged youth to look upon senior citizens as the foundational roots of society. As part of the ceremonies, HMLA Tapi Darang presented special gifts to senior citizens who recorded the highest attendance at the care center. The observance reiterated Ayi: Ke Ekum's commitment to enhancing the quality of life for senior citizens through sustained social engagement, wellness activities, and community awareness across East Siang.

Beyond the ceremonial observances, the celebration featured targeted health and welfare initiatives designed to provide tangible support to Pasighat's elderly community. An awareness and enrollment drive for the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) was organized on-site by District Program Coordinator

Bir Bahadur Rai. The drive specifically assisted senior citizens aged 70 and above in registering for comprehensive health coverage, ensuring access to essential medical care and reducing financial vulnerabilities associated with old age.

To promote mental well-being and active living, the organizers also conducted physical stimulation sessions and traditional age-appropriate games, encouraging participants to stay physically active and socially connected. Vice President Pemi Tato Perme emphasized the pivotal role of family caregivers in sustaining elder health, urging households to actively engage elderly members in daily decision-making and community life. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Vice President Perme, who reiterated Ayi: Ke Ekum's mission to expand healthcare outreach, recreational programs, and peer-support networks throughout East Siang.

DC Kiphire reviews STMC for NH-202 in emergency meeting

Kiphire, Aug 21: Deputy Commissioner Temsuwati Longkumer, NCS, convened an emergency meeting at the DC's Conference Hall in Kiphire to deliberate on the Short-term Maintenance Contract (STMC) for National Highway-202, underscoring the urgent need to ensure uninterrupted connectivity and safety along the strategic route.

The meeting brought together officials from the Public Works Department (PWD), district administration, and representatives of local stakeholders to address pressing concerns over the deteriorating condition of NH-202. The highway, which serves as a vital lifeline linking Kiphire with other districts and neighboring states, has faced recurring challenges due to monsoon damage, landslides, and inadequate upkeep.

Speaking at the session, DC Longkumer emphasized that the STMC framework was designed to provide immediate relief and stabilize road conditions until long-term rehabilitation projects could be finalized. He noted that the highway's poor state not only hampers daily travel but also affects



the movement of essential supplies, emergency services, and economic activities in the district. "Ensuring the reliability of NH-202 is critical for both public safety and regional development," he stressed.

Officials from the PWD presented a detailed assessment of vulnerable stretches, highlighting sections prone to erosion and waterlogging. They outlined short-term measures including resurfacing, drainage clearance, and slope stabilization, while acknowledging that sustained investment would be required for permanent solutions.

Community representatives voiced concerns about the impact of road

disruptions on farmers, traders, and students. They urged authorities to expedite maintenance work and ensure transparency in contract execution. The DC assured participants that monitoring mechanisms would be strengthened, with regular inspections to track progress and accountability.

The meeting also discussed coordination with state and central agencies to secure additional funding and technical support. Given NH-202's importance as part of the broader Northeast connectivity network, officials agreed that the highway's upkeep must remain a priority in both district and state planning.

In closing, DC Longkumer reiterated that the STMC was not a substitute for long-term infrastructure development but a necessary interim measure to safeguard mobility and livelihoods. He called upon all stakeholders to cooperate in implementing the plan swiftly and effectively.

The emergency meeting reflects the administration's proactive stance in addressing infrastructure challenges in Kiphire. With monsoon pressures continuing to test road resilience, the STMC for NH-202 is expected to provide immediate relief while laying the groundwork for more comprehensive upgrades in the future.

State govt won't force Vande Mataram singing, says Patton

Dimapur, Aug 21: Nagaland Deputy Chief Minister and Minister-in-charge of Home and Border Affairs, Yanthungo Patton, affirmed that the state government will not compel anyone to sing Vande Mataram. Speaking to reporters at Dimapur Airport upon his return from New Delhi, Patton emphasized that participating in the recitation of the national song is purely a matter of personal discretion.

"We cannot say that we will enforce it; rather, it is entirely up to the individual. Nobody will be forced to sing, nobody will ask them to sing, and nobody can stop anyone from singing either," Patton stated. The Deputy Chief Minister clarified that as a national song, its observance is respected, but no state-mandated enforcement will be imposed on



citizens. Patton's comments follow strong opposition across Christian-majority states in the Northeast after Union directives required the singing of all six stanzas of Vande Mataram during official programs and educational assemblies. Major civil society organizations, including the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) and the Na-

galand Baptist Church Council (NBCC), voiced serious concerns, arguing that compulsory recitation infringes upon freedom of conscience and religious convictions.

Addressing queries on whether the Centre's directive conflicts with special constitutional protections, Patton assured that the issue does not alter or weak-

en the safeguards guaranteed under Article 371A of the Indian Constitution. However, given the widespread public sensitivity and representation from tribal bodies, Patton indicated that the matter is likely to be taken up for detailed discussion during the upcoming Monsoon Session of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly.

Natural farming awareness programme held at Gipulin cluster

Itanagar, Aug 21: The Department of Agriculture, Dibang Valley district, conducted an Awareness Generation and Orientation Programme on Natural Farming (NF) at the Gipulin Cluster to promote chemical-free, sustainable agricultural practices across the region. Supervised by Agriculture Development Officer (ADO) Duyu Udi, the event gathered local leaders, self-help group (SHG) members, and progressive farmers from Gipulin, Angrim Valley, Aliney, Mihundo, and Etabe.

During the session, Neelam Sunny, Subject Matter Specialist (Agroforestry) from Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Dibang Valley, educated participants on the core tenets of natural farming. The presentation focused on the preparation and application of indigenous biological inputs,



specifically Beejamrit (seed treatment) and Jeevamrit (soil nutrient enhancer), designed to restore soil health, enhance microbial activity, and drastically lower farmer dependence on expensive commercial fertilizers.

A major highlight of the program was the announcement regarding the proposed establishment of a need-based Bhartiya Prakritik Bio-input Resource Centre (BRC) at the Gipulin Cluster under the National Mission on Natural

Farming (NMNF). The proposed facility will support the localized production and distribution of natural bio-inputs, benefiting smallholders who lack the individual capacity or raw materials to prepare these formulations independently.

District officials and Zilla Parishad Member (ZPM) Eta Mihu emphasized that localized resource centers will make eco-friendly farming accessible, resilient, and economically viable for rural

households.

The orientation initiative goes beyond initial farmer sensitization by introducing an operational framework designed to sustain long-term ecological farming across Dibang Valley. Agricultural experts emphasized that transitioning away from chemical-intensive agriculture addresses critical environmental concerns, including soil degradation, groundwater contamination, and rising input expenditures that affect smallholder margins. By equipping local self-help groups and Gram Panchayat leaders with knowledge on natural soil enrichment, the department seeks to build a decentralized network of peer mentors across neighboring villages such as Angrim Valley, Aliney, Mihundo, and Etabe.

Sivasagar Steps Up Post-Flood Cleanup With Major Drive Along Jhanji–Mitong Stretch

Sivasagar, Aug 21: In the aftermath of the devastating floods that affected large parts of Sivasagar district, authorities have stepped up post-flood sanitation and restoration efforts to bring public spaces back to normal. As part of the initiative, a mega cleanliness drive was carried out along the Jhanji–Mitong bridge stretch, with a focus on clearing the large quantities of waste, debris and other flood-related materials that had accumulated in the area. The drive was jointly organised by the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), Sivasagar, and the Sivasagar district administration, in collaboration with Jyoti NGO, bringing together government agencies, civil society organisations and local community groups for the cleanup operation. The campaign also saw active participation from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) representing Hatighuli, Charing, Morabazar and Momai Tamuli Gram Panchayats, highlighting the important role of local communities



in post-disaster recovery and sanitation efforts. The coordinated initiative aimed not only to restore cleanliness along the important bridge stretch but also to improve hygiene and public health conditions in areas affected by the floods. The participation of SHG members and local organisations further strengthened the community-led nature of the campaign, as residents and volunteers joined hands with the administration to remove flood waste and help restore the affected public spaces.

Such coordinated cleanliness efforts are expected to contribute to the broader recovery process in Sivasagar as the district continues to deal with the aftermath of the recent floods. The recent floods caused extensive disruption across Sivasagar district, leaving behind significant quantities of accumulated waste, including plastic, debris and other flood-related materials across several affected locations. In this backdrop, the cleanliness initiative along the Jhanji–Mi-

tong stretch assumed particular significance, as authorities and local communities came together to address the environmental and sanitation challenges created by the floods and support the restoration of normalcy in the affected areas. The drive focused on removing waste from public spaces and ensuring that discarded materials did not continue to pose environmental or public health concerns. Sivasagar District Commissioner Mridul Yadav also joined the cleanliness campaign and

actively participated in the field-level efforts, interacting with officials, volunteers and community members while encouraging them to continue contributing to the post-flood recovery process. His participation also underlined the administration's emphasis on coordinated, community-driven action in dealing with the aftermath of the natural disaster. According to sources in the district administration, the campaign resulted in the collection of approximately 500 kg of plastic waste, which was subsequently sent for recycling. The recycling of the collected plastic is expected to help reduce the environmental impact of the flood-generated waste while supporting responsible waste management practices. The initiative brought together government departments, local organisations and Self-Help Groups, demonstrating the importance of collective participation in restoring cleanliness and environmental conditions in areas affected by severe flooding.

Kokrajhar Hosts Muga Eri Productivity Demo



Kokrajhar, Aug 21: A technology demonstration programme was organised at the Composite Farm, Kowabil, Kokrajhar, under the Mera Resham Mera Abhimaan (MRMA) 2.0 campaign to promote scientific practices and modern technologies in Muga and Eri sericulture. The programme was organised by Dr. Suraksha Chanotra of the Central Silk Board, in collaboration with local officials and stakeholders, with the objective of helping farmers adopt improved and more effective sericulture practices. A key focus of the programme was the proper use

of disinfectants such as Nirmool, Sodium Hypochlorite and bleaching powder to maintain hygienic breeding conditions, reduce the risk of disease outbreaks and create a healthier environment for silkworm rearing. The demonstration also aimed to enhance awareness among farmers about scientific methods that can help improve the quality and productivity of Muga and Eri silk production. Additionally, hands-on demonstrations showcased mechanisation technologies, including power sprayers and pruning saws, to enhance host-plant management in sericulture.

NABARD Trains AUS Students

Itanagar, Aug 21: The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) on Thursday conducted an informative session on banking, financial services and agricultural credit for BSc Agriculture students of AUS in Namsai district. The programme was organised under the bank attachment module of the Rural Agricultural Work Experience and Agro-Industrial Attachment programme, providing students with an opportunity to gain practical knowledge about the role of banking and financial institutions in supporting agriculture and rural development. The session aimed to familiarise the students with various aspects of agricultural finance, credit facilities and banking services, while also highlighting potential career opportunities in the rural finance and banking sectors. Kamal Roy, Assistant General Manager at NABARD, conducted the session and interacted with the students, explaining the importance of institutional credit in strengthening the agricultural sector and supporting rural communities. The programme also sought to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical exposure by giving agriculture students a better understanding of how financial institutions contribute to farm development, entrepreneurship and the wider rural economy. Roy explained the banking system, different categories of banks, co-operative credit structures and banking products and services. He also discussed financial inclusion, social security schemes, subsidies and interest subvention. The session covered agricultural and rural credit mechanisms, including Kisan Credit Cards, self-help groups, joint liability groups and farmer producer organisations, as well as insurance, investment awareness and the roles of financial regulators and development institutions. Students were also introduced to entrepreneurship, skill development and agricultural extension programmes and emerging career opportunities in agri-finance, banking, FPO management, insurance, rural development and agri-fintech. The programme concluded with an interactive session where students raised queries on agricultural credit, subsidies, insurance, entrepreneurship financing, FPOs and career opportunities.

Arunachal Aims to Halve Road Fatalities by 2030



Itanagar, Aug 21: Arunachal Pradesh Transport Minister Ojing Tasing on Thursday reiterated the state's commitment to reducing road fatalities by 50 per cent by 2030 and called for district-specific, coordinated and evidence-based measures. Tasing was speaking at an inception workshop in New Delhi on preparing district road safety action plans. The state Transport Department has collaborated with IIT Delhi's Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Centre to prepare plans for three high-fatality areas - Itanagar Capital Region, East Siang and Namsai. Tasing urged district administrations to work closely with IIT Delhi to develop interventions suited to local conditions. Transport Commissioner Saugat Biswas stressed the need for Arunachal Pradesh to adopt a more targeted and data-driven approach to road safety by moving beyond

broad accident figures and identifying specific risks at the local level. He emphasised the importance of mapping vulnerable locations, prioritising appropriate interventions and clearly defining the responsibilities of different institutions involved in road safety management. The workshop brought together officials from the state government, district administrations, police, health departments and road-owning agencies, along with road safety experts, to discuss the challenges affecting road safety across the state. Detailed discussions focused on district-specific risks, gaps in accident and road safety data, inter-departmental coordination and difficulties in implementing safety measures on the ground. The participants also examined ways to strengthen collaboration among various agencies so that road safety interventions can be implemented more effectively and efficiently.

Manipur CM Promises Assembly Discussion on NRC Implementation After Students' Demand

NRC Debate in Assembly

Imphal, Aug 21: Amid continuing protests and agitations demanding the updation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur, Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Thursday assured that the issue would be taken up for discussion during the upcoming state Assembly session, which is scheduled to begin on September 2. According to officials, the Chief Minister gave the assurance during a meeting with a delegation of students who raised their concerns over the implementation and updation of the NRC in the state. A senior official from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said that Khemchand Singh assured the students that the government would place the issue before the Assembly for discussion during the forthcoming session.

The assurance comes at a time when various student, youth, women and civil society organisations have been holding protests and agitations seeking the updation of the NRC before the 2027 Census. The government's decision to discuss the matter in the Assembly is expected to provide an institutional platform for deliberations on the concerns surrounding NRC implementation, including issues related to documentation, identification and verification of residents. The



Chief Minister's assurance to the student delegation is also likely to ease some of the concerns raised by protesters, even as various organisations continue to press for concrete action on the demand. The delegation of students, representing 10 schools and colleges, met Khemchand Singh at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Imphal and demanded implementation of the NRC before Census-2027. The students demanded that the Chief Minister pressurise the Centre to order the implementation of the NRC in Manipur before the Census. The students also demanded that illegal immigrants be identi-

fied through the NRC before conducting the Census-2027. The delegation also urged the Chief Minister to reopen educational institutions in the state. They further demanded that the issue of NRC implementation be discussed in the forthcoming state Assembly session. The Chief Minister also informed the students that the government has always supported the implementation of the NRC in the state. He added that the conduct of the NRC and its error-free implementation are two issues that need to be addressed. The meeting was attended by Commissioner of Education Ningthoujam Geoffrey

and Director of Education (School) Ng. Bhogendra Meitei. The student delegation comprised representatives from DM College of Science, Manipur College, CC Higher Secondary School, Johnstone Higher Secondary School, Nambol Higher Secondary School, T.G. Higher Secondary School, Ibotonsana Girls' Higher Secondary School, Ram Lal Paul School, Model Higher Secondary School and Ananda Singh Higher Secondary School. Meanwhile, the Campaign for Just and Fair Delimitation (JFD) launched a series of agitations, particularly across the Imphal Valley, from midnight

on August 17, demanding the updation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur before Census 2027. The agitation significantly affected normal life in the state, with a 48-hour shutdown beginning at midnight on Monday disrupting public activities, businesses and daily movement across several areas on Tuesday and Wednesday. The shutdown received support from a wide range of groups, including student and youth organisations, women's organisations and civil society bodies, with the influential Meira Paibi also backing the demand. The growing mobilisation reflects the increasing pressure on the state government to address concerns surrounding the NRC and the identification and verification of residents ahead of the upcoming census. Amid the tense situation, the state government also took precautionary measures to ensure safety and maintain law and order. The Education Department announced that all educational institutions across Manipur would remain closed for three days from Thursday, citing the prevailing law and order situation. The decision was aimed at ensuring the safety of students, teachers and staff as protests and shutdown-related activities continued in different parts of the state.

Violent Black-Flag Rally Leads to KSU Sit-In Permission Revocation

Shillong, Aug 21: The East Khasi Hills district administration has revoked the permission granted to the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) to hold a sit-in protest, following alleged violations of conditions imposed for its recent black-flag bike rally. The decision came after reports of vandalism, arson and assaults during Wednesday's rally, prompting the administration to take action over concerns regarding the maintenance of law and order. Deputy Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal said the permission for the proposed sit-in was withdrawn after the administration received reports indicating that the conditions laid down for the rally had allegedly not



been followed. The authorities' decision comes amid heightened attention to public demonstrations and the need to ensure that protests remain peaceful and do not result in damage to public or private property or disruption of normal life. The administration is ex-

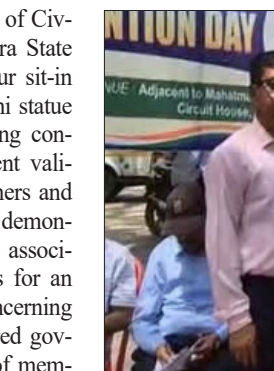
pected to continue monitoring the situation closely and take appropriate measures to prevent any further escalation, while emphasising compliance with conditions attached to permissions for public gatherings and rallies. He warned that any gathering held thereafter would

amount to an unlawful assembly. Baranwal said the administration and police had earlier communicated with the KSU and received assurances that the bike rally would remain peaceful. The development came amid heightened tension in Shillong following the violence during the rally and the subsequent arrest of senior KSU leaders. However, former KSU president Lambokstarwell Marngar said the organisation would continue its agitation and press the Government to implement its demands. He said the decision was taken after the KSU's current Central Executive Committee discussed the situation following the arrest of its senior leaders.

