

Meghalaya Launches ‘Mission Clouded Leopard’ to Protect State Animal

Shillong, Aug 04: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Tuesday launched Mission Clouded Leopard, the state’s flagship conservation programme aimed at protecting the endangered habitats and long-term survival of the Clouded Leopard (Neofelis nebulosa), Meghalaya’s State Animal. The initiative was launched on the occasion of International Clouded Leopard Day, observed annually on August 4. The mission has been designed as a comprehensive conservation framework focusing on habitat protection

and restoration, scientific research, long-term population monitoring, stronger anti-poaching measures and improved connectivity between forest landscapes. It also places emphasis on community participation, public awareness and cooperation with neighbouring northeastern states to ensure coordinated conservation efforts. The programme will be guided by the Meghalaya Clouded Leopard Action Plan, currently being prepared by the state Forest and Environment Department. The Clouded Leopard is classified as Vulnerable on



the IUCN Red List. It receives the highest level of protection under Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and is listed under Appendix I of CITES. The animal is local-

ly known as Maccha Pheng in Garo, Lakrong in Khasi and Khla in Jaintia. Sangma said Meghalaya retains some of the finest remaining habitats of the elusive big cat, including the for-

est landscapes of Nokrek, Balpakram, Baghmara, Narpuh and Nongkhylliem, besides extensive community-managed forests. However, these habitats are facing growing pressure from forest fragmentation, declining ecological connectivity, illegal hunting, shrinking prey populations and climate change. A preliminary scientific survey has identified 21 individual Clouded Leopards in the Balpakram landscape, which officials described as a significant finding given the species’ elusive and largely nocturnal behaviour.

CJP forms Assam committee, launches youth membership drive

Guwahati, Aug 04: The Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) is set to form its Assam state committee, with the process expected to begin after the organisation’s upcoming meetings in Maharashtra and Delhi. CJP National Media Coordinator Sheikh Sahiluddin Shah made the announcement at a press conference at the Guwahati Press Club on Tuesday, held amid heavy police deployment. Shah said the organisation is currently concentrating on expanding its presence in Assam by enrolling students, youth and members of the working class. A membership drive has already been launched,



and the proposed Assam committee will be constituted from among those who join the organisation. He said the press conference was also aimed at reviewing the outcome of the earlier student

movement and seeking suggestions from senior journalists, advocates and students. Their feedback, he added, would be taken into account while framing the organisation’s future agenda.

12th National Handloom Week Observed at Tripura University

Agartala, Aug 04: Tripura University marked the 12th National Handloom Week with a series of events celebrating India’s rich textile heritage and the contributions of handloom weavers to the nation’s cultural and economic fabric. The week-long observance featured exhibitions of traditional handloom products, interactive workshops, and cultural performances showcasing the artistry of local weavers. Faculty members,

students, and artisans participated in discussions on the importance of preserving indigenous weaving techniques and promoting sustainable livelihoods through handloom. University officials emphasized that handloom is not only a symbol of India’s heritage but also a vital source of employment for millions of families across the country. They highlighted the need to integrate modern design practices with traditional

weaving to expand markets and strengthen the handloom sector. Guest speakers from the Ministry of Textiles and local cooperatives addressed the gathering, stressing the importance of empowering artisans through training, financial support, and digital platforms. They noted that initiatives like the National Handloom Week provide visibility to weavers and encourage younger generations to take pride in traditional crafts. Students of



Tripura University organized cultural programs, including fashion shows featuring handloom attire, musical performances, and panel discussions on the role of handloom in sustainable development. The events drew enthusiastic participation from the campus community and local residents. The observance concluded with a pledge to continue supporting handloom artisans and to promote awareness about the sector’s role in preserv-

ing India’s cultural identity. Organizers expressed confidence that such initiatives will inspire greater appreciation for handloom and contribute to its revival in modern markets. In addition, Tripura University announced plans to collaborate with local weaving clusters to create research and training modules that will help artisans adapt to changing consumer trends. The initiative aims to bridge the gap between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design, ensuring that handloom products remain competitive in both domestic and international markets.