Pensioners Protest Nationwide Against Centre's Validation Rule

Tripura Pensioners Oppose Rule

Agartala, Aug 21: The Forum of Civil Pensioners Association, Tripura State Committee, organised a two-hour sit-in protest near the Mahatma Gandhi statue at Agartala Circuit House, raising concerns over a Central Government validation rule applicable to pensioners and demanding its withdrawal. The demonstration was held as part of the association's wider campaign to press for an 11-point charter of demands concerning the interests and welfare of retired government employees. A number of members of the association participated in the protest, voicing their concerns and urging the authorities to reconsider the rule, which they believe could create difficulties for pensioners. The protest was attended by the association's convener, Dr Bhopal Chandra Sinha, along with other members and representatives. The sit-in provided a platform for pensioners to



collectively highlight their demands and seek appropriate intervention from the authorities. The association maintained that its demands should be addressed through dialogue and necessary policy measures, while reiterating its call for the withdrawal of the validation requirement. Sinha said, "The Central Government introduced a validation rule in March 2025

for retired Central Government employees. This rule must be withdrawn immediately." "Through this rule, the government is trying to create divisions among pensioners, and the government wants to use this law as a tool, which is one of its powers," he alleged. "This is why our organisation demands the immediate withdrawal of this law.

Given the increase in swine flu cases, JP Nadda will assess Delhi’s H1N1 situation

New Delhi, Aug 21: In order to discuss the current H1N1 situation in the nation’s capital, Union Health Minister JP Nadda will meet on Friday with the Health Minister of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, top representatives of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), and the Government of the NCT of Delhi. The meeting takes place in the midst of allegations of an increase in swine flu infections in Delhi, where the national capital’s humid and unpredictable weather is raising health concerns. The assessment is anticipated to evaluate the current epidemiological situation, healthcare facilities’ readiness, the availability of diagnostic and treatment facilities, and the steps the Delhi government and health authorities are taking to track and stop the spread of H1N1. The Center’s evaluation is especially important because Delhi’s weather has been shifting, with humidity and tempera-



ture swings making it easier for seasonal respiratory diseases to spread. A recent research claims that Delhi has seen an increase in swine flu cases due to the city’s current humid and unpredictable weather. Health professionals have warned people to be on the lookout for flu-like symptoms and to seek medical help when necessary. The influenza A (H1N1) virus is the cause of H1N1, sometimes known as swine flu. Fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills, and exhaustion are some of the symptoms. Influenza can occasionally cause

major problems, especially in susceptible populations. Strengthening surveillance and making sure hospitals and other healthcare institutions are sufficiently equipped to handle any rise in cases are likely to be the key topics of discussion during the review conference. Nadda has previously emphasized how crucial it is for the federal government and state governments to work together to combat infectious and seasonal diseases. He examined Delhi’s dengue prevention and control readiness in July and urged tight cooperation between the Union

government, the Delhi government, local authorities, medical facilities, and front-line staff. In order to avoid a possible spike in cases, Nadda had also emphasized proactive readiness, illness surveillance, early detection, hospital readiness, and routine monitoring during that assessment. Therefore, it is anticipated that the Delhi administration and the Union Health Ministry would evaluate whether the current healthcare infrastructure and surveillance systems are adequate to address the observed rise in H1N1 cases. In addition to raising public awareness of preventive measures, the meeting will give officials a chance to assess the availability of medications, testing facilities, and hospital beds. It is anticipated that the Health Ministry’s analysis of the H1N1 situation would offer a more precise evaluation of the magnitude of the documented rise in cases and the steps needed to stop additional transmission in Delhi.

Rahul Gandhi discusses the pellet gun controversy while sitting on a dharna outside the Delhi police station

New Delhi, Aug 21: Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, protested Friday by sitting on dharna outside the Deputy Commissioner of Police’s office at Delhi’s Parliament Street Police Station. Gandhi was protesting an alleged refusal to file a formal complaint regarding a student who, according to the Congress, was hurt by a pellet gun during last month’s demonstrations calling for educational reforms. According to the Congress, Gandhi arrived at the police station with the student whose attempts to file a case had not resulted in any action. “I went to the DCP office on Parliament Street today to register a formal complaint regarding Sahil Lochab’s experience with police abuse. Sahil was peacefully demonstrating at Jantar Mantar when the police used a pellet gun to strike him on July 20. Gandhi said on X, “Sahil’s vision in one eye is now at risk due to severe injuries caused by



the pellets.” “Now, even when Sahil wants to file a FIR for justice, that is not being allowed,” he continued. The Constitution and constitutional rights are being violated in this way. The student and his attorneys allegedly filed a written complaint with the Delhi Police on August 14 and followed up three days later, but nothing was done, according to the Congress. The DCP did not supply an I/O number, but the party claimed that Gandhi went with the student to the po-

lice station on Friday to demand action. According to the Congress, filing a formal complaint was necessary because the claimed offense was cognizable. The opposition and BJP are increasing pressure on the Delhi Police for how they handled the protests, and the alleged deployment of pellet guns during the July 20 CJP protest has become a key cause of dispute. The use of plastic pellets and anti-riot guns by Rapid Action Force members during the protest was document-

ed in the daily journal of the Parliament Street Police Station, according to the Hindustan Times, even though there has been no official confirmation of pellet-gun usage against protestors. According to the entry, in an effort to manage the gathering, RAF personnel fired two rounds from anti-riot guns and two rounds of plastic pellets. Demands for an independent investigation into the police reaction to the protests have been sparked by the problem, especially in light of claims that students were hurt by pellets and other crowd-control techniques. A five-person powerful inquiry committee led by former Judge Justice R Subhash Reddy was established by the Supreme Court on Thursday to look into claims of police abuses during the protests. Allegations about pellet guns, electric batons, lathi charges, tear gas, and other crowd-control techniques will be investigated by the panel.

TVK Responds to DMK’s Claim That Vijay Diluted Delimitation Stand



New Delhi, Aug 21: The DMK and the ruling TVK squared off in the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Friday over the state’s official position on the impending delimitation process. Head of the Opposition Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay was questioned by Udhayanidhi Stalin, who pointed out that although the state parliament had approved a resolution to “freeze” the number of Lok Sabha seats at 543, the Chief Minister had left out the precise phrase during yesterday’s zonal meeting. Chief Minister Vijay did not use the phrase “freeze” at the Southern Zonal Council meeting, according to Udhayanidhi, who claimed that the TVK government’s resolution to freeze the total number of Lok Sabha seats at 543 was diluted.

Defending the government’s stand, Minister Adhav Arjuna asserted that the government’s position remains unwavering. “Our government has no change in stand with regard to delimitation,” he said. The exchange intensified as both sides traded charges of compromising the state’s interests. Udhayanidhi reiterated that the DMK remains committed to a total freeze on the redrawing of constituencies, or at the very least, ensuring that Tamil Nadu’s current 7.18% representation is not reduced. In response to Stalin Junior, Minister Adhav Arjuna claimed that the DMK has changed its stance in the past. Arjuna said, “If they ask only for fair delimitation, it would be a betrayal to Tamil Nadu,” pointing out that the DMK had not previously insisted on the 543-seat cap. Our position is no delimitation. We also oppose the 50% rise in every state. The minister declared, “We want to keep Tamil Nadu’s current 7.18% share in parliamentary seats.” Speaking on the matter, AIADMK chairman Edappadi Palaniswami insisted that Tamil Nadu receive its allotted 7.18 percent of the seats following the delimitation process. However, BJP MLA Bhole Rajan maintained that since Tamil Nadu’s quota will rise from the current

7.18%, the delimitation “will be good” for the state. Vijay warned that population-based delimitation could disproportionately affect the Southern states and urged the Union Government on Thursday to give a clear assurance that no state would lose parliamentary representation as a result of the proposed Delimitation Bill, 2026. This led to a verbal spat. At the 31st meeting of the Southern Zonal Council, Vijay stated, “There is a genuine and shared concern across the Southern States that delimitation based primarily on populations may diminish our collective voice in Parliament as the freeze on the allocation of Lok Sabha seats based on the 1971 Census approaches its end and the Delimitation Bill, 2026 is considered.” He maintained that the Southern states’ accomplishments in population stabilization should not be penalized. Therefore, I implore the Union Government to issue a clear legislative guaranty that no State’s accomplishment in population stabilization would result in a decrease in its percentage of representation in Parliament. Such a strategy would strengthen the faith of the States in our democratic institutions, maintain the federal balance envisioned by our Constitution, and defend the ideals of equality,” he continued.

To stop rising prices, the center permits duty-free imports of raw sugar

New Delhi, Aug 21: The Center on Thursday permitted the duty-free import of one million tons of raw sugar under a tariff-rate quota (TRQ) until October 31 in an additional effort to curb the skyrocketing price of sugar. However, the government’s announcement only permits the importation of raw sugar, which needs to be refined before it can be sold as white sugar. The 2016–17 season was



the last time India permitted the import of raw sugar.

The action is taken in advance of India’s peak sugar

demand period, which typically lasts from August to November. During this time, festivities like Ganesh Chaturthi, Dussehra, and Diwali increase demand from homes, food firms, and sweet stores. The order follows a spike in sugar prices to all-time highs. On Thursday, sugar prices in important Karnataka markets reached ₹7,100 per 100 kg.

Following the violent KSU Black-Flag Rally, Meghalaya deploys more CAPF units in Shillong

Shillong, Aug 21: Following violence during the black-flag bike demonstration by the Khasi Students’ Union (KSU), the Meghalaya government has sent five more companies of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), including one company of the Rapid Action Force (RAF), to Shillong. 31 government and private vehicles were destroyed, 16 verified assault cases were reported, and sculptures of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Swami Vivekananda were vandalized during the event, according to East Khasi Hills Deputy Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal. Additionally, two vehicles—one private and one government—were set on fire. Around 200 police officers were stationed along the rally route, according to Baranwal, but there were a number of weak spots throughout the long route. He claimed that as the circumstances changed, the administration had responded to suggestions. Following a late-night raid, three senior KSU leaders were captured, and police also visited the organization’s Jaiaw Pdenng office. After community people intervened, the

staff later withdrew. In light of reports of vehicles registered in Meghalaya being stopped and vandalized close to Jorabat in Assam, the Deputy Commissioner cautioned that the violence might have consequences beyond Meghalaya. He stated that the district administration and Meghalaya government were discussing the issue with their Assamese counterparts. According to Baranwal, the KSU’s planned sit-in protest was denied authorization due to alleged violations of the administration’s rules. He stated that police were looking into the incidents, including the alleged involvement of people in assaults and vandalism, and that a formal complaint had been filed. Responding to the KSU’s claim that unruly elements had hijacked the rally, Baranwal said the allegation would have to be examined against the evidence. He said some individuals were seen carrying sticks and rods, while some had covered number plates and worn masks. He said the investigation would determine whether the violence was pre-planned, instigated or caused by unruly elements. In reference

to the police operation at the KSU office, Baranwal stated that officers had gone there to capture suspects in assaults and other crimes. He claimed that after a petrol bomb was hurled at the police, they dispersed the mob with stun grenades and tear gas. The administration urged citizens to maintain composure, refrain from spreading rumors, and report instances to the police while stepping up night patrols and community outreach initiatives. Baranwal stated that while investigators reviewed the material, more arrests might be made. He stated that locals had responded favorably to the administration’s appeal, ruling out the imminent need for a curfew. Additionally, he stated that the administration will assess whether intelligence inputs had been enough and timely, acknowledging that there were lessons to be learned from the management of the quickly changing situation. Baranwal added that prior to the gathering, the district administration had tried to arrange a meeting between the KSU and Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, but the meeting was never held.

Farmers are concerned about dry farmlands as irrigation plans fail in Barkhetri and Tihu

Nalbari, Aug 21: The intense heat and insufficient rainfall are causing major problems for farmers in Barkhetri, Tihu, and several other areas of the Nalbari district. Water in agricultural fields has dried up due to the lack of rain in recent weeks, leaving some farmlands with significant fissures. Additionally, some agricultural land has become dry and reddish due to the lack of water, and some fields have started to be covered in weeds and wild grass. The current dry circumstances are apparently having a negative impact on farmers in locations like Jayasagar, Kekankuchi, Mukalmua, Haulighat, Narua Damdama, Jagara, Nalicha, Goalpara, Baluwa, Bogurihati, and Batchar. Farmers are now anxiously awaiting rain because they are becoming more concerned about the effects on their crops due to the



continued lack of rainfall.

The crisis has also raised questions about how well government irrigation programs are operating. Farmers claim that several solar-powered deep tubewell irrigation systems, which cost lakhs of rupees to build in various communities, are no longer operational.

Farmers assert that many of these programs are currently inactive, despite the fact that they were supposedly implemented to guaranty timely water supply to agricultural fields. In particular, farmers have claimed that within one to one and a half years of installation, a number of irrigation schemes put

in place under the SOPD (G) project during the 2021–2022 fiscal year were ineffective. Some of the schemes have apparently failed due to equipment theft and other operational and technical issues. Farmers additionally claimed that the relevant department had neglected to properly repair or restore a number of the defunct schemes for years. As a result, farmers are unable to benefit from the irrigation infrastructure as intended, even though significant public expenditures have been spent on them. According to the farmers, relying solely on rainfall has grown more challenging, especially in light of rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns. They worry that if the dry period persists, crop production may suffer greatly in the absence of dependable irrigation facilities.

By 2030, Arunachal wants to reduce road fatalities by 50%

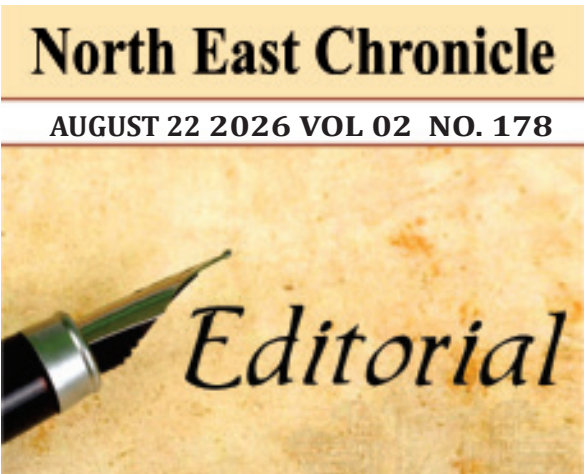
Itanagar, Aug 21: Transport Minister Ojing Tasing of Arunachal Pradesh called for district-specific, coordinated, and evidence-based actions on Thursday, reiterating the state’s aim to decreasing road fatalities by 50% by 2030. Tasing was giving a speech during a workshop on district road safety action plan preparation in New Delhi. The Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Center at IIT Delhi and the state Transport Department have worked together to create strategies for the Itanagar Capital Region, East Siang, and Namsai, three high-fatality areas. Tasing called on district governments to collaborate closely with IIT Delhi in order to provide solutions that are appropriate for the local environment. According

to Transport Commissioner Saugat Biswas, the state must identify local dangers, prioritize solutions, and establish institutional responsibilities in addition to focusing on overall crash statistics. Along with road safety specialists, representatives from the state government, district administrations, police, health departments, and road-owning organizations attended the session. Risks unique to each district, data shortages, coordination issues, and implementation difficulties were the main topics of discussion. In addition to providing a framework for district-level road safety planning throughout Arunachal Pradesh, the exercise is anticipated to generate practical road safety plans for the three regions.

In July, domestic air travel in India decreased by 4.8%



New Delhi, Aug 21: According to figures issued on Thursday by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), domestic air passenger traffic decreased 4.8% to 12 million in July from 12.6 million the previous year, and most major airlines also reported lower passenger load factors. The first seven months of 2026 saw somewhat more passenger traffic than the same period the previous year, notwithstanding the July dip. Indian airlines handled 98.4 million passengers from January to July, up 0.64% from 97.78 million the previous year. The biggest airline in India, IndiGo, transported 8.08 million passengers in July compared to 8.92 million in June. Compared to 3.22 million in June, the Air India Group, which consists of Air India and Air India Express, handled 2.88 million passengers. Akasa Air carried 665,000 passengers in July, down from 861,000 in June, while SpiceJet carried 187,000, compared with 263,000 in the previous month. IndiGo’s market share increased to 67.4% in July from 66.3% in June despite the decline in passenger numbers, while the Air India Group’s share slightly increased to 24% from 23.9%. SpiceJet’s market share dropped to 1.6% from 1.9%, while Akasa Air’s dropped to 5.5% from 6.4%. For IndiGo, the Air India Group, and Akasa Air, the passenger load factor—the percentage of available seats occupied—dropped throughout the course of the month. The exception was SpiceJet, whose load factor increased from 73.2% in June to 74.7% in July. In July, scheduled domestic airlines had an aggregate cancellation rate of 0.62%. Technical concerns accounted for 39.9% of cancellations, followed by operational reasons at 27.4% and weather-related disruptions at 22.7%, according to the DGCA.



While the world fixates West, China quietly shapes East

The most consequential shifts in world affairs rarely announce themselves. They gather quietly while governments are distracted, markets are unsettled and public attention is consumed by the crisis of the day. Much of the world’s strategic gaze today remains fixed on the West — Ukraine, West Asia, Washington-Tehran tensions and the security of global energy routes. These crises matter. But while the world watches one theatre, another is steadily changing. China is pressing Taiwan, consolidating its position in the South China Sea, deepening its relationships across the Indian Ocean and building the industrial and technological foundations of long-term power. Beijing has understood a truth democracies sometimes forget: power is not merely about winning today’s argument; it is about shaping tomorrow’s choices. For India, that distinction is becoming decisive.

India has traditionally viewed China through the Himalayas. Understandably so. The mountains are where the territorial dispute is most visible and the memory of 2020 remains powerful. Peace along the Line of Actual Control is indispensable. But the border cannot become the entire map of India’s China policy. Beijing does not see India merely from the Tibetan plateau. Its conception of power is continental, maritime, technological, economic and diplomatic. China’s strategic geography stretches from the Himalayas to the Pacific, from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, and from ports and shipping lanes to supply chains and technology. India must learn to see the same map. The real question is how India prepares for a China whose understanding of power extends far beyond the frontier. For India, the Indian Ocean is not an outer ring of national security. It is the country’s economic bloodstream. Energy arrives through these waters, trade moves through them, and India’s relationships with the Gulf, Africa and Southeast Asia depend upon them. As India seeks to become a major manufacturing and trading power, maritime security will become inseparable from economic security. The Indian Navy, therefore, must be understood not merely as an instrument of defence but as the guardian of India’s economic arteries. Maritime domain awareness, satellites, undersea capabilities, unmanned systems, secure communications and protection of commercial shipping are no longer specialised military concerns. They are instruments of national power.

India possesses a geographical advantage that China cannot easily replicate. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands sit close to the approaches to the Malacca Strait; the Bay of Bengal opens towards Southeast Asia, while the Arabian Sea connects India to the Gulf and eastern Africa. But geography becomes power only when backed by infrastructure, technology, naval capability, economic strength and diplomatic purpose. The islands must therefore be treated not as distant outposts

but as strategic assets through which India’s economic rise and regional influence can travel. China’s partnership with Pakistan offers another lesson. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has obvious implications for India, particularly because it passes through territory claimed by India. But the larger lesson lies in how Beijing combines economics with geography. A road does not have to be a military road to possess strategic value. A port does not need a uniform at its gate to influence calculations. Connectivity creates access; access creates relationships; relationships create leverage. India needs its own connectivity story—from the Northeast to Southeast Asia, from the Indian Ocean to Africa and from the Gulf to Central Asia. The Northeast cannot remain peripheral to India’s strategic imagination. Its geography makes deeper economic integration with Southeast Asia not merely an economic opportunity but a strategic imperative. India’s partnerships with the United States, Japan, Australia and other Indo-Pacific countries are important because they can help preserve a balance in a region where the status quo is under pressure. Yet India’s Indo-Pacific policy should not become an anti-China crusade. Secure sea lanes, resilient supply chains, technological cooperation and a stable maritime neighbourhood are Indian interests in their own right. Strategic autonomy does not mean standing alone. It means possessing enough strength to choose one’s partners without surrendering one’s choices. India’s relationship with China will test that principle. Dialogue must continue because two major Asian powers cannot conduct their relationship indefinitely through suspicion. Every reduction in border tension should be welcomed. But engagement must never be confused with naivety. The territorial dispute remains unresolved, China’s claims over Arunachal Pradesh remain a concern, and competition for influence across Asia will continue even when relations appear calmer. Mature statecraft requires two things at once: the willingness to talk and the capacity to prepare. Diplomacy should reduce the possibility of conflict; preparedness should reduce the temptation to exploit vulnerability.

The deeper challenge is that national security itself is changing. The next conflict may not begin with troops crossing a border. It could begin with a cyberattack, disruption of communications, an attack on a port or the disabling of critical infrastructure. Satellites, undersea cables, financial networks and power systems can become battlefields without looking like battlefields. A secure country is one that can continue functioning when someone tries to disrupt it. Defence preparedness remains indispensable, but so are resilient supply chains, secure digital infrastructure, domestic technological capacity, advanced manufacturing and energy security. Sovereignty in the twenty-first century will increasingly depend on the ability to withstand disruption.

IndiGo’s network carrier expansion carries too many risks of ‘unrealistic ambitions’

IndiGo generated a lot of buzz when it placed an order for 30 A350-900 a twin-engine, long-range aircraft to begin transitioning from a no-frills carrier to a network carrier. In October 2025, the airline added another 30 aircraft to its order. Deliveries, as per the latest update, are likely to begin in mid-2028.

When the airline first announced plans to become a network carrier, the market reacted with caution. As the deadline for the induction of the long range aircraft draws nearer, experts and industry insiders remain sceptical about the plan. This piece will elaborate a few reasons behind the scepticism, some internal to IndiGo and some external and/or structural factors. Let’s start with the internal constraints. First, IndiGo, with its 430 aircraft in operation, over 500 ordered, and 68,000 employees, is already a large operation that is required to deliver consistently, every day of the year. Airline experts believe keeping it going in present form is challenging enough, without adding new verticals — IndiGo still has plenty of

opportunity in its present niche and should not give in to “unrealistic ambitions”, they maintain. Second, the airline faced a crisis of delays and cancellations in December 2025 that became a national embarrassment due to personnel management issues; as a result, the airline had to rebuild its core team. CEO Willie Walsh has only recently assumed charge, as have a new HR chief, chief financial officer, and chief of strategy, among others. A big new challenge at this stage might be biting off more than it can chew.

Moreover, airlines get built with a certain DNA and changing that mid-course doesn’t always work out. Jet Airways was structured and operated as a full-service airline from its inception in 1993. As the environment around it changed, Jet tried to adapt, reinvent, and reboot in every manner possible, but to no avail. In the end, it had to shut shop. As one observer said at the time, selling Oberoi rooms at OYO rates simply wasn’t viable in the long run. But the bigger hurdles for Indigo’s plans are likely structural or external. Even if it were to surmount

internal challenges and smoothly transition from a no-frills airline to a full-service one, there are at least three or four factors outside its control. One is the existing competition. In one direction, there’s Lufthansa, British Airways, Air France, Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways to joust with and, in the other, there’s Singapore Airlines, JAL, Korean Air and a clutch of other Thai and Malaysian carriers. Several have been in the business for the last 50-70 years. None of them are going to concede any traffic. If the competition can make life difficult, it will. Even if fear of competition will not deter a resolute new entrant, experts point out that Indian airports are not geared to facilitate the kind of hub-and-spoke operations that network carriers are structured around. Many of the metro airports, for instance, require fliers to arrive at one terminal and then make their way often by road, via connections outside the airport premises to another terminal to board an international flight, which in all likelihood will not take you to your final destination if it is Buenos Aires or Botswana,

for instance. Compare this with what Emirates which picks up fliers from nine different Indian cities headed to diverse destinations offers. Pick-up from the nine cities, arrival at Dubai and, within a 1.5-2 hour window that one can spend shopping and eating in the transit zones, boarding for one’s end-destination. Moving into long haul also makes the airline lose some of its current cost advantage since the costs of operating an A350 doesn’t vary dramatically between operators while the unique geography and spread of metropolises and Tier 2 and 3 cities in India allows IndiGo to use its A320s aggressively through the day. This lets it beat the competition by better utilising an expensive asset while reducing ground handling and others costs since the same staff handle multiple flights in a day. While the industry gives the planned foray the benefit of doubt well earned, with admiration for its current operations (glitches notwithstanding) wishes IndiGo luck, the risks continue to weigh on the minds of the aviation-sector watchers.

Iran can weather the war, but the price of survival is rapidly shifting

Across ages, scholars of war have returned to a deceptive yet simple question: what does it mean to win? Andrew Mack’s seminal work on asymmetric conflict showed why materially superior powers can lose “small wars” when battlefield dominance fails to produce the desired political outcome; in a later work, Ivan Arreguín-Toft argued that the interaction of strategies, rather than the balance of capabilities alone, often determines who prevails. Mary Kaldor’s formulation of “new wars” complicated the verdict further: contemporary conflict is sustained through dispersed networks, coercive economies and forms of violence that can persist beyond conventional campaigns. Analysed against this literature, the war with Iran has merely changed form and doesn’t offer a verdict on defeat or victory as yet.

While a successful military campaign by the US couldn’t fetch strategic outcomes, the IRGC’s capacity to survive and disrupt does not mean that Iran has escaped an enormous cumulative cost either. The Iran–Iraq War offers Tehran’s own warning. Today, the IRGC’s perseverance in sustaining eight years of bombing without regime change or territorial disintegration is invoked repeatedly. The Revolutionary Guard emerged more powerful and more radicalised, and yet Ayatollah Khomeini described accepting UN Resolution 598 as worse than drinking from a poisoned chalice. Survival and institutional consolidation could not be conflated with strategic success. That distinction remains useful. This war should be assessed along three separate axes: operational control, economic endurance and regional re-balancing. On the first axis, the United States retains overwhelming force and Iran retains disruptive capabilities. On

the third, neither has compelled the other, but the regional actors themselves are looking at diversification from Hormuz and newer geometries of deterrence the Mecca Pact being the latest in the offing. It is the second the economic warfare that is changing fastest and is the subject of today’s column. There are two crucial players in this context – US’s successive measures, and the UAE, whose measures could inflict a more immediate and deeper economic shock to the IRGC deploying a lever Abu Dhabi had avoided over the past six months.

The Trump administration’s rhetoric remains maximal. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has promised the “toughest sanctions in history” and a “one-two punch” of sanctions alongside the naval blockade. Trump’s Truth Social remains explosive “Economic D-Day”, “Economic Warfare” and severe consequences for any country providing Iran “any type of lifeline”. Yet, slogans are not strategy. Economic coercion works through specific nodes oil loadings, payments, shipping registries, insurers and third-country banks and depends on whether allies and buyers cooperate. However, beyond Trump’s diatribe, physical evidence is consequential. Kpler’s pre-war data showed that Kharg Island handled 94 per cent of Iran’s crude exports over 12 months, at about 1.52 million barrels a day. Jask, outside Hormuz, was designed as an alternative, but its effective capacity is estimated at roughly 300,000 barrels a day, and it has been lightly used. The latest Kpler updates make the war-cost visible for Iran. Its own crude loadings fell from 893,000 barrels a day in July to 156,000 through 17 August. Kharg’s western terminal resumed limited activity on 12 August after a 25-day pause; the

eastern terminal remained empty and tankers were still waiting offshore. The IRGC can boast of control of Hormuz for others and with desired effect too, but it has been able to do little about the US blockade on its own. Axios reported this week that the US military has “quietly organized” a southern channel along Oman’s coast, with 15–20 tankers entering and leaving nightly. Two unnamed US officials said flows had approached 10 million barrels a day. The operational claim is somewhat plausible: escort schedules, air cover and degraded Iranian surveillance can create a protected lane, but the volume claim is not yet established. Many have accused Axios of overstating facts.

Kpler counted only nine commodity-vessel transits on both Tuesday and Wednesday, against roughly 130-140 ships a day before the war. Some vessels may, of course, be running with transponders switched off. Its crude-flow data also recorded 2.77 million barrels a day for the week beginning 27 July, 1.74 million for the following week, and a wartime weekly high of 6.98 million. These datasets do support the existence of an alternate corridor, as Axios revealed, but do not support the claim of 10 million barrels a day. Dark transits, ship-to-ship transfers and differences between cargo loaded and cargo cleared make maritime accounting unusually difficult. The correct conclusion is narrower. Iran’s own loadings matter more than rhetoric about whether the Strait is “open” or “closed”. A chokepoint can be militarily contested, legally open, commercially avoided and economically constricted at the same time. If Iranian oil cannot leave Kharg at scale, or its proceeds cannot be converted and repatriated, the double blockade becomes a

double-edged sword.

The second pressure front is Emirati. After the UAE intercepted two ballistic missiles launched from Iran on 18 August that fell into the sea Abu Dhabi halted all trade, commercial exchange and financial transactions with Iran until further notice. The role of the UAE as a safe haven for the IRGC elite’s money has been mentioned intermittently, but never really been analyzed enough. Neither has its trade relationship with Iran been followed through. WTO data show that in 2024 the UAE supplied \$21 billion (30.6 per cent) of Iran’s merchandise imports and received \$7.16 billion (12.8 per cent) of its exports. Iranian customs data for the year ending March 2025 present an almost identical pattern: the UAE supplied \$21.9 billion, about 30.3 per cent, of Iran’s non-oil imports and received \$7.2 billion, about 12.4 per cent, of its non-oil exports. Nearly one-third of Iran’s imports continued to pass through the Emirati gateway. To understand the leverage, one must revisit and analyse some more history. Dubai’s Iranian connection predates the UAE federation. Southern Iranian merchants helped build its commercial class in the early 20th century. The 1979 Revolution and the Iran–Iraq War brought new migrants and refugees. Today, not many remember that during that war Abu Dhabi and the UAE, at large, leaned towards Iraq while Dubai remained a transit point for Iran. After Dubai opened its property market to foreigners in 2003, real estate offered varied investments. By 2010, re-exports to Iran were worth \$8.58 billion almost 17% of all UAE re-exports. Geography, free ports, exchange hubs and family networks made Dubai an efficient interface between a sanctioned economy and global trade.

It was a dual system and not just the Emirates helping the IRGC to evade sanctions. Abu Dhabi was security-minded and closely aligned with Washington; but Dubai monetized its openness. Legitimate trade coexisted with hawala settlements, trade mis-invoicing (basically money laundering), front companies, property and, eventually, cryptocurrency. The arrangement also functioned as an insurance policy for the UAE: access for Iranian business and elites reduced the incentive to threaten the hub that held the IRGC’s commercial oxygen. There is enough evidence now to support the claims made above. In July, a Reuters investigation found that an unlicensed Dubai crypto exchange, Shelbit, had processed at least \$4 billion since May 2024, including flows connected to more than 2,000 gambling sites, Iran’s central bank and wallets that Israel later linked to the IRGC. Reuters could not establish direct IRGC control; Dubai’s regulator had fined the firm and later ordered it to stop. Separately, the US Treasury identified UAE fronts and networks moving or holding hundreds of millions for sanctioned Iranian banks. In June, it was reported that intermediaries had discussed unlocking at least \$10 billion for Iran in return for an end to attacks on the UAE, but Abu Dhabi categorically denied that any frozen funds were released or facilitated. The report nevertheless documented visits between senior IRGC and Emirati officials and Iranian-linked deposits immobilised in Dubai banks. Two months later, the missile incident and earlier attacks on ADNOC-linked shipping show that the UAE’s long-standing insurance policy is not working. It also shows that the UAE suspending all trade and commercial activity with Iran is a larger blow to the IRGC than usually perceived.

The AI paradigm shift: rethinking liberal arts education for the future

As artificial intelligence rapidly reshapes the way knowledge is created, accessed, and applied, classrooms are evolving into 360-degree learning environments (students’ total growth), where digital technologies, collaborative platforms, and intelligent systems increasingly influence how students learn and engage with the world. Amid this, a fundamental question emerges: should higher education focus solely on producing technically skilled professionals, or should it also cultivate reflective, ethical, and analytical minds? In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to address this challenge by promoting multidisciplinary learning, curricular flexibility, and student-centred pedagogy, reaffirming that the purpose of higher education extends beyond employability to nurturing individuals who can think independently, communicate persuasively, and contribute meaningfully to society.

As learning behaviours evolve rapidly, education systems face the challenge of preparing students not merely to acquire information, but to interpret, question, and use it responsibly. In an age of smart technologies, AI should enhance human capabilities rather than replace them, making critical literacy, analytical reasoning, and the ability to ask meaningful questions increasingly valuable. Consequently, success will depend not merely on technical ex-

pertise but on the ability to scrutinise evidence critically, innovate creatively, collaborate effectively, and exercise problem-solving abilities guided by wisdom, empathy, and human values. While integrating liberal learning with professional education, institutions can nurture adaptable, creative, and socially responsible graduates equipped to navigate complexity, exercise informed choice, and address the multifaceted challenges of society. In liberal arts education, historians, philosophers, political scientists, and sociologists encourage learners to question assumptions, examine evidence, and understand the complexities of human societies. Interdisciplinary learning fosters curiosity, critical thinking, and informed judgement - qualities difficult to replicate through technology. In an AI-driven era marked by misinformation and deepfakes, liberal education equips individuals to avoid the dangers of uncritical conformity (Hannah Arendt) in public life. Indeed, true education brings out the innate talent of students. As the UGC underlines, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are graduates’ attributes that foster intellectual growth, creativity, and lifelong learning beyond memorisation. By encouraging inquiry, evidence-based reasoning, and interdisciplinary learning, institutions can empower students to navigate information critically and create civic

trust. By integrating the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and technology, institutions enable students to navigate complex realities, evaluate competing claims, and exercise ethical judgement. Its purpose is not merely to acquire knowledge but to read critically, write cogently, think broadly and act wisely.