Landslide blocks Seppa–Itanagar road, vehicle buried under debris

Itanagar, Aug 04: A massive landslide triggered by heavy rainfall has blocked the Seppa–Itanagar road in Arunachal Pradesh, leaving one vehicle buried under debris and disrupting traffic along the vital route. According to local authorities, the landslide occurred early Tuesday near a vulnerable stretch of the highway, cutting off connectivity between Seppa and the state capital. Rescue teams rushed to the site and began clearing operations, while efforts were made to locate and assist commuters trapped in the affected vehicle. Officials from the district administration confirmed that heavy machinery has been deployed to remove boulders

and mud blocking the road. The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and police personnel are coordinating rescue and relief operations, ensuring stranded passengers receive immediate assistance. Residents reported that landslides have become a recurring problem during the monsoon season, with fragile slopes and ongoing construction activities exacerbating the risk. The incident has once again highlighted the need for stronger preventive measures and stricter monitoring of earth-cutting along highways. Authorities have advised commuters to avoid travel along the Seppa–Itanagar route until clearance work is completed. Emergency shelters and relief camps

have been set up nearby to accommodate stranded travelers. The state government has assured that restoration of road connectivity remains a priority, with engineers and disaster management teams working round the clock. Officials emphasized that long-term solutions, including slope stabilization and improved drainage systems, are being considered to reduce the frequency of such incidents. Community leaders have urged the administration to take immediate steps to safeguard vulnerable stretches of the highway, stressing that repeated disruptions affect not only commuters but also the delivery of essential supplies to remote districts.

Proposed FCRA Bill triggers strong opposition across Meghalaya political spectrum

Shillong, Aug 04: The proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 has triggered concern across political parties in Meghalaya as senior BJP leader AL Hek and the Meghalaya Pradesh Mahila Congress (MPMC) urging the Centre to reconsider the legislation. Hek, a former minister and BJP MLA, said he has written to Rajya Sabha MP James PK Sangma, urging him to ensure that the amendments do not penalise genuine humanitarian organisations. He however said that he is yet to receive a response. Calling for a consultative approach, Hek urged the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led govern-



ment to engage with religious leaders, NGOs, and charitable stakeholders before introducing the Bill in Parliament. “Suggestions from those directly affected should be considered while finalising the legislation,” Hek said, warning that bypassing

consultations could create unnecessary apprehension. In his letter, also forwarded to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Hek sought safeguards for Christian institutions and NGOs serving remote areas in the Northeast. He cited the legacy of the

Missionaries of Charity and the late Purno Agitok Sangma’s commitment to protecting individual dignity regardless of faith. In the same vein, the MPMC on Sunday voiced strong opposition to the Bill, alleging it could cripple civil society and

minority-run institutions. MPMC president Joplyn Scott Shylla stated that while transparency is necessary, it should not come at the cost of healthcare, education, and women’s empowerment initiatives. “The government should strengthen democratic institutions rather than create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty,” Shylla said, calling for meaningful dialogue with stakeholders. The unrest has triggered from specific provisions in the proposed Bill that would empower the Union Government to seize physical assets—including hospitals, schools and hostels—if an organisation’s FCRA license is cancelled, surrendered or expires.

Assam Congress Chief Gaurav Gogoi Condemns Detention of Land Rights Activist Under NSA

Guwahati, Aug 04: Assam Congress President Gaurav Gogoi has strongly condemned the detention of a land rights activist under the National Security Act (NSA), describing the move as undemocratic and a grave assault on civil liberties. In a statement issued today, Gogoi said that invoking the NSA against individuals advocating for land rights reflects the government’s growing intolerance toward dissent and grassroots activism. He emphasized that safeguarding the rights of marginalized communities is central to democracy and that silencing activists only deepens public mistrust in governance. The Congress leader urged authorities to immediately release the activist and to address the concerns raised by local communities regarding land ownership, displacement, and livelihood security.



ity. Gogoi added that the party stands firmly with those advocating for justice and equitable development in Assam, reiterating that peaceful activism should never be criminalized. Civil society groups and rights organizations have echoed