The challenges of the twenty-first century demand more than technical proficiency; they require holistic learning that cultivates digital democracy based on curiosity and critical inquiry. Historians teach the importance of evidence and context. Philosophers sharpen reasoning and expose logical fallacies; political scientists illuminate the workings of institutions and power; literature cultivates empathy and perspective-taking, while anthropologists reveal how culture shapes human behaviour. Together, these disciplines foster the ability to question assumptions, evaluate competing claims, and engage thoughtfully with complex realities. In an era of information abundance and algorithmic decision-making, wisdom remains humanity’s greatest strength, empowering individuals to exercise ethical judgement, maintain intellectual independence, critically evaluate information, participate responsibly in democratic processes, and engage meaningfully in community action.

Centre Plans \$1.2-Billion Push to Build Heavy Machinery in India

New Delhi: The Centre is preparing a \$1.2-billion incentive programme to accelerate domestic manufacturing of high-value infrastructure and heavy engineering equipment, with a focus on reducing India's dependence on imports from China for critical machinery.

The proposed package will provide financial incentives over seven years and is expected to attract around \$1.8 billion in private investment. The programme will target technologically advanced equipment that is currently largely imported as fully built units.

Tunnel boring machines (TBMs), high-capacity fire-fighting systems and specialised elevators and lifts are among the equipment expected to be covered under the proposed framework. TBMs are particularly important for metro construction and road tunnels in the Himalayan region.

The scheme is expected

to include phased domestic value-addition requirements, encouraging manufacturers to progressively increase the share of components and manufacturing carried out within India.

Reducing dependence on Chinese machinery has emerged as a key objective following supply-chain disruptions in recent years. Procurement restrictions were tightened after the 2020 border tensions, while customs-related delays in 2024 affected TBM supplies and contributed to delays in some urban transport and border infrastructure projects.

India's imports of TBMs from China fell from \$18 million in FY23 to \$3 million in FY24 and further to \$500,000 in FY25. Imports subsequently rose marginally to around \$800,000 in FY26.

State-owned BEML and private-sector engineering companies such as Larsen & Toubro and Johnson Lifts

are among the domestic players positioned to benefit as local manufacturing capacity expands.

The initiative comes as India's construction and mining equipment industry continues to grow. The domestic sector is estimated at around ₹1 lakh crore, or \$10.5 billion, while India's share of global construction equipment production has increased from 2.5% to 4%.

A BCG-CII report has projected India's global share could rise to 6.5% over the next five years, supported by continued public spending on expressways, high-speed rail networks, metro projects and airports.

The proposed incentive programme is therefore aimed not only at replacing imports but also at building a stronger domestic heavy-engineering ecosystem capable of serving India's expanding infrastructure requirements and competing in overseas markets.

Saatvik Green Energy Gains 3% on Rs 190-Crore Solar Order

Mumbai: Shares of Saatvik Green Energy rose 3.26% in intraday trading after its subsidiary Saatvik Solar Industries secured a ₹190-crore commercial contract to supply high-efficiency solar photovoltaic (PV) modules to a domestic independent power producer and EPC player.

The order is scheduled for completion by March 2027 and covers the supply of solar modules for renewable energy projects. The customer has not been named. Saatvik Green Energy said the contract is commercial in nature and does not involve any related-party transaction.

The company disclosed the order under Regulation 30 of the SEBI Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) Regulations, 2015. The an-



nouncement provided support to the stock, which had declined around 7.8% over the previous month and 5.96% over the preceding 12 months before the latest gain.

Headquartered in Gurugram and established in 2015, Saatvik Green Energy manufactures MonoPERC, bifacial and N-TopCon solar PV modules and provides EPC services across

utility, commercial and residential projects.

The company has supplied more than 2.50 GW of solar modules in domestic and international markets and operates through subsidiaries in India and the United States. The latest order strengthens its module supply pipeline as demand for solar manufacturing and renewable energy infrastructure continues to expand.

Volkswagen Targets Mass Market with New Sub-4-Metre SUV

Mumbai: Volkswagen India is preparing to enter one of the country's most competitive and high-volume passenger vehicle segments with a new sub-four-metre compact SUV, marking a significant expansion beyond its current Taigun- and Virtus-led portfolio. The move is aimed at giving the German automaker a stronger presence among value-conscious buyers and increasing sales volumes in the Indian market.

The upcoming SUV has received global approval and is expected to be launched in India around the second quarter of 2027. The project is estimated to involve an investment of about €25 million, or roughly ₹275 crore, for adapting the model to Volkswagen's requirements. The company is expected to manufacture the vehicle locally, supporting its broader localisation strategy in India.

The decision reflects Volkswagen's renewed focus on the sub-four-metre SUV category, which has become a crucial growth area in the Indian passenger vehicle market. The segment includes some of the country's best-selling SUVs and offers manu-

facturers access to a substantially larger customer base than the more premium-oriented products currently available in Volkswagen India's range.

Volkswagen has been largely absent from this segment since discontinuing the Polo and Ameo. Its current Indian portfolio is centred around the Taigun SUV and Virtus sedan, leaving the brand without a direct offering in the high-volume compact SUV space. The new model is expected to fill that gap and give Volkswagen a product positioned below the Taigun.

The new SUV will be closely related to the Škoda Kylaq, which already occupies the sub-four-metre category. It will use the same underlying MQB-A0-IN architecture and is expected to share significant mechanical components with the Škoda model. However, Volkswagen plans to give its version a distinctly different identity rather than simply rebadging the Kylaq.

Design changes are expected across the exterior and interior, with Volkswagen-specific styling, revised front and rear sections, different lighting elements, unique alloy



wheels and a separate cabin treatment. The model is also expected to receive equipment and positioning tailored to Volkswagen customers.

The MQB-A0-IN platform has already been extensively localised for the Indian market. Developed by teams in India and the Czech Republic, the architecture was designed to reduce costs, increase localisation and support models suited to Indian road and market conditions. It currently underpins the Škoda Kylaq, Kushaq and Slavia, as well as Volkswagen's Taigun and Virtus.

Power is expected to come from the group's 1.0-litre three-cylinder TSI turbo-petrol engine, producing around 115 PS and 178 Nm. The same powertrain in the Kylaq is offered with a six-speed manual and six-speed torque-con-

verter automatic transmission. Reports on the Volkswagen model, however, indicate that a newer eight-speed torque-converter automatic could also be considered.

The Škoda Kylaq provides an indication of the mechanical package Volkswagen could adopt. The model measures 3,995 mm in length and uses the 1.0 TSI engine with 115 hp and 178 Nm, while offering both manual and automatic transmission options.

The Volkswagen SUV will enter a fiercely contested market featuring the Maruti Suzuki Brezza, Tata Nexon, Hyundai Venue, Kia Sonet and Mahindra XUV 3XO. The segment has become increasingly important as Indian consumers continue to favour compact SUVs that combine relatively small dimensions with higher ground clearance

and SUV styling.

For Volkswagen, the launch represents more than the addition of another SUV. It is an attempt to broaden the company's customer base, improve economies of scale through greater use of its locally developed platform and establish a stronger foothold in India's mass-market passenger vehicle industry.

The move also signals a change in Volkswagen's earlier approach to the sub-four-metre category. The company had previously been cautious about entering the segment because of concerns over development costs, limited export opportunities and profitability. The success of the Kylaq and the growing importance of compact SUVs have now made the category a more attractive opportunity.

With the new model, Volkswagen will seek to combine its brand identity and engineering with the cost advantages of a highly localised platform. If launched as planned, the SUV could become an important volume product for the company and strengthen its position in one of India's fastest-growing areas of the passenger vehicle market.

New Delhi: Colgate-Palmolive (India) Limited has appointed Manish Anandani as its Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer for a five-year term beginning September 28, 2026, in a leadership transition that will see Prabha Narasimhan move to a senior regional role within the company's Asia-Pacific business.

Anandani will assume the MD and CEO position after Narasimhan steps down at the close of business on September 27. His tenure is scheduled to run until September 27, 2031, following the recommendation of the company's Nomination and Remuneration Committee.

Narasimhan will take up the position of Executive Vice President-Marketing for Colgate-Palmolive's Asia-Pacific operations. As part of the transition, she will also relinquish her position as a director on the Indian company's board and step down from the board committees on which she currently serves.

Anandani is returning to Colgate-Palmolive after serving as Managing Di-



rector for India and South Asia at Kenvue. His appointment brings back an executive with extensive experience within the Colgate-Palmolive system, having spent 13 years with the company between 2005 and 2018.

During his earlier stint, Anandani held a range of positions across India, Indochina and Colgate-Palmolive's global headquarters. His responsibilities included global customer development, where he served as Worldwide Director, giving him exposure to the company's international

operations and commercial strategy.

Anandani has around 30 years of professional experience across sales, brand marketing, market development and digital transformation. His career has also included work in e-commerce and the development of consumer businesses across both emerging and developed markets.

His academic background includes a degree in Electronics, an MBA in Marketing and an Executive MBA in Leadership from the Tuck School of Business in the United States. The

combination of commercial and digital experience is expected to be relevant as Colgate India continues to adapt to changing consumer behaviour and the growing importance of digital and modern retail channels.

The leadership change comes as Colgate-Palmolive India continues to report growth in revenue and profit. During the first quarter of FY27, the company's revenue increased 12% year-on-year to ₹1,591 crore, while net profit rose 7% to ₹343 crore.

Despite the year-on-year improvement, profit de-

clined 3% sequentially from the preceding quarter, indicating some moderation in earnings momentum. The company will therefore enter the leadership transition with growth continuing in its core business but amid a mixed operating and market environment.

The company's shares traded around 1% lower during Friday's session. Before the latest movement, the stock had declined 13.05% over the preceding three months and was down 10.11% on a year-to-date basis.

Anandani's return places an experienced Colgate executive at the helm of the India business at a time when the fast-moving consumer goods sector is navigating changing consumer preferences, evolving retail channels and increasing competition. His previous experience within the group and subsequent leadership role at Kenvue gives him exposure to both the company's global operating structure and the Indian consumer market.

Foreign Investors Return to Indian Financial Stocks with ₹6,535-Crore Inflow

Mumbai: Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) sharply increased their exposure to India's financial services sector during the first half of August, investing a net ₹6,535 crore between August 1 and 15, as overseas investors shifted towards sectors offering stronger liquidity, earnings visibility and relatively defensive characteristics.

The latest inflow marked a significant turnaround from the final fortnight of July, when FIIs had withdrawn ₹2,669 crore from financial services stocks. The reversal amounted to ₹9,204 crore within a fortnight.

Foreign investors also increased their overall sectoral exposure during the period. Net inflows across domestic equity sectors stood at ₹16,618 crore in the first half of August, more than three times the ₹4,642 crore recorded during the corresponding period in late July, according to data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL). Financial services accounted for nearly 40% of the total net sectoral inflows, making it the largest recipient of foreign capital during the first half of the month. Automobiles emerged as the second-largest beneficiary,

attracting ₹4,405 crore of net foreign investment, compared with ₹2,372 crore in the preceding fortnight. Consumer services followed with ₹3,398 crore, while also recording the highest inflow relative to its previous assets under custody (AUC), at 1.23%.

Healthcare and information technology continued to draw foreign interest, receiving ₹2,910 crore and ₹2,530 crore, respectively. Consumer durables recorded net purchases of ₹1,472 crore, while metals and oil and gas attracted ₹720 crore and ₹490 crore, respectively, reversing earlier selling trends.

The buying, however, remained selective, with foreign investors continuing to reduce their exposure to several capital-intensive and telecom-related sectors.

Telecommunications witnessed the largest net outflow at ₹3,322 crore. The latest selling took cumulative foreign divestment from the sector since January beyond ₹24,500 crore.

Capital goods also remained under pressure, registering net foreign selling of ₹1,556 crore. However, the outflow was considerably lower than the ₹3,618 crore recorded during the final fortnight of

July. Power and real estate recorded net outflows of ₹1,164 crore and ₹1,014 crore, respectively, while construction stocks saw ₹404 crore withdrawn during the period.

The pattern indicates a preference among foreign investors for sectors with relatively stronger earnings visibility, higher liquidity and more defensive characteristics. Capital-intensive segments, meanwhile, continued to face pressure as longer investment cycles, execution challenges and higher capital requirements weighed on investor preference.

Lalithaa Jewellery IPO May List at ₹260 as GMP Signals Strong Gains

Mumbai: Shares of South India-based jewellery retailer Lalithaa Jewellery Mart are set to debut on the BSE and NSE on August 24, with grey market trends indicating a potential listing price of around ₹260, or nearly 29.35% above the IPO's upper issue price of ₹201.

The ₹1,700-crore IPO, comprising a ₹1,200-crore

fresh issue and ₹500 crore offer for sale, received 66.63 times overall subscription.

The QIB portion was subscribed 154 times, while the NII and retail categories were subscribed 78 times and 12.51 times, respectively.

Lalithaa Jewellery operates 61 showrooms across Tamil Nadu, Andhra

Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Puducherry. Tier-II and Tier-III markets contributed 60.25% of its FY26 revenue.

The company's FY26 revenue rose 48.1% to ₹25,023.9 crore, while net profit jumped 177% to ₹1,009.8 crore. Fresh issue proceeds will primarily support expansion of its retail network.

Rupee Rises 9 Paise to 95.65 Against Dollar as Greenback Weakens

New Delhi: The Indian rupee strengthened 9 paise to 95.65 against the US dollar in early trade on Friday, supported by broad weakness in the greenback, although elevated crude oil prices and continued geopolitical tensions in West Asia limited the currency's gains.

The rupee opened at 95.69 against the dollar in the interbank foreign exchange market before improving to 95.65, compared with Thursday's close of 95.74. The US Dollar Index fell 0.15% to 98.74, its lowest level since May, providing support to emerging-market currencies.

However, rising crude prices remained a key constraint for the rupee. Brent crude futures traded around \$93.56 a barrel as disruptions to supplies from the

Middle East kept the oil market tight. The continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz and more than 20% of regional refining capacity remaining offline have added to supply concerns.

The Reserve Bank of India is also seeking to strengthen foreign-currency inflows through measures introduced earlier this year. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said around \$56.85 billion had been mobilised so far towards the central bank's broader target of at least \$80 billion.

FCNR(B) deposits accounted for the bulk of the mobilisation, contributing around \$52.3 billion. Despite the sizeable inflows, market participants said the rupee has not experienced the sharp appreciation seen

during the 2013 FCNR(B) deposit mobilisation cycle.

Persistent geopolitical risks, a higher oil import bill and continued foreign selling in domestic equities have absorbed part of the additional dollar liquidity, limiting the impact of the inflows on the rupee.

Domestic equities also opened on a subdued note, with the BSE Sensex hovering around 77,506 and the NSE Nifty trading near 24,223. Foreign institutional investors remained net sellers in the previous session, withdrawing ₹583.36 crore from Indian equities.

The rupee's near-term movement is therefore likely to remain influenced by the direction of the US dollar, crude oil prices, foreign portfolio flows and developments in the West Asian geopolitical situation.

Academic who accused Jason Arday of plagiarism suspended by his university

America: Nathan Cofnas, the academic who made plagiarism allegations against Prof Jason Arday before his death, has been suspended by a university.

Arday, 41, resigned from his role at the University of Cambridge this month after coverage of Cofnas’s accusations of plagiarism. The allegations, which were not proven in any formal investigation, triggered questions about Arday’s achievements.

There has been stiff criticism of Cambridge over its handling of the affair, but also of the coverage by some media. The university’s chancellor, Chris Smith, described it as a “racist feeding frenzy”. Arday, who became Cambridge’s youngest black professor in 2023, was found dead in Battersea, south London, on Friday. The “American anti-woke” blogger Cofnas is a postdoctoral researcher

at Ghent University’s department of philosophy and moral sciences, according to his website.

In a post on X on Thursday, Cofnas said: “I am under investigation by my university for discriminating against Arday.” He added in a separate post: “I was just suspended by Ghent University. They will almost certainly fire me.”

Ghent University confirmed his suspension after saying they had been “shocked” by Arday’s death and that it “should prompt reflection”, adding that the institution “opposes discrimination, hatred and racism”.