Gogoi’s concerns, warning that misuse of stringent laws like the NSA undermines democratic values and discourages legitimate public movements. They argue that the detention of activists sends a chilling message to those working

for the welfare of vulnerable communities, particularly in rural and tribal areas where land disputes remain a pressing issue. Gogoi further pointed out that the Congress has consistently raised the issue of land rights in Assam, highlighting the need for transparent policies and fair compensation for displaced families. He stressed that the government must engage in dialogue with affected communities rather than resorting to repressive measures. The incident has sparked widespread debate on the balance between national security and the protection of fundamental rights. Political observers note that the use of the NSA in such cases risks eroding public confidence in democratic institutions and could set a dangerous precedent for handling civil society movements. The Assam Congress has

announced that it will continue to raise the issue both within the state and at the national level, calling for accountability and justice for those who dedicate their lives to defending the rights of the marginalized. The Assam Congress has announced that it will continue to raise the issue both within the state and at the national level, calling for accountability and justice for those who dedicate their lives to defending the rights of the marginalized. Gogoi reaffirmed that the party stands committed to protecting democratic freedoms and ensuring that voices of dissent are respected, not silenced. The detention has also drawn attention to the broader challenges of land governance in Assam, where disputes over ownership, encroachment, and displacement have long been sources of tension.

IMD forecasts heavy rain over three Northeast states till Aug 5

Guwahati, Aug 04: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a forecast warning of heavy rainfall over three Northeast states — Assam, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh — continuing till August 5. According to IMD officials, the region is likely to experience intense showers accompanied by thunderstorms and strong winds, raising concerns of localized flooding, landslides, and disruption of road connectivity. The department has advised residents in vulnerable areas to remain alert and follow instructions issued by local authorities. District administrations in the affected states have been asked to activate disaster management protocols, including monitoring river levels, deploying relief teams, and ensuring the safety of commuters along highways prone to landslides. Emergency services have also



been put on standby to respond to any eventualities. The IMD has highlighted that heavy rainfall during the monsoon season often triggers flash floods and landslides in the Northeast, particularly in hilly terrain. Citizens are urged to avoid unnecessary travel, stay indoors during intense spells, and keep essential supplies ready. State governments have assured that relief camps and medical facilities are being pre-

pared to assist those affected. Officials emphasized that coordination between central and state agencies will be crucial in minimizing damage and ensuring timely support to vulnerable communities. The IMD will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide regular updates. Authorities have reiterated that public cooperation is vital in reducing risks during extreme weather events.

Nagaland Author Realizes Childhood Dream at Royal Tyrrell Museum

Kohima, Aug 04: Mishanli Easteryna Yanthan finally walked through the doors of the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology on August 1. The 14 year old from Dimapur, Nagaland, spent eight years chasing this goal. She is a Grade 9 student at Hope Academy and stands among the state’s youngest published authors. Her inspiration began in 2018 at age six after a chance meeting with Canadian traveler Julian Erb sparked a deep interest in dinosaurs.

To pay for the trip, she wrote and sold two books. She released The Unforgettable Trip to Drumheller and Other Stories in 2020 and The Pre-historic Adventure in 2022. The Nagaland Education Mission Society

eventually bought these books for government school libraries through Samagra Shiksha. This sale provided the funds she needed to make the trek to Drumheller, Alberta.Hosts Peter and Areni Ritchie helped finalize the logistics for Mishanli and her father.

The museum provided complimentary passes once they heard her story. Julian Erb and his son attended the visit to see the project he inspired years ago reach its finish line. Mishanli is the daughter of Yanchenthung Yanthan and Dr. Wojanbeni S. Yanthan of Lakhuti village. Reflecting on the long road to the museum, she said, “It was the fulfilment of a dream I first imagined at six.”

State BJP allays FCRA fears of church bodies

Kohima, Aug 04: Caught between New Delhi’s tightening grip on foreign funding and local fears of institutional overreach, the Meghalaya BJP is scrambling to re-assure the state’s powerful church bodies that proposed FCRA amendments will not lead to the seizure of their assets.Speaking to The Shillong Times on Monday, State BJP general secretary Wankitbok Pohshna insisted there was “nothing to fear,” framing the changes as measures to ensure

“accountability and compliance.”However, this defensive posture follows growing alarm among missionary-led societies that manage the bulk of Meghalaya’s health-care and education systems—institutions that rely heavily on foreign contributions.

Pohshna cited Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s recent assurance to the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI) that the amendments would apply prospectively.

M’laya, Assam CMs to meet on Jorabat flood, says Dhar



Shillong, Aug 04: Chief Ministers of Meghalaya and Assam will meet to collectively address the recurring flash floods in Jorabat, Deputy Chief Minister Sniawbhalang Dhar said on Monday.

The announcement follows repeated allegations by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who has blamed construction activities in Meghalaya’s hills for flooding in Jorabat and Guwahati.

“I have told the CM that we will meet the Assam CM and resolve the matter collectively. We are not here to blame each other but to resolve the issue,” Dhar said,expressing confidence that both states would find a viable solution.

Sarma has recently claimed that unchecked development in the hills on the Meghalaya side of the border is a major contributor to Guwahati’s worsening flood situation. He previously singled out earth cutting at the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) campus as a primary cause.

The Assam CM also warned that water runoff from the Meghalaya hills during heavy rainfall now poses a threat to the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati.

KHADC has decided to put the Rs 153-crore ropeway construction on hold

Shillong, Aug 04: The KHADC has effectively hit the ‘pause’ button on the Rs 153-crore Shillong Ropeway Project, giving the implementing firms a seven-day ultimatum to prove their legal right to operate within Council jurisdiction or face enforcement action.

The move follows a meeting on Monday between KHADC Chief Executive Member (CEM) Winston Tony Lyngdoh and the Joint Action Committee (JAC) Against the Shillong Ropeway Project. The JAC, representing the Riat Laban Dorbar Pyllun, is protesting the project over its potential impact on the Lum Shyllong catchment area—the primary water source for half of Shillong.

Lyngdoh disclosed that the Council’s enforcement wing inspected the project site on July 28 and found a joint venture between KEC International Ltd and the Kolkata-based Tania Construction Ltd executing the work. However, the firms could not immediately produce the mandatory trading license required to operate in the Sixth

Schedule area.

“The enforcement team has given the manager seven days to produce all relevant documents. We need to determine whether the company is required to obtain a trading license from the Council,” Lyngdoh said.

He warned that if the firms fail to comply within the week, the Council will deploy enforcement personnel to initiate further action.

While the state Tourism department has maintained that the project will have “minimal” environmental impact, the KHADC is now scrutinising the legalities of the land use.

Lyngdoh confirmed the Council would seek clarification from the Hima Mylliem regarding the reported felling of trees in the project area. “If the forest falls under Council jurisdiction, we will task our forest officials to investigate. The Council will act according to its powers once all facts are before us,” the CEM added. The JAC has termed the project a direct threat to the city’s water security. Following the meeting with the CEM, JAC



Chairperson Deborah Marbaniang alleged a lack of transparency, claiming many residents under the Riat Laban Dorbar Pyllun were unaware of any public hearings.

The committee has demanded that the Tourism Department and the local Dorbar make all records of the consultation process public, including attendance registers and notices.

“This is not just about Riat Laban. The water sources on Lum Shyllong benefit a wide population across Malki, Mawprem, Jaiaw, and Riatsamthiah,” Marbaniang said. “Any damage to this catchment area will lead to permanent

water shortages for future generations.”

JAC member Olivia Lyngdoh Mawlong added that residents only grasped the scale of the project after witnessing trees being cleared on the hill.

She countered claims that the opposition was “anti-development,” stating that infrastructure should not come at the cost of essential natural resources.

The committee has already sought the intervention of Laban-Mawprem MDC Ricky AJ Shullai and has reached out to South Shillong MLA Sanbor Shullai for his stance on the matter.

SC summons Arunachal officials in CM kin contracts probe

Itanagar, Aug 04: The Supreme Court on Monday issued notices to the Arunachal Pradesh chief secretary and principal secretary, Home, after taking note of the Central Bureau of Investigation’s (CBI) status report indicating that the state government was not cooperating with the court-monitored preliminary inquiry into alleged irregularities in the award of public works contracts, including those allegedly linked to family members of chief minister Pema Khandu.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta directed both senior officials to remain personally present before the apex court on August 24 along with their response to the CBI’s status report and explain the alleged non-cooperation and non-compliance with the top court’s earlier directions. “We have perused the status report submitted on behalf of the Central Bureau of Investigation (C.B.I.) dated 17.07.2026. A perusal of the same reflects that there is no cooperation at the end of the state government in providing the necessary records as was directed vide judgment and order dated 06.04.2026,” the Justice Vikram Nath-led Bench observed. “As such, we deem it appropriate to issue notice to the Chief Secretary and the Principal Secretary (Home), Government of Arunachal Pradesh,” it added.