In a joint statement on Wednesday, Ghent University’s rector, Petra De Sutter, and vice-rector, Herwig Reynaert, said: “We attach great importance to academic freedom and to open academic debate, even when views are controver-

sial. However, that freedom is not unlimited.

“It goes hand in hand with responsibility and may be restricted in order to protect the rights of others. For this reason, the university takes the recent public statements made by a postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University regarding this matter very seriously.

“Ghent University has decided to take appropriate action within its powers and the applicable framework.” The rector and vice-rector said that while it was “important to be transparent”, they did not want to “pre-empt any potential decisions at this stage”.

In an update on Thursday, a spokesperson said: “Ghent University formally notified the staff member concerned of the launch of a preliminary disciplinary investigation.

“As part of this process, the university is assessing



whether there are sufficient grounds to refer the case to the competent disciplinary body for further consideration. Pending this preliminary investigation, Ghent

il for Arday in Trafalgar Square, central London. Cofnas was sacked from his role at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 2024. In blog posts, he had said that, in a meritocracy: “Blacks would disappear from almost all high-profile positions outside of sports and entertainment.” In a piece titled “Don’t Scapegoat Women”, published in January this year, Cofnas claimed “women but not men can get people fired by pointing and crying”.

He added: “To meet de facto quotas, employers have had to reach deeper into the pool of less qualified female candidates. For obvious reasons, affirmative action hires often have a chip on their shoulder. Many of them turn to social justice activism to distract from the fact that they aren’t as good at their job as the straight white men who earned their position based

University has suspended the staff member as a precautionary measure.”

Earlier this week, organisers said more than 30,000 people had attended a vig-

il for Arday in Trafalgar Square, central London. Cofnas was sacked from his role at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 2024. In blog posts, he had said that, in a meritocracy: “Blacks would disappear from almost all high-profile positions outside of sports and entertainment.” In a piece titled “Don’t Scapegoat Women”, published in January this year, Cofnas claimed “women but not men can get people fired by pointing and crying”.

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on merit, or weren’t hired at all.” This year, the northern hemisphere has been battered by unprecedented heatwaves and wildfires that have even reached the fringes of major European cities.

At the same time, the global consensus on the need for urgent action has been attacked by rightwing populists as an elite concern, just as the poorest suffer most from the climate catastrophe.

The result of this has been corporations retreating from their climate promises and major news organisations gutting their climate coverage.

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As well as banning advertisements from fossil fuel companies, we have hired

more journalists to report on the environment and expanded the coverage we give to the great crisis of our time. Our transparently-funded reporting is free to draw the direct links between big oil and the impact on our planet.

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GCSE results: almost one in four boys in England get top grades in maths



UK: Almost one in four boys in England received top grades in maths while results in English improved across the board, helping to propel improved GCSE results for this year’s cohort of 16-year-olds.

The stronger performances in maths helped pupils taking GCSEs in year 11 reach a record level for higher grades in England outside the Covid pandemic years, when exams were replaced by teacher assessments.

The overall results for 16-year-olds nudged slightly higher compared with last year, with the proportion receiving grades 7, 8 and 9 – equivalent to grades A and A* – rising by 0.1 of a percentage point to 23.1%. The proportion of nearly 700,000 16-year-olds in England who got a grade 4 or better – equivalent to a C or higher – also rose to 70.7%, compared

with 70.5% in 2025.

Some of the strongest performances appeared to come in the compulsory subject of maths, where 22.3% received 7s or better, including 24% of boys and 20.5% of girls. But girls did worse than last year in lower grades, dropping from 71% awarded 4 and above to 70.7%, while boys improved further to 72.8%.

Richard Harry, the executive director of qualifications and assessment at the Welsh exam board WJEC, said the maths results for 16-year-old boys in England “may be the highest in recent years”.

Coming after last week’s A-levels also showed stronger results in maths, Harry said it was difficult to know what was driving the improvement: “Since coming out of the pandemic we’ve been maintaining the standard in maths at both GCSE and in A-level and I think

we’re confident that the outcomes we’re seeing this year reflect the level of attainment that learners have achieved.”

Girls continue to outperform boys at GCSE, but the gap is closing and is now 2.9 percentage points lower than it was in 2019. Harry urged caution, however. “The gap is only very slightly narrower this year – it’s a very small change. I think it would be difficult to speculate too much around the differences for such small changes.”

In English, the other compulsory subject, results bounced back after dipping last year, with 66.1% of boys getting 4s and above while girls improved to 76.8%.

Many of the pupils receiving GCSE results this summer were in year 5 when schools were largely closed due to Covid-19 restrictions, disrupting their final years of primary schooling.

Trump shows off White House renovations and ornate new helipad

Washington: As the US national debt climbed past \$40tn for the first time on Wednesday, and the war with Iran he started nearly six months ago dragged on, forcing Americans already struggling to pay the bills to spend more on fuel, Donald Trump led the press corps on a tour of the extensive remodeling of the White House grounds he is personally overseeing in his role as the self-styled “builder-in-chief”.

The tour, during which Trump showed off upgrades such as a new granite driveway and refurbished columns, and expounded at length on newly laid grass, culminated in Trump autographing the back of a stone, inscribed with his name, to go in the center of the ornate new helipad he insists he needs.

All in all, the 40-minute diversion from the work of being US president, which seemed at times like a lost episode of the 1980s TV show *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, did little to help Trump beat the charge laid against him by senator Jon Ossoff, the Georgia Democrat who said earlier this week that the former real estate developer is not really that interested in the work of leading the nation.

While US service members “fight his war” on Iran, Ossoff said, “the president sleeps through his meetings. He golfs and trades stocks. See, he doesn’t want to do the job. He wants to build his ballroom” and travel with his close aide Natalie Harp on the luxury jet gifted to him by the emir of Qatar.



At one point in the tour, after Trump boasted about the “flawless granite” he replaced the asphalt driveway with, he told his captive audience of reporters: “We get the best stuff; one thing I know how to do is build.”

“It’s ridiculous the way this place was taken care of,” he said. “Nobody, including other presidents, they didn’t see it. But I see it because I was very good at real estate, like maybe the best in a lot of ways.”

Drawing attention to the newly laid sod around the helipad, golf course owner Trump repeated one of his favorite lines. “You know, grass has a life like humans have a life,” he said, for at least the tenth time in public remarks in the past year.

“It’s all been top-soiled. In other words, we put top soil, brand new earth on top. Very, you know, very – a lot of good ingredients in that earth for grass. If you’re grass, you’re very happy,” the president said.

He then pivoted to something like a product placement. “This grass is the highest quality. It was given free of charge by Scotts Miracle-Gro. Scotts. And Scotts is a great company. They actually contributed to my campaign,” he said.

“They said to me, ‘Sir, we’d like to replace the grass at the White House with the highest quality grass and do a real job.’ So, Scotts, I want to thank Scotts Miracle-Gro,” Trump went on. “It’s a very, I think the biggest grass company in the world, somebody said, but it’s very big and very good.”

Trump first made his observation that “grass has a life” during remarks last August to the federal forces he deployed to police Washington DC. “I know more about grass than any human being I think anywhere in the world,” the president claimed on that occasion.

He made the observation again in the Oval Office the following month, while an-

nouncing his rebrand of the defense department as the Department of War, and has repeated it multiple times since, including: during a cabinet meeting; while meeting with the Nato secretary general; while signing an executive order on trade; and as he unveiled plans for a renovation of Dulles airport.

The president also suggested that his new helipad will be dual use, also serving as a second patio. “They can have events on it. They can have people go there for cocktails and then walk to the ballroom after that’s finished,” he said.

Before he was done with the tour on Wednesday, the president also reminded the press pack that he had donated the two huge flag poles now flanking the White House, and made a point of saying that those poles were of the highest quality. “This is a great pole,” Trump said. “This is the top of the line. It’s tapered. Great. I’m very good at flagpoles.”

Pakistan Government Challenges Supreme Court Order to Shift Imran Khan to Hospital

Islamabad: The Pakistani government has begun efforts to prevent ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan from being moved out of custody after the Supreme Court ordered that he be shifted to Shifa International Hospital in the capital Islamabad. Strongly objecting to the order, the government on Wednesday filed a review petition before the Supreme Court seeking its withdrawal.

Imran Khan is currently incarcerated at Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi. Attention is now focused on how the

apex court will respond to the review petition.

According to a report in The News, the review petition was filed by Islamabad Advocate General Naveed Hayat Malik on behalf of the Federal Government through the Chief Commissioner. The petition described the interim order as discriminatory and argued that the Supreme Court’s August 18 order was beyond its jurisdiction and required reconsideration.

The review petition stated, “It appears that the Honourable Court’s atten-

tion was not drawn to the above-mentioned statutory provision, resulting in an error apparent on the face of the record. Had the Court considered the said provision of law, the order under review could not have been passed. Therefore, the same requires reconsideration.”

According to the federal government’s review petition, an Additional Sessions Judge sentenced Imran Khan to three years in prison on August 5, 2023. He subsequently challenged the conviction before the Islamabad High Court. The

petition said Khan had requested to be shifted to Shifa International Hospital for medical treatment, but the Islamabad High Court rejected the request on March 12. He subsequently approached the Supreme Court.

The federal government argued in its review petition that, in certain circumstances, transferring a prisoner to a hospital requires government approval and action through the Inspector General of Prisons. It also maintained that prisoners transferred

to hospitals must remain under police supervision. The petition referred to the Pakistan Prison Rules, 1978, which prescribe the procedure for transferring prisoners from jails to hospitals. The government further argued that Article 10A guarantees the right to a fair trial and due process of law. According to the petition, the matter had come before the Supreme Court for the first time and notices had not been issued to the concerned parties.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday, August 18, had

directed that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan be admitted to Shifa International Hospital within two days and receive treatment there until September 16. The court also ordered the formation of a medical board to examine and treat Khan.

The Supreme Court also permitted Khan’s personal physician and his sister to remain involved in his medical care. The order came amid months of concern expressed by Khan’s family and supporters over his health and allegations that

he had not been provided adequate medical treatment. The apex court directed that Khan remain at Shifa International Hospital until the next hearing scheduled for September 16. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said the government would implement the Supreme Court’s order in letter and spirit.

The Supreme Court also allowed Khan to meet his family once a week during his hospital stay. The PTI founder has been imprisoned at Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi since August

2023. His supporters have continued to stage protests against his incarceration. His family members and party associates have repeatedly alleged human rights violations, accusing the authorities of denying Khan adequate medical treatment, family visits and access to his legal advisers.

The order issued on Tuesday stated that Dr Uzma and the former prime minister’s personal physician should be present during his examination and treatment at Shifa, with the expenses to be borne by his family.

According to dermatologist Dr. Rinky Kapoor, sensitive skin is a genuine condition, affecting one-third of the Indian population

In the past, a slight stinging sensation following the application of a cream was often disregarded by many individuals. However, in contemporary times, experiences of burning after using a serum, redness post-cleansing, itching after applying sunscreen, or sudden adverse reactions to previously tolerated products have become increasingly prevalent issues reported in dermatology clinics. Scientific research indicates that sensitive skin is not merely a niche issue. A comprehensive epidemiological study conducted across India revealed that 32.4% of the population identified themselves as having sensitive or very sensitive skin, with 27.9% of men and 36.7% of women falling into this category. It is crucial to note that this data is based on self-reports and should not be misconstrued as a clinical diagnosis; nonetheless, it highlights the widespread nature of this condition.

What is actually happening to sensitive skin? Sensitive skin is now understood as a complex interaction between the skin barrier and the sensory nervous system. It is characterized by sensations such as burning, stinging, tingling, itching, or prickling in response to stimuli that would not normally produce such reactions, sometimes even when the skin appears completely normal. “One mechanism attracting considerable scientific attention involves transient receptor potential (TRP) channels, particularly TRPV1, a receptor that detects heat and noxious stimuli. Research has found increased TRPV1 expression in people with sensitive skin, with expression correlating with symptom intensity,” Dermatologist Dr Rinky Kapoor, Co- Founder & Director, The Esthetic Clinics, tells Health Shots. Are our skincare habits making things worse? Modern skincare has given

consumers access to highly effective ingredients. Still, it has also created an environment where more is often mistaken for better. Retinoids, exfoliating acids, and other active ingredients can deliver significant dermatological benefits. “Still, irritation is a recognized limitation of topical retinoid therapy, particularly when products are introduced too aggressively, or the skin is not allowed to adapt,” says Dr Kapoor. Over-exfoliation can similarly aggravate an already vulnerable barrier. The problem is not that these ingredients are inherently harmful; rather, dose, frequency, formulation, and individual tolerance matter. “The Indian environment adds another challenge,” warns the skin specialist. In the Indian epidemiological study, people who described their skin as sensitive or very sensitive were two to three times more likely to report reactions to climatic and environmental

factors and cosmetics. When the protective skin barrier is compromised, irritants may also penetrate more easily, potentially amplifying these sensory responses. This helps explain why “my skin burns when I apply something” shouldn’t be dismissed as a cosmetic inconvenience. Air pollution represents another possible source of stress. A review of existing evidence indicates that pollutants can harm the skin through processes such as oxidative stress and inflammation, with particulate matter and other contaminants identified as factors that disrupt normal skin function. “For Indian consumers residing in highly urbanized areas, this highlights the significance of the connection between skincare, environmental factors, and barrier health,” states the dermatologist. Additionally, it is crucial to differentiate between irritation and allergy. “Irritant contact dermatitis arises from direct damage

or irritation, while allergic contact dermatitis is characterized by an immune response to a specific allergen,” explains the expert. In a study examining cosmetic-related contact dermatitis in Northern India, patch testing with suspected cosmetics yielded positive results in 52.75% of cases, indicating that ongoing reactions should not be hastily classified as “sensitive skin.” The answer is not more products, but better personalization. Sensitive skin requires us to rethink the idea that an effective skincare routine must be complicated. “The foundation should focus on barrier protection, appropriate moisturization, and daily sun protection, with active ingredients introduced gradually and selected based on individual skin needs,” says the doctor. Persistent burning, itching, redness, scaling, or swelling deserves more than another product trial. “These symptoms may reflect sen-



sitive skin, but they can also accompany conditions such as eczema, rosacea, or contact dermatitis and may warrant dermatological assessment,” explains the dermat. The skincare conversation therefore needs

to move beyond chasing the newest ingredient. Our skin is a biological barrier, not a testing ground for every trend. Perhaps the most important lesson is that sophisticated skincare does not

necessarily mean a longer routine. “For sensitive skin, sophistication lies in understanding the biology, identifying the triggers, and knowing when to stop adding and start protecting,” says the doctor.

‘Dressing up made my 60s better’: A woman demonstrates that style never goes out of style



Throughout history, society has sought to impose restrictions on women’s attire, dictating what is deemed suitable for them as they age, and suggesting that fashion that brings them happiness is no longer appropriate after a certain age. Nevertheless, Anju Kakkar, a content creator in her 60s, is challenging this

stereotype. ‘Keep enjoying the little things that make you smile...’ Anju shares videos on Instagram of her experimenting with fashion and enjoying wearing clothes she loves. On August 6, she posted an Instagram Reel in which she tried three different co-ord looks, and captioned it, “Dressing up made my 60s better.”

Sharing the clip, Anju wrote, “To all the youngsters, never think style has an expiry date. And to everyone in their 50s, 60s, or beyond, don’t stop shopping because you think you’re getting older. Keep dressing up, keep exploring trends, and keep enjoying the little things that make you smile.” She added, “Age may change, but the

joy of shopping and the confidence it brings never go out of style.” Check out the video here: What did Anju wear in the reel? The video shows the content creator dressed in three different looks: for the first, she wore a green co-ord set featuring a collared, button-down shirt and flared pants, which she styled with a statement beaded necklace, loose centre-parted locks, and minimal makeup. For the second look, she slipped into a matching set of a sleeveless button-down blouse and straight-fit pants featuring a vertical striped pattern in black and white. She paired the ensemble with a beaded necklace, peep-toe heels, hair left loose in a centre-parted style, and minimal glam. Lastly, her third look – featuring a purple co-ord set – was quite similar to the first outfit. She styled it similarly, too, with a state-

ment neckpiece adorned with shells. How did the internet react? The video garnered much praise from Instagram users, who showered Anju with compliments for breaking stereotypes and living her best life without a care. One user commented, “I just really love those women who prioritise themselves. Manifesting such awesome 60s for real, lots of love.” Someone else wrote, “You’re an inspiration, I want to age like you.” A few others requested her to share style tips, as their mothers would also love to wear outfits like hers. A user complimented her and wrote, “You are so very beautiful, Aunty! May God bless you! Keep shining.” Another wrote, “We need women like you to keep shining and showing what ageing can look like.” A user commented, “This is so cute and inspiring.”

Features of the “world’s most expensive silk saree” 11 paintings of Raja Ravi Varma

Throughout history, society has sought to impose restrictions on women’s attire, dictating what is deemed suitable for them as they age, and suggesting that fashion that brings them happiness is no longer appropriate after a certain age. Nevertheless, Anju Kakkar, a content creator in her 60s, is challenging this stereotype. ‘Keep enjoying the little things that make you smile...’ Anju shares videos on Instagram of her experimenting with fashion and enjoying wearing clothes she loves. On August 6, she posted an Instagram Reel in which she tried three different co-ord looks, and captioned it, “Dressing up made my 60s better.” Sharing the clip, Anju wrote, “To all the youngsters, never think style has an expiry date. And to everyone in their 50s, 60s, or beyond, don’t stop shopping because you think you’re getting older. Keep

dressing up, keep exploring trends, and keep enjoying the little things that make you smile.” She added, “Age may change, but the joy of shopping and the confidence it brings never go out of style.” Check out the video here: What did Anju wear in the reel? The video shows the content creator dressed in three different looks: for the first, she wore a green co-ord set featuring a collared, button-down shirt and flared pants, which she styled with a statement beaded necklace, loose centre-parted locks, and minimal makeup. For the second look, she slipped into a matching set of a sleeveless button-down blouse and straight-fit pants featuring a vertical striped pattern in black and white. She paired the ensemble with a beaded necklace, peep-toe heels, hair left loose in a centre-parted style, and minimal glam. Lastly, her third look –



featuring a purple co-ord set – was quite similar to the first outfit. She styled it similarly, too, with a statement neckpiece adorned with shells. How did the internet react? The video garnered much praise from Instagram users, who showered Anju with compliments for breaking stereotypes and

living her best life without a care. One user commented, “I just really love those women who prioritise themselves. Manifesting such awesome 60s for real, lots of love.” Someone else wrote, “You’re an inspiration, I want to age like you.” A few others requested her to share style tips, as

their mothers would also love to wear outfits like hers. A user complimented her and wrote, “You are so very beautiful, Aunty! May God bless you! Keep shining.” Another wrote, “We need women like you to keep shining and showing what ageing can look like.” A user commented, “This is so cute and inspiring.”

Do overnight collagen masks aid in preventing aging



Recently, terms such as collagen, peptides, and skin-barrier have gained significant attention. Collagen, in particular, has become a popular topic in the beauty industry, largely due to social media and reality shows featuring artists using collagen-boosting masks. However, have you ever considered whether these products truly live up to the hype? Collagen masks can make skin look better overnight. Dr Manisha Mareddy, MBBS, MD, Dermatologist, Founder, Shlok Dermatology and Wellness Clinic, “Collagen masks can make your skin look better overnight, but probably not for the reasons that are being marketed for. They have become a skincare sensation promising firmness, smooth skin, all of that happening when you’re sleeping.”

Dr Mareddy says that when you put collagen on your skin, it should help replenish what is being lost with age, but that is not how it works. “Collagen is actually a large protein and they are approximately 300 kDa in molecular weight. This makes it far too large to simply get into the skin barrier and reach the dermis, where you actually have your own collagen being produced,” she clarifies. She further mentions that scientific studies have strongly proven that intact collagen has very limited skin penetration. “So if a mask is promising that it will replenish your lost collagen by penetrating into your skin, it is not accurate, but collagen masks are not completely useless,” she asserts. What can collagen masks

actually do? However, Dr Mareddy never doubts the skin benefits a face mask can actually provide. In the conversation, she also clarifies that masks can still provide excellent hydration, temporary plumping and skin barrier support. Occlusion that happens when you use a face mask reduces water loss from skin and allows the moisturising ingredients to stay in contact with the skin longer. “It has been long proven that facial masks help improve moisturising and strengthen the skin barrier when appropriately formulated”, she says. This actually explains why people feel like the masks work and skin looks amazing overnight. “So most of the immediate effect that you see after using an overnight mask is mainly from hydration rather than new collagen formation”, she says. How does a face mask work? According to Dr Mareddy, “When the outermost layer of the skin becomes more hydrated, it temporarily looks smoother and plumper. Fine lines can appear less prominent because of the hydration too. Mainly this effect is because water has changed the appearance of the skin”.

So, she briefly explains that an overnight mask is not completely useless, but it is absolutely not worth the hype. What about collagen peptides? Dr Mareddy also mentions that collagen peptides are quite different. “This is hydrolysed collagen where collagen is broken down into smaller peptides. So some smaller collagen-derived peptides can interact with skin differently than

intact collagen. Lab studies have shown that they can penetrate the outer skin layers, but that does not mean it is replenishing your body’s collagen”. Even though the science is promising for hydration and skin appearance, dramatic collagen rebuilding claims are mostly marketing hype at this point. The main ingredients that actually work in these masks are things like glycerin, hyaluronic acid, ceramides and certain peptides that help in repair and restoring hydration. Who can benefit from these masks? So well-formulated masks can help if your skin is dry, dehydrated or your skin barrier is compromised. Peptides do have a role in anti-ageing, but the results heavily depend on the specific peptide, concentration and formulation as well. Collagen masks are not anti-ageing treatments. The main takeaway is that topical collagen replacing the collagen you have lost is completely false. The idea that leaving collagen on your skin produces more collagen is also false. And this promise of an overnight mask replacing proven anti-ageing treatments is also completely wrong. A mask is a skincare accessory, not a treatment. Occlusive masks can also cause breakouts in oily and acne-prone skin. She finally concludes by saying that rather than chasing collagen masks for anti-ageing, choose them for hydration. If you’re really looking for anti-ageing, retinoids are substantially stronger and evidence-backed for improving photoageing than simply applying collagen on the surface.

ENTERTAINMENT

Arjun Bijlani survives car crash after shoot

Mumbai : Actor Arjun Bijlani has reportedly met with a car accident while returning from a promotional event for his upcoming web series Chumbak. As per the update, Arjun had gone to promote his upcoming show on Thursday, August 20, and while returning from the shoot, he met with an accident.

As per Times Now, Arjun was on the set of The Indian Game Show, hosted by Bharti Singh and Harsh Limbachiyaa, and while returning from the shoot, the car he was travelling in met with an accident. Fortunately, the actor and everyone else present in the vehicle escaped unhurt and are safe. Arjun Bijlani is a popular Indian television actor and host, best known for his roles in shows such as Miley Jab Hum Tum, Naagin, Left Right Left and Pardes Mein Hai Mera Dil. He gained widespread popularity as Mayank Sharma in Miley Jab Hum Tum and later played Ritik Raheja in Naagin. Apart from acting, Arjun has hosted several reality shows and participated in reality television. He emerged as the winner of Khatron Ke Khiladi 11 in 2021. Arjun is married to Neha Swami, and they have a son, Ayaan.

Chumbak is a new original sitcom that focuses on neighbourhood life and the relationships that silently impact daily life. Chumbak, set in Mumbai's ancient row-house district, delves into a world where neighbours are more than just courteous acquaintances. The show chronicles five families whose lives are inextricably linked, establishing a surrogate family over time. Anchored by a young author and an eccentric family support group, the story captures moments of humour, vulnerability, and collective fortitude as the characters face life's daily problems together.

Animal park shoot set to begin 6 months after spirit, confirms producer Pranay

Mumbai : Sandeep Reddy Vanga's brother, Pranay Reddy Vanga, has confirmed that they will begin shooting for Animal Park 6 months after Spirit's release. Animal, starring Ranbir Kapoor in the lead, became quite the rage when it was released. As such, fans cannot wait to watch Ranbir in a double role in Animal Park.

In a recent chat with NTV Telugu, Pranay Reddy Vanga mentioned that

he and Sandeep will take a 6-month break after Spirit. After this, they will commence the shoot of Animal Park. Spirit, which is headlined by Prabhas, is scheduled to be released on March 5, 2027. This means that Animal Park's shoot will begin in late 2027. By then, Ranbir Kapoor will also be promoting Ramayana Part 2, which is to release around Diwali 2027. Ranbir's Love and War, co-starring Alia Bhatt



and Vicky Kaushal, is also supposed to be released in early 2027. As per reports,

Ranbir's Brahmastra 2: Dev shoot will also happen in mid 2027. It looks like

Ranbir will have quite the busy year!

Meanwhile, fans have reacted to the Animal Park update. One person wrote on Reddit, "RK took too many time-consuming movies and so did Vicky." Someone else commented, "Second half ki script bhluna mat yeh baar." A comment read, "So it will be a 2029 release maybe." Another comment read, "It would be too late, I guess.. should have worked on it

when Animal was buzzing."

Reacting to this, someone wrote, "It has just been almost 3 years. KGF's sequel took 5 years to come, and we all know how successful that movie was." Another comment referenced Spirit and mentioned, "So back-to-back Vanga movies for Tripti." Someone else commented, "But RK will be stuck with Brahmastra 2 shoot if it's actually happening." Another person

wrote, "Can't wait."

Ranbir had previously revealed that Sandeep already had Animal Park's story in mind while shooting for Animal. He mentioned that Animal Park will continue from where Animal ended, and that he will play two characters in the film. With Animal Park, Sandeep Reddy Vanga appears ready to escalate the conflict further, introducing a mirrored rivalry and expanding the film's moral battlefield.

Arjun Kapoor loses his temper after fan films him without consent



Mumbai : Arjun Kapoor, who is known for his fun nature, was seen losing his cool over a fan for recording him without his knowledge. The video, which is now going viral, shows Arjun Kapoor sitting in his car when he was spotted by a fan who is known for clicking pictures of and spotting Bollywood stars. The video has the fan asking Arjun if he could click a picture with him, to which the actor obliged. However, Arjun lost his cool when he noticed that the fan was already recording him.

The video has Arjun Kapoor sitting in his car and sporting a casual look. The actor looked smart with a sharp beard and styled hair. He paired a white T-shirt with a blue unzipped jacket and accessorised the entire look with a stylish dog tag. In the now-viral clip, after noticing that the fan was trying to record a video of him, Arjun rolled up the windows

while saying, "Video kyu bana raha hai? Photo le na," as he rolled up the window of his car.

Arjun Kapoor made headlines after rumours of his relationship with Sahiba Bali, nearly two years after his breakup with Malaika Arora, surfaced on social media. Speculation surrounding Arjun and Sahiba first surfaced after they attended the India vs England third ODI at Lord's on July 19. Photos and videos from the stadium showed the two watching the match together, prompting social media users to wonder if there was more than friendship between them. As discussions gathered pace online, Sahiba addressed the chatter in her own way without directly commenting on the rumours.

The renewed speculation comes nearly two years after Arjun confirmed that he was single. The actor was previously in a long-term

relationship with Malaika Arora. The couple made their relationship public in 2018 and remained together for several years before reportedly parting ways in 2024.

During promotions for Singham Again later that year, Arjun put rumours about his relationship status to rest. Responding to fans who asked about Malaika during a public event, he smiled and said, "Nahi nahi, abhi single hoon, relax karo." Professionally, Arjun was last seen in Mere Husband Ki Biwi, alongside Bhumi Pednekar and Rakul Preet Singh. While the actor is yet to announce his next project, his latest social media banter with Sahiba Bali has once again become a talking point, keeping both fans and gossip mills busy, even if the two continue to insist, at least indirectly, that not everything on the internet should be believed.

Box office triumph: Lokesh Kanagaraj's DC enters the Rs 100 crore club globally

Chennai : Lokesh Kanagaraj appears to have carried his remarkable box office momentum from behind the camera to in front of it. His acting debut DC, directed by Arun Matheswaran, has crossed the Rs 100 crore mark globally within two weeks of its theatrical release. The action-thriller, which opened in cinemas on August 7, has benefited considerably from strong word of mouth, with audiences and critics praising both Lokesh's performance and Arun's screenplay.

DC opened with a worldwide collection of close to Rs 5 crore on its first day before gaining momentum over the following days. The response from viewers helped the film cross the Rs 50 crore milestone within five days. Its sustained run has now taken the film beyond Rs 100 crore worldwide, giving Lokesh a notable commercial milestone in his first major acting role. The film has also received support from several prominent names in the industry. Suriya, directors Soundarya Rajinikanth and Vignesh Shivan, and Telugu stars Mahesh Babu and Allu Arjun are among the celebrities who have publicly appreciated the film and its filmmaking.

The film centres on Devadas, an outsider who finds

himself protecting an innocent family after they become victims of police brutality. As he attempts to get them to safety, Devadas and his companions are pursued by a ruthless police officer. Their journey gradually becomes a story about survival, justice, redemption and the unexpected relationships forged along the way. Lokesh's performance has been one of the major talking points since the film's release. Known primarily for his work as a filmmaker, he takes on a substantially different creative role in DC, playing a character whose physicality and emotional journey form the centre of the narrative.

Arun Matheswaran's screenplay has also been widely discussed, particularly for its treatment of violence and character dynamics. The film marks his fourth directorial after Rocky, Saani Kaayidham and Captain Miller, continuing his interest in stories built around morally complicated characters and intense situations. The film's music has added another layer to its reception. Composer Anirudh has created a 15-track album for DC, which has been praised for complementing the film's action-heavy narrative and overall mood. Wamiqa Gabbi and Sanjana Krishnamoorthy play the female



leads, while Aadukalam Naren, Thalaivasal Vijay and Kasthuri Raja feature in important supporting roles.

The success of DC is particularly significant given Lokesh's track record as a director. He began his filmmaking career with Maanagaram in 2017, a critically acclaimed film that established him as a promising new voice in Tamil cinema. He followed it with Kaithi in 2019, which became a commercial success while laying the foundations for what would eventually become the Lokesh Cinematic Universe. Lokesh subsequently directed Master, starring Vijay, which became a major theatrical success despite releasing during the pandemic era. He then expanded the LCU with Vikram in 2022 and Leo in 2023, both

of which emerged as blockbusters. His most recent directorial was Coolie, which brought him together with Rajinikanth.

With DC, however, Lokesh has swapped the director's chair for the actor's spotlight. The film's Rs 100 crore worldwide milestone suggests that his audience pull has extended beyond his work as a filmmaker. More importantly, the positive response indicates that viewers have been willing to embrace him in an entirely different capacity. For Lokesh, DC therefore represents more than another successful film. It marks the beginning of a new chapter in a career that has already established him as one of Tamil cinema's most commercially successful contemporary filmmakers.

Rajat Bedi to enter Bigg Boss 20 as a wild card? here is everything you need to know



Mumbai : Bigg Boss Hindi Season 20 is one of the most awaited reality shows of the year. With each passing day, the excitement among fans for the show is growing with the rumoured

contestants list.

Actor Rajat Bedi is reportedly one of the confirmed contestants for Bigg Boss. Reports suggest that Rajat Bedi was approached by the makers, but it is being said

that he will not be seen entering at the start of the season. While he has given his nod to participate in Bigg Boss Hindi, not entering right at the beginning means he is likely to make a wild card entry. This is just a prediction going by the reports and buzz on social media. Rajat Bedi is a well-known celebrity who recently appeared in The Bar**ds of Bollywood. Bigg Boss Hindi Season 20 is all set to officially launch on September 6. Salman Khan will return to the small screen as host. The show will air on Colors TV at 10:30 PM.

Akanksha Chamola breaks silence on Orry's 'fake divorce' and 'fame chasing' allegations

Mumbai : The news of Akanksha Chamola's separation from her husband, Gaurav Khanna, has continued to follow her even after her stint in the reality show Lock Upp 2. While she made headlines with her appearance on the show and opened up about their separation, the discussion around her personal life has often overshadowed her journey on the show. Recently, Orry (Orhan Awatramani), who participated with Gaurav in Khatron Ke Khiladi 15, reacted to an Instagram



post questioning whether she is deliberately putting Gaurav in a negative light. In his comment, Orry accused her of milking Gaurav's fame for her own views. Now, in a new interview, the actress, howev-

er, has chosen to step away from the constant pressure of explaining and defending her personal choices.

While speaking to Hindustan Times, Akanksha Chamola set the record

straight and said that she would never do something like this for PR. She said, "The show I was a part of was about revealing your own self and speaking about things and secrets that you may have kept with you for a long time. That is exactly what I did. It was about being honest about my own journey, not creating a narrative." Akanksha said that there were also legal aspects involved, which she had addressed repeatedly. However, she added that she had chosen not to get caught up

in a cycle of proving herself, stressing that some things in life do not need to be constantly justified to everyone.

She went on to add, "I've been dealing with public scrutiny for a very long time now. I dealt with it when I was married and I'm dealing with it even after announcing my separation. The reality is that there are certain things that only the people going through them truly know. I have said what I had to say I choose peace over explanation."

Batwara 1947 box office: Sunny Deol's film dips further on day 7, adds Rs 1.35 crore

Mumbai : Sunny Deol's Batwara 1947 is facing a tough competition at the box office with Emraan Hashmi's Awarapan 2. The film is seeing a decline in its collection. In one week, it managed to collect only Rs 33.60 in India. On Day 7, Batwara minted Rs 1.35 crore taking the total collection to Rs 39.87 crore. On the other hand, Awarapan 2 has already crossed the Rs 100-crore mark at the box office.

According to Sacnilk, Batwara 1947 earned Rs. 1.35 crore net in India on Thursday, taking its seven-day collection to Rs. 33.60 crore net. The film's domestic gross now stands at Rs. 39.87 crore, a disappointing figure given the expectations surround-



ing its release. The Rajkumar Santoshi directorial has also struggled in overseas markets. The film has grossed Rs. 7.75 crore internationally in its first seven days, taking its worldwide gross collection to Rs. 47.62 crore.