The apex court further directed that both officers “shall remain present before this Court along with their response to the afore-mentioned report of the CBI and also explain as to why there is non-cooperation and non-compliance of the directions issued by this Court”.

The matter has been posted for further hearing on August 24. The latest directions came in proceedings arising out of a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by NGOs Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena, alleging large-scale irregularities in the award of public

contracts in the northeastern state.

In April, the Supreme Court had directed the CBI to register a preliminary inquiry into allegations relating to the award and execution of public works contracts in Arunachal Pradesh, including those allegedly linked to relatives of the Chief Minister. The apex court had directed the probe agency to examine the award and execution of public works contracts and work orders between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2025, while clarifying that it would not be precluded from looking into transactions outside the period to trace “beneficial ownership, related party links, fund flows, or other connected circumstances”.

It had also directed the CBI to scrutinise procurement processes, tender approvals, reasons for dispensing with open tenders, compliance with statutory requirements, and records relating to payments, work orders and execution.

Further, the state government was directed to fully cooperate with the inquiry, with the Chief Secretary asked to designate a nodal officer to coordinate with the CBI and ensure that all relevant records, including tender documents, administrative approvals, agreements, bills and electronic procurement data, were furnished to the investigating agency.

The bench had also ordered preservation of all physical and electronic records connected with the matter and clarified that its observations were confined to determining whether an independent probe was warranted and should not be construed as findings on the merits of the allegations.The PIL has alleged that public contracts worth around Rs 1,270 crore were awarded to firms linked to relatives of chief minister Pema Khandu, including his spouse and other family members, in violation of prescribed procedures.

Illegal earth-cutting damages NH 415; citizens question DA’s Inaction

Itanagar, Aug 04: The Itanagar-Hollongi stretch of the NH 415 four-lane highway suffered major damage following heavy rainfall on Sunday night. A portion of the road was washed away at one location, while a mudslide blocked the highway a few kilometres before the Donyi Polo International Airport.Due to extensive earth-cutting along NH 415, a huge volume of debris from an earth-cutting site adjacent to the highway slid onto the road. The highway remained blocked for several hours, “Suddenly, mud and rainwater rushed onto the highway. My car got stuck because of it. I was stranded for more than four hours. It was the SDRF team that rescued us,” said a stranded commuter. From Chimpu, near the Sunday Market, to Hollongi, indiscriminate earth-cutting has caused significant damage to NH 415. Citizens have taken to social media



to express their anger over the recurring problem.“Everyone knows these damages are being caused by illegal earth-cutting near the highway. Right from Chimpu to Hollongi, rampant illegal earth-cutting is taking place along the highway. Where have the officials of the district administration, the Forest Department, and the PWD (Highway) gone? Someone should file a missing person’s report at the police

station,” remarked a frustrated citizen. Every monsoon, roads in the Itanagar Capital Region, particularly highways, suffer extensive damage due to illegal earth-cutting.“Repeatedly, roads are getting damaged, but the administration is not taking any action against those carrying out illegal earth-cutting. This is not acceptable. Public anger is growing with each passing day,” he added.

Masked individuals throw a petrol bomb at the MSPCB office

Shilllong, Aug 04: Two unidentified masked men hurled petrol bombs at the office of the Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board (MSPCB) in Lumpynggad area on Monday afternoon. Police confirmed that no injuries were reported in the incident.

MSPCB Member Secretary Dr. George Hagi Chyrmang stated that the attack occurred around 12:15 p.m. when two masked men arrived on a scooter, entered the office compound, and threw petrol bombs before fleeing. One of the bombs was lobbed into a room occupied by a senior scientific assistant, narrowly missing him.

“Our CCTV cameras cap-



tured the attack, but the perpetrators had masked their faces, making identification difficult,” Dr. Chyrmang said. He added that footage showed four individuals arriving on two scooters, though only two entered the premises.

When asked if the attack

was linked to the recent environmental public hearing for Shree Cement’s Rs. 1,800 crore integrated cement plant and limestone mining project in East Jaintia Hills, Dr. Chyrmang said it was “too early to establish any link.” Police and forensic teams have

collected evidence from the site, and investigations are ongoing.