"Batwara 1947, in its intent and purpose, is as sincere and authentic as it can possibly be. The film captures the hor-

rors of Partition in a balanced manner, without falling prey to the temptation of taking religious sides. It portrays the bloodshed that happened on both sides of the border, driven by hatred and rage among misguided people who twisted their respective religions to justify their bloodlust. This poignant dichotomy acts like a soothing balm on wounds

that have festered because of religious enmity. It fosters a secular worldview rooted in brotherhood and harmony."

Batwara 1947 is a 2026 Hindi-language period drama co-written and directed by Rajkumar Santoshi and produced by Aamir Khan under Aamir Khan Productions. Set in Lahore against the backdrop of the 1947 Partition of India and the division of Punjab, the film stars Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Shabana Azmi, Karan Deol, Ali Fazal, Abhimanyu Singh, Khushi Harjare, Kanikka Kapur and Isha Sandhir. The film is based on Asghar Wajahat's play Jis Lahore Nai Vekhya, O Jamiya Nai. It also marks Preity Zinta's comeback to films after an eight-year hiatus.

Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan share a playful moment on KBC 18 sets, amuse paparazzi

Mumbai : Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan shared a fun moment on the sets of "Kaun Banega Crorepati 18."

Akshay, who will be seen as 'Haiwaan' in his upcoming project, was in a playful mood as he posed alongside Saif, giving a glimpse of their camaraderie off screen. The duo happily posed together for the paparazzi outside the sets of the popular game show. Akshay and Saif were seen striking several poses together, with the 'Airlift' actor placing his hand on Saif's shoulder. The two also indulged in some light-hearted banter while posing for the cameras. Later, the 'Kesari' actor posed solo. He was seen sitting on his knees and striking stylish poses for the

paparazzi. Akshay looked dapper in a loose T-shirt paired with black jeans and a cap. Saif, meanwhile, also stepped out to pose solo for the paparazzi. Dressed in a black T-shirt and blue jeans, the 'Omkaara' actor leaned against the gate while posing for the cameras.

When Akshay noticed Saif posing against the gate, he turned playful. He opened the other side of the gate and started posing alongside him. As Akshay's side of the gate opened while he posed with Saif, the playful act turned into a funny moment, leaving the duo and the paparazzi amused.

Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan will be seen appearing together on the sets of



"Kaun Banega Crorepati 18" to promote their upcoming psychological action thriller 'Haiwaan.' In the film, Khiladi Kumar portrays a negative/psychopathic role. Saif Ali Khan plays the central protagonist, a tough, blind martial artist who uses his heightened senses to protect a young girl from a dangerous psychopathic killer. The up-

coming crime thriller 'Haiwaan' marks Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan's on-screen reunion after 18 years. The actors were last seen together in the 2008 film "Tashan." They had also shared the screen in the film "Main Khiladi Tu Anari." Directed by Priyadarshan, the upcoming film is scheduled to hit theatres on September 11.

China Will Be India’s Principal Rival in Several Domains: Former Army Chief



New Delhi, Aug 21: The ongoing danger of terrorism was a major factor in India’s focus on Pakistan, but in the long run, China would be New Delhi’s primary rival in a number of areas, according to former Army commander General Manoj Naravane on Thursday.He emphasized the necessity of a robust military deterrence while settling long-standing disagreements with Beijing via conversation, avoiding the term “enemy” when referring to China.Talking about security issues Naravane pointed out that although India has fought wars had unresolved boundaries with both China and Pakistan, they were in a distinct category when it came to the challenges New Delhi confronted from its neighbors. He was speaking at the launch of his new book ‘The Curious and the

Classified: Unearthing Military Myths and Mysteries’, published by Rupa Publications.“Pakistan and China are a totally different ballgame. We have fought wars with both of them. We have unsettled borders. So they will always remain on our radar as a threat, as a challenge,” he noted.Naravane, however, drew a distinction between the two countries, saying India’s immediate attention towards Pakistan was driven largely by the continuing threat of terrorism, while China was likely to emerge as India’s principal competitor over the longer term. “We have fought significant battles with Pakistan, and we are focusing on our western frontiers due of their ongoing support for terrorism. However, I believe we are quite certain that China will be our primary rival in the

long run and in the years to come. And I deliberately use the term “competitor” rather than “enemy,” Naravane said.He said that China would compete with India in a number of areas, such as commerce, politics, economics, and military matters.They will be our primary rival in every area. Trade, political, economic, and, of course, military. Naravane, who led the Army from December 31, 2019, until April 30, 2022, emphasized that “there is always a little bit of conflict wherever there is competition.” He emphasised that India should seek to manage such differences through dialogue and diplomatic mechanisms rather than resorting to force.“It is up to us to try to resolve those conflicts, those differences, through the mechanisms of talks, dialogues. And taking recourse to the use of force should always be the last priority,” the former Army chief maintained.At the same time, he said India must maintain credible military preparedness to deter any potential misadventure.“There comes a moment when you realise that this is not going to happen. And therefore, you have to have a strong deterrence,” Naravane said, adding the Indian armed forces must remain prepared at all times.“That is why the armed forces have

to be ready at all times. You have to have a strong deterrence to stop anybody from taking recourse to the use of force or any misadventure,” he said.On India’s wider neighbourhood, Naravane said New Delhi should work towards ensuring stability in neighbouring countries, including Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. “You can’t choose your neighbours, in real life also, and in geopolitics also. You have to make the best of what you have,” he said.A stable neighbourhood, Naravane stressed, was essential for India’s own peace and development. Instability in neighbouring countries could also lead to refugee flows, smuggling, drug trafficking and illegal arms movement.“If your neighbouring country is burning, that should not make you happy,” he said, citing the refugee influx into India from Myanmar as an example.The former Army chief stated that instability along borders ultimately had a direct impact on India, including through the movement of narcotics and other illegal goods.“Therefore, we need to help out these countries to be stable,” Naravane said.Stressing the importance of maintaining peace, he called for ensuring India’s armed forces had sufficient deterrence capability.

Vidit Gujrathi on D Gukesh’s World Championship match “Test Of Mind, Not Chess”

Luis: Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi believes that current world champion D Gukesh’s title defense against Uzbek challenger Javokhir Sindarov will be more of a test of mental toughness than chess skill, as the Indian must overcome a challenging run and regain the form that made 2024 a remarkable year. Sindarov is in great form going into the big match, whereas Gukesh has had a patchy period since winning the World Championship. But according to Vidit, a drop in performance does not always mean that a player’s skill level is declining. “In chess, performances, if you are not Magnus Carlsen, come in stages. For example, 2024 was an exceptional year for Gukesh. Every tournament, he had the Midas touch. Whatever he played, he was winning,” Vidit told PTI.He said form among elite players is influenced by several factors beyond their chess strength.“Their strength is very high. A lot of things affect form -- mindset, physical condition and pressure. Sport is about whether you can bring your best on that day.” According to Vidit, Gukesh continues to work hard and has brought fresh ideas to his games but has struggled to produce the efficiency that characterised his rise to the world title. “Usually he would convert very well, but now he is missing those wins. He is coming under time pressure a lot. He is working very hard. That’s very clear from the games. But something is missing.” Vidit, however, felt Gukesh could still return to his best, provided he can overcome the mental baggage of his recent results.“That doesn’t mean that in the World Championship, he cannot go back to his 2024 version. It will require a lot of inner strength because when you don’t do well, you struggle mentally.” “So, it’s a test of his mental strength rather than a test of his chess. Can he forget everything that has happened this year and go as a challenger, not as someone defending the World Championship?” Vidit expects a closely-contested match if Gukesh can achieve that mental reset, though he acknowledged Sindarov currently has the momentum. “Both of them are very strong players. Of course, right now, Sindarov is in better shape. There is no doubt in that.” India will face another major challenge at the upcoming Chess Olympiad, where the defending champions will rely on the depth of a team that includes several players currently enjoying good runs.Vidit singled out R Praggnanandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi and Nihal Sarin, saying their form augurs well for India, though he cautioned against considering the defending champions overwhelming favourites.“It’s very good to see that Praggnanandhaa is in excellent shape. Arjun also is doing well and Nihal was also doing well. So, three of them are in good shape.” He pointed out that a successful team does not necessarily require every player to be at the peak of his powers simultaneously. “It’s not like all five of us are playing the best



chess that we can. But the aim is to bring that back.” Vidit said Uzbekistan and the United States would pose formidable challenges, with the former having developed considerable depth and the latter boasting a star-studded line-up.“It’s not a given that we are exceptional favourites because Uzbekistan has improved a lot and they have a lot of depth. USA is very, very motivated. They have stars -- Fabiano Caruana, Levon Aronian and Wesley So. It’s a very strong line-up.” “It’s going to be a huge fight and whoever is better that day will win. If you keep this tournament going every month, we might have a different result every month. That’s how strong it is.” For Vidit personally, the Arjuna Award is recognition that carries significance beyond the chess world. He said the honour gives wider credibility to a sportsperson’s achievements, especially in disciplines whose technical details may not be familiar to the general public.“They may not know what the Grand Swiss or Candidates is, but they do know what an Arjuna Award is. It gives credibility to a sportsperson’s achievement, and that’s from the government.” “I’m very pleased that I have been nominated and selected for it.” The 31-year-old, however, admitted that his best performances came between 2022 and 2024, adding that there was a “bit of a lag or delay” in receiving the recognition. His reduced tournament schedule was a conscious decision after an intense period of work left him burnt out.“I had a burnout after 2024 because I was working like insane, 14 hours a day, non-stop for three years, and your body can only take so much.” Vidit said the demands of competing at the highest level take an emotional toll, making a break necessary. It’s more like a sprint than a marathon. There’s a limit to how far you can run. You must stop and rest. Vidit’s strategy for the game has also changed during the hiatus; he is no longer pursuing a particular event or Candidates cycle.“I was attempting to rediscover the joy of playing.” My perspective on chess has evolved. I’m no longer actively pursuing a competition or a Candidates cycle. I’m accepting the competitions as they arise. He claimed that Praggnanandhaa’s current purple patch was another illustration of how elite players’ form frequently fluctuates in cycles.

CCTV Captures the Lucknow Man Shooting His Wife Outside ICICI Bank

Lucknow, Aug 21: seen the CCTV footage from outside the Lucknow ICICI bank, where a man shot his wife on Thursday.The precise moment that Manas Vajpayee, an employee of SBI Bank, murdered his wife Divya Mishra outside the ICICI Bank branch in the city’s posh Gomti Nagar neighborhood at approximately midday is seen on camera. Manas is seen forcibly preventing Divya Mishra from entering the bank in the video taken from outside the branch where she works.CCTV Captures the Lucknow Man Shooting His Wife Outside ICICI Bank. Eyewitnesses told police that 38-year-old Manas Vajpayee called his wife Divya outside bank where she worked, spoke to her for a few minutes before shooting her and escaping the scene. Divya was rushed to hospital where she was declared brought dead, police said. Footage shows that some bank staff rushed out to intervene in Manas and Divya’s altercation. Manas is seen physically assaulting Divya in front of the bank gate. The staff is then seen rushing back inside in panic as Manas shoots Divya. Although they were separated for more than a year, Divya and Manas got married twelve years ago. Divya reportedly filed for divorce last year. Divya was reportedly accused of cheating on Manas.Lucknow was rocked by the double murder and suicide case on Thursday.According to the police, Manas also shot Shiva Vajpayee, his 28-year-old sister, who was allegedly struggling with mental health problems. Manas, before killing himself, had put a WhatsApp status announcing that he had killed his wife and sister.“Today I killed my wife who cheated on me. Now I have to kill myself and my sister... her sister Pragma and Bharat know everything,” read the WhatsApp status.

Thursday was the day to be at IG Stadium for badminton, pressure, and VIP bragging rights

New Delhi: The finest time to watch badminton was on Thursday, when Sindhu, Ayush, Satwik/Chirag, Tressa/Gayatri, and Dhruv/Tanisha were playing. Pompaewee Chochuwong, a strong rival who is 28 years old, was also there. Rishika Santra, a 14-year-old badminton trainee at a city nursery, waited with her mother in expectation of a thriller as the Thai pulled off a stunning victory over World No. 4 Chen Yufei, while the Indians pushed deep for some excellent and some unpleasant outcomes. After the Thai shuttler accomplished an incredible 17-21, 25-23, 21-17 turnaround, she remarked, “I had an idea that this would be one of the best matches of the day when I looked up the schedule, and I wasn’t disappointed at all.” “I normally go from school to attend my training in the afternoons,” the teenager explained, describing how her schedule has been disrupted by the World Badminton Championships. “But today, and for the last few days, I have skipped training after school. I have been coming here with my mother, and we both have had lunch sitting under the trees of IG Stadium before heading to the badminton hall.” In order to finance her child’s athletic career, Rishika’s mother, Mrinal, quit her job as Chief Technology Officer at a European medical tech company in Gurgaon. Matches like the one between Chen Yufei and Pompaewee Chochuwong, in Mrinal’s opinion, are excellent for role modeling.I suggested to her coach last week that Rishika watch some quality badminton. This caliber of badminton is uncommon in Delhi. What, therefore, did the badminton cadet Rishika learn? “How pressure makes a huge difference.”Rishika watched in the tribunes, stunned when Pompaewee Chochuwong collapsed on the court following the 84-minute drama. Pressure was the word of the day. Ayush Shetty’s opponent Alwi Farhan, who finished off the challenge 21-19, 21-11, said later, “I think Ayush had a lot of pressure because he was playing on home soil. I feel he was done in by pressure on the court.”Pressure works in strange ways and under strange circumstances. Ayush had earlier stunned World No. 1 and defending champion Shi Yu Qi in the opening round of the World Championships in New Delhi.Ayush admitted that the difference on Thursday evening was, “I think he was playing the second game with more confidence. He had his shots really sharp. When I had my chances, I was not getting the lines.



That made the difference. He played with much more patience. I think he definitely was putting more pressure near the net. That made it tough to find the length and led to some unforced errors. That cost me the match today.” Rishika was restless because she was waiting for her idol, PV Sindhu.While the press scrum was happening in the mixed zone, Sindhu, in a black dress, took to the court against China’s Wang Zhiyi.Sindhu, World No. 9. Wang, World No. 3.The difference was visible in the first game as Sindhu went down 11-21.The IG Stadium had around 7,000 vocal PV Sindhu fans packed into the stands on Thursday evening, and two girls who were barracking for the Chinese.Shambhavi Patel, an MBA student, sat in a stand opposite the VIP seating and watched the action up close, waving the Indian tricolour.“We saw Sindhu in a meditative state. Even though she had lost the first game, there was no hurry; she was not frazzled at all. It looked like there was a comeback on the cards.”She regrouped after the mid-game break when the score was tied at 15-all and brilliantly took control of the game with six consecutive points, fuelled by powerful winners that forced errors from her Chinese opponent. It was pulsating, edge-of-the-seat action that got the entire stadium chanting for the double Olympic medalist.Zhiyi not only had the challenge of the Indian crowd and facing a five-time Worlds medalist, but her mind and body weren’t aligning.In the dying moments of the game, the Chinese shuttler went down twice, once clutching her left thigh and then her right. She called the doctor onto the court and, at one point, the referee even asked her to get on with the game without wasting time. The moment seemed to have caused great distraction to the Indian ace.The Olympic medalist admitted during her mixed-zone walk-

through, “I don’t know if she had an injury or maybe that was her tactic, and her way of doing it. But I should have converted that into a win. There were long rallies, and it was a good match. I think at 17-all every point matters. I should have been a little more patient. It hurt a lot more because after you train and work hard for so long, losing these kinds of matches definitely hurts a lot.” After finishing her press duties, Sindhu dashed off to meet the fans. She did not disappoint young Rishika either, who was able to add a PV Sindhu-signed cap to her list of badminton memorabilia.Elsewhere, an extravagant dinner was being laid out for the press corps and officials as Sat/Chi began their journey in this edition of the World Championships in the round of 16. Their first game began as the dining room, with TVs broadcasting badminton, gradually swelled. By then, some journalists were hammering away at stories on Sindhu and Ayush and what their losses would mean for a big badminton weekend coming up in the national capital. The selfie-loving gentry of NCR who will adorn the VIP seats over the weekend can expect two things: great badminton and few Indians on court. India was saved by Sat/Chi’s late-night surge. In an exciting men’s doubles round-of-16 match at the BWF World Championships on Thursday, they defeated Malaysia’s Junaidi Arif and Roy King Yap (21-23, 21-19, 21-17).On Friday, the men’s and women’s doubles teams from India will get a double Chinese treat. They are the last role models in the competition to be invited to the IG Stadium tribunes, much like Rishika Santra.Additionally, missing Thursday would mean brutally losing out on some crucial bragging rights for the Capital’s swish set, who had been itching to flaunt their weekend VIP credentials to badminton.

A 6-year-old is shown on camera falling face first and dying after a teacher slaps him



Amaravati, Aug 21: The family of a six-year-old kid who died at a private school in Visakhapatnam claims that a teacher thrashed him for failing to do his schoolwork. According to Pranay Teja’s family, he passed out after a teacher struck him with a stick for failing to complete his schoolwork. After being brought to King George Hospital (KGH), the medical staff pronounced him dead. The Little Garden School, a private school in the One Town neighborhood, was the scene of the event.The circumstances surrounding the death are being investigated by police and revenue officials. A post-mortem study is anticipated to determine the precise medical cause of death. Family members and relatives gathered at the hospital after learning of the death and demanded strict action against those responsible. According to the family, Pranay left home on Thursday morning in what appeared to be good health. His father said the child had himself insisted on going to school that day. “In the morning around 8:00 AM, my son woke up and said he wanted to go to school. He insisted on

going to school,” the father said, recounting the events leading up to the tragedy.The family initially did not send him immediately, but with examinations approaching, they eventually agreed.“We thought, ‘Okay, exams are coming up soon, so let him go.’ He said, ‘Alright Dad, I’m leaving,’ and went to school,” the father said.The family said there was nothing unusual about the child when he left home. But several hours later, they received disturbing news.The father said that at around noon, he received a phone call informing him that something had happened to his son, though the call did not come directly from the school. “No one from the school called me,” he said.

checked the CCTV footage at the school, it showed that the teacher scared him. She hit him with a stick, and due to shock and fear, he collapsed right there,” the father alleged.He also said a doctor had told the family that the child had died some time before reaching the hospital.“The doctor told us that he had passed away half an hour before arriving at the hospital,” he said. The instructor is seen striking the youngster in the CCTV clip. The youngster falls onto her lap a few moments later.Any indication that his son had been ill before leaving for school was vehemently denied by the father.When asked if his son had any underlying health difficulties, he responded, “No issues at all.” “He woke up well this morning and was playing cheerfully last nite. He had no health issues, including a viral fever. The family has alleged that the incident was not an isolated act of physical punishment, claiming that other children had also been beaten. They have demanded strict action if the allegations are established.Revenue Divisional Officer Dilip Chakravarthy also reached the hospital after receiving information about the incident.“I came to know about this incident that a 6-year-old boy has been brought dead to KGH from the school,” the RDO said, adding that the government wing was collecting full details about the incident.The school education department of Andhra Pradesh has termed the incident as an extremely unfortunate and painful. “The government is taking this incident seriously.”

Brazil will launch the 2027 FIFA Women’s World Cup campaign. In Maracana

Brazil: The FIFA Women’s World Cup 2027 schedule was released by FIFA on Thursday. All 64 matches will take place in eight host cities in Brazil. The schedule was revealed at the live draw ceremony for the FIFA Women’s World Cup 2027 Play-Off Tournament preliminary round at the Home of FIFA in Zurich, Switzerland. Brazil, the hosts, will kick off their campaign on June 24 in Rio de Janeiro’s famous Estadio do Maracanã. After that, on June 29, they will play their second group-stage game at Arena Itaquera in São Paulo. On July 4, they will play their last group-stage game at the Estadio Nacional in Brasilia. All eight host cities will stage at least seven matches, including at least one knockout fixture. “We can’t wait to witness a new chapter of women’s football history unfold when the world’s best players, coaches, fans and local communities take centre stage in Brazil next year,” said FIFA President Gianni Infantino.“I already have goosebumps thinking about the incredible passion, colour and energy that Brazilian fans will bring to the tournament as they welcome the world to eight vibrant Host Cities.”Brasilia, Porto Alegre, Recife and Salvador will host matches through the Round of 16, while Belo Horizonte and Fortaleza will join Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo as venues for the quarter-finals.

After Stephen Fleming, Another CSK Coach Open to England Coaching Role Ahead of Ashes Series

New Delhi : Former Australia Test batter Mike Hussey is open to joining England’s coaching staff for next year’s Ashes, after new Test coach Stephen Fleming sounded him out about a possible batting role. The prospect would reunite two long-time Chennai Super Kings colleagues on the opposite side of one of cricket’s biggest rivalries. Fleming and Hussey were both part of the CSK coaching set-up most recently during IPL 2026, continuing a relationship that has stretched across 15 years. Fleming’s appointment as England Test coach has now opened the possibility of Hussey following him into the England set-up. Speaking to Fox Sports News, Hussey said he would not immediately rule out Fleming’s approach, although he remains undecided about taking up the role.

“There is a lot of different things to consider. My short answer is I would not say no to anything really,” Hussey said. “I love the coaching side of the game. I love trying to help players get better whether they are Australians,



English, South Africans, Pakistan or India or anywhere, it does not bother me.” Hussey, who scored 6,235 runs in 79 Tests for Australia, has already worked with England once, helping them win the 2022 T20 World Cup. An Ashes role, however, would put him in the unusual position of preparing Australia’s biggest rivals to face his former team. The 50-year-old admitted that the prospect would feel strange, but said his focus as a coach would remain on helping the team he works with. “It would feel a bit weird, definitely, coach-

ing for England against Australia in an Ashes series, no question,” Hussey said. “But if that is your job and that is what you are doing you just get on with it. I don’t feel as if I am coaching against a team. That’s the thing. I sort of feel as if I am coaching with a team whether it is against Australia or South Africa or some other team.” Hussey also stressed that family commitments mean he is in no hurry to make a decision. His relationship with Fleming, however, could play a part in whether he accepts the opportunity. “I won’t be rush-

ing into a decision. I have a very close relationship with Stephen Fleming and that has an impact on it as well. The time away from family is a real thing for me,” he said. Hussey believes Fleming is well suited to take England forward after the end of Brendon McCullum’s tenure. He expects the former New Zealand captain to retain England’s attacking intent while bringing greater control to their approach. “He has a very good understanding of the game,” Hussey said. “Very shrewd operator who gets that balance between enjoyment and fun and relationships.” “He wants to keep the game moving forward but perhaps not as recklessly as England have been recently. He will try and be a bit smarter with it.” England will host Australia in the Ashes from June to August next year, aiming to regain the urn for the first time since 2015. For CSK, Hussey’s potential move would also create a notable vacancy in a coaching structure where he and Fleming have worked together for years.

Messi Jersey Fetches Six Times More Than Ronaldo’s at Auction

New Delhi : Football memorabilia from the Manchester United dressing room has produced a clear winner, with a jersey worn by Lionel Messi during his Barcelona days fetching 66,107 USD (Rs 56.4 lakh) at auction. A Cristiano Ronaldo jersey from the same collection, meanwhile, sold for 10,601 USD (Rs 9.05 lakh). Both pieces came from the personal collection of former Manchester United masseur Rod Thornley, who spent years working closely with the club’s first team. But the Messi jersey carried a particularly unusual backstory, with Thornley securing it through a personal request to Gerard Pique before Barcelona’s 2012 visit to Old Trafford. “I messaged Gerard Pique a couple of days before the game and said, ‘I never ask you for anything, but I need Messi’s shirt from this one’.” The request paid off after the match.

Pique took Thornley into the Barcelona dressing room, where Messi was still wearing the jersey from the goalless pre-season encounter. “At the end of the game Gerard came into our dressing room, grabbed me, and walked me straight into theirs. Messi still had the shirt on his back.” Messi then took off the shirt, signed it and personally handed it to Thornley. “He took it off, signed it to me while I sat there



with him, and shook my hand. It was incredible,” Thornley recalled. The jersey’s appeal extended beyond its association with Messi. It was match-worn, signed by the player and came with a story that linked two of football’s biggest clubs and one of the game’s biggest stars. Ronaldo’s jersey came from his Real Madrid period and was issued for a match during the 2014-15 season. Unlike Messi’s, it was not worn by Ronaldo during the game, although it carried a personal message for Thornley. The former United staff member

had worked with Ronaldo during the Portuguese forward’s time at Old Trafford, adding a personal connection to the item despite its lower auction value. The collection contained several other pieces connected to Manchester United legends. A Ryan Giggs shirt from United’s 4-0 Champions League victory over Olympiacos in 2002 sold for 10,103 US dollars (Rs 8.62 lakh). Paul Scholes’ match-issued shirt fetched 4,585 USD (Rs 3.91 lakh), while a David Beckham match-prepared jersey sold for 3,884 USD (Rs 3.32 lakh).

US Open Jackpot: Champions Set to Claim Biggest Grand Slam Prize Ever in History

New Delhi : The US Open is set to offer the richest prize in Grand Slam tennis history, with the men’s and women’s singles champions set to take home a record 5.5 million US dollars each. The total player compensation at the year’s final major will also reach an unprecedented USD 108 million, according to figures released by the United States Tennis Association (USTA) on Thursday. That represents a 20 percent rise from 2025 and a 44 percent increase compared with 2024. Even reaching the 128-player singles main draw will guarantee competitors 140,000 USD, the biggest first-round payout in the history of the sport. Players who make the quarter-finals will collect USD 780,000, while semi-finalists will



receive USD 1.45 million. The runners-up are set to earn USD 2.8 million. The singles champions’ prize marks an increase from last year’s USD 5 million payday, which was collected by Aryna Sabalenka and Carlos Alcaraz. The total prize allocation for players at the 2025 tournament stood at USD 90 million. There will also be significant rewards in the doubles events. The men’s, women’s and mixed dou-

bles champions will share \$1 million per winning team, while the runners-up will receive USD 500,000. The wheelchair singles winners will be awarded USD 104,000. Alongside the increased prize money, the USTA has announced a new player support initiative. The programme will initially receive USD 2 million, divided equally between men’s and women’s players, and is intended to provide additional

benefits alongside existing pension arrangements. USTA CEO Craig Tiley described the investment as an important beginning to a longer-term effort aimed at supporting players across the sport.

He said the US Open would continue to provide one of the strongest financial opportunities in tennis while serving players, fans and commercial partners. “This is a significant first step in a multi-year investment in athletes as the US Open continues to be the best economic opportunity for players and the most valuable platform in tennis for players, fans and partners. We are proud to deliver record-setting prize money and expanded player benefits as well as providing a new platform to work together with players,” said Tiley.

Mohun Bagan Beat NorthEast United on Penalties, Reach Kolkata Derby Final

New Delhi : Vishal Kaith turned hero once again, making two crucial saves in the penalty shootout as Mohun Bagan Super Giant booked their place in the Durand Cup final with a 4-3 win over NorthEast United after their second semifinal ended goalless after regulation time on Thursday. Mohun Bagan Super Giant will now face arch-rivals East Bengal FC in a much-anticipated Kolkata Derby final on Sunday. Neither side managed to establish control in midfield during the opening 20 minutes, with the wet conditions making it difficult for both teams to put together sustained passing moves. With the pitch making it difficult to play through the middle, both sides frequently resorted to long balls over the defensive line in search of attacking opportunities.

The first shot on target came midway through the first half when Liston Colaco’s free-kick forced an excellent save from NorthEast United goalkeeper Gurmeet Singh. Moments later, Kiyan Nassiri had an opportunity to create danger inside the box



but chose to shoot from a tight angle instead of picking out a teammate. His effort, however, only found the side-netting. NorthEast United came close to breaking the deadlock at the half-hour mark when Alaaeddine Ajaraie brought down a high ball from a set-piece before unleashing a volley that narrowly missed the post. With the wet conditions continuing to restrict both teams from playing their preferred style, set-pieces be-

came an important avenue for creating opportunities. Both sides won three corners during the opening period but were unable to make them count.

Mohun Bagan nearly took the lead just before half-time when Sahal Abdul Samad won possession in the centre of the pitch. With NorthEast United goalkeeper Gurmeet Singh backpedalling, Sahal attempted an audacious long-range effort.

Asian Games Champion Swapna Barman Faces Doping Suspension

New Delhi : India’s first Asian Games gold-winning heptathlete Swapna Barman has been provisionally suspended by the National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) after testing positive for a banned substance and disciplinary proceedings against her will go ahead despite her recent decision to retire. The 29-year-old has

tested positive for banned anabolic-androgenic steroid Boldenone. Her name figures in the NADA’s latest list of provisionally suspended athletes. “The due procedure will be followed and she stands provisionally suspended despite her retirement. She will have to appear for a hearing and can seek a B sample test,”

a well-placed source in the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) told PTI. “If she decides to come out of retirement at any point in her life, all sanctions against her will stand in case she is found guilty in the formal hearing, a ban will be imposed. A retirement announcement does not absolve anyone of dop-

ing offences,” the source added. Apart from Barman’s provisional suspension, hockey player Mayank Sharma was banned for four years for failing an out of competition test last year. In addition, 19-year-old runner Sanjana Singh, who won a gold in the women’s 1500m and 5000m races in the SAAF Senior Athletics

Championships last year, was handed a five-year ban after testing positive for prohibited steroids last year. Both Mayank and Sanjana were already serving provisional suspensions. But Barman was the biggest name to emerge in the latest list of sanctions. She was the first Indian heptathlete to clinch gold at the Asiad

when she finished on top in the 2018 Jakarta Games. She announced her retirement at the beginning of this month, stating that her injury-plagued body could no longer take the rigours of competition. Boldenone is known to decrease testosterone levels and has no medicinal use for the human body.



BWF Worlds: Satwik-Chirag Survive Test, Reach Quarters, Keep Medal Hopes Alive



New Delhi : It was a battle of nerves, grit and relentless attacking badminton, but Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty dug deep to beat Malaysia’s Junaidi Arif and Roy Kim Yip 21-23, 21-19, 21-17 in a thrilling Round of 16 clash at the 2026 BWF World Championships in New Delhi. The fifth-seeded Indian pair fought back from a game down in 82 minutes to keep their hopes of winning a World Championships medal on home soil alive. Their victory provided some much-needed cheer on a difficult day for the Indian contingent, with PV Sindhu and Ayush Shetty

bowing out in the singles competitions. Satwik and Chirag made a strong start, leading 11-8 at the opening interval, but Arif and Yap steadily worked their way back into the contest. The Malaysians levelled at 18-18 before edging ahead to take the opening game 23-21. The Indians responded strongly in the second game. They again led 11-8 at the interval and continued to put pressure on their opponents with their aggressive attacking play. The Malaysians stayed within touching distance, but Satwik and Chirag held their nerve in the closing stages to take the game 21-19 and force a decider. The third game was just as closely fought. Arif and Yap led 11-8 at the break before the Indians began to chip away at the deficit. Satwik and Chirag levelled at 16-16 and then moved ahead 19-17 as the home crowd found its voice. With the match entering a tense final phase, Chirag was urged to quicken the pace. The change brought an immediate re-

ward as the Malaysians made an error. The Indians then produced another outstanding rally, defending under pressure before Satwik finished it with a powerful smash. Another Malaysian error handed the Indians two match points. Satwik made no mistake with the next opportunity, producing a decisive winner to complete a hard-earned comeback. It was Satwik and Chirag’s first match of the tournament after they received a first-round bye and progressed to the Round of 16 through a second-round walkover. The pair, who won bronze medals at the 2022 and 2025 World Championships, will face third seeds Liang Weikeng and Wang Chang in the quarter-finals. For Sindhu, however, the day ended in disappointment. The two-time Olympic medalist’s bid for an unprecedented sixth World Championships medal ended with an 11-21, 21-15, 17-21 defeat to China’s world No. 3 Wang Zhi Yi.

India-Bangladesh Series Could Be Pushed Back Again, BCB Chief Tamim Iqbal Says Amid Ongoing Uncertainty

Dhaka : India’s scheduled tour of Bangladesh could be pushed back yet again, with the two cricket boards still discussing the dates for the six-match series. With the opening ODI currently scheduled for September 3, the uncertainty has also forced the Bangladesh Cricket Board to keep its domestic calendar flexible. India are due to play three ODIs and three T20Is during the tour, which was already moved from August 2025 to September 2026.

However, the BCCI has not publicly confirmed the itinerary, while BCB president Tamim Iqbal said talks over the series are still continuing. “Both boards remain in discussion about the India series. The dates may be shifted here or there,”



Tamim said at a press conference in Dhaka. The uncertainty became more apparent after the BCB announced its Game Development Trophy, a competition involving Under-17, Under-19 and Under-23 players. The tournament is currently scheduled at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur from August 28 to Septem-

ber 9, overlapping with India’s proposed tour. Tamim, however, said the domestic tournament would not stand in the way if the India series is finalised. “This tournament is being held in Mirpur but it can be shifted to the Basundhara ground in two minutes. If the India series is locked and fixed, we will schedule it accordingly,” he said. The proposed series

has already had a complicated journey. It was originally meant to take place in August 2025 before being postponed by a year, after which the BCB announced a revised schedule covering three ODIs and three T20Is in Dhaka and Chattogram. The lack of a public confirmation from the BCCI has kept questions over the tour alive, particularly with the September 3 start date now approaching.

Relations between the two boards also went through a difficult phase earlier this year. Tensions followed the Kolkata Knight Riders episode involving Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman and later intensified when Bangladesh declined to travel to India for the T20 World Cup.