The July 31 public hearing conducted by MSPCB at Lum Syrman has drawn criticism from landowners, farmers, and pressure groups, who described it as a “sham.” Allegations included restricted access for local landowners, police blockades, and a rushed process. Several organisations, including the Khasi Students’ Union (KSU), have demanded cancellation of the hearing.

Meanwhile, police have registered a case at Laitumkhrak Police Station and launched a manhunt to trace those involved in the attack.

Tea Board begins certification process for Tripura tea producers

Agartala, Aug 04: The TBI has initiated the process of providing ‘tea mark certification’ to its producers in Tripura to ensure quality assurance of finished products for consumers, an official said on Monday.

Initially, the certification will be provided to small tea growers and bought-leaf factories to help them market their products in the domestic market with quality assurance, he said.

“As part of ensuring quality, we have started issuing tea mark certification to bought-leaf factories. Basumat Small Tea Growers, a self-help group (SHG) in Sepahijala district that applied for the Tea Board of India (TBI) tag, has been provisionally granted certification. This is the first such case in the northeastern state,” board assistant director, Agartala, Biman Saha told PTI.

He said the TBI would provide certification to



eligible tea factories in batches after they fulfil the required criteria.

“If a factory owner applies for the certification, we will collect a sample of a particular batch and send it to the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) in Siliguri for necessary testing. If the test results are positive, we will issue tea mark certification for that batch,” Saha said.

Once the process is complete, the TBI will affix a QR-enabled seal on a particular batch of tea, through

which consumers can access details about its origin and other information, he said.

Saha said the certification would help ensure the quality of finished tea in both domestic and international markets and enable producers to get better prices due to increased consumer confidence.

The northeastern state has 54 operational tea estates producing nearly 90 lakh kg of the beverage annually, with over 30,000 people directly dependent on the sector.

Arunachal Pradesh Secures Ramsar

Itanagar, Aug 04: Glaw Lake in Arunachal Pradesh is officially India’s 101st Ramsar site. This is a first for the state. Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav confirmed the news on Monday. The recognition brings international protection to this Eastern Himalayan freshwater ecosystem.The lake sits inside the Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary in Lohit district. Mountain streams feed the water. Thick forest surrounds the site. The area holds massive biological value, hosting over 150 tree species and 49 types of orchids. Yadav touted the growth of the national network. journey reflects our unwavering

The government also aims to support sustainable livelihoods and research through this new classification. This move places Arunachal Pradesh firmly on the global map for wetland management.

23 additional fast-track courts will hear Maharashtra paper leak cases, according to Bombay High Court

New Delhi, Aug 04: Twenty-three more special fast-track courts have been established throughout Maharashtra by the Bombay High Court to hear instances involving exam question paper leaks and other associated malpractices. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and the Maharashtra Prevention of Malpractices in University, Board, and Other Specified Examinations Act, 1982 will all be used to try cases, according to a notice it released on Saturday.Beed, Chandrapur, Dhule, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Jalgaon, Jalna, Kolhapur,



Nashik, Osmanabad, Parbhani, Pune, Satara, Solapur, Thane, Wardha, Yavatmal, Nandurbar, and Mumbai are the locations of the 23 courts.On July 24, the high court designated two special courts in Nagpur and Aurangabad to fast-track trials

in examination paper leak cases. Acting Chief Justice Ravindra V Ghuge said the courts would hear only cases under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, and the BNS. The 2024 Act was enacted to prevent unfair

means in public examinations and deal with related offences. Trials under the law are required to be completed within three months. The Union government sought formation of special courts to speed up the prosecution of those accused of examination malpractice after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that such cases would be pursued for swift and stringent punishment. The Cockroach Janta Party protests, which called for Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation due to paper leaks, coincided with this occurrence. Pradhan's resignation put an end to the demonstrations.

Prashant Kishor's RS. 198 crore fortune includes gold, bonds, and a disassembled rice mill

New Delhi, Aug 04: In his election affidavit, Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor, who won the Bankipur assembly bypoll in his first election, disclosed family assets valued at about ₹198 crore. The majority of this wealth was concentrated in high-value real estate, bank investments, and a dismantled rice factory in Bihar.The total movable and immovable assets of Kishor, his wife Jahnvi Das, and a dependent are valued at ₹198.07 crore in the affidavit submitted with his nomination papers for the by-election on July 30. Immovable assets are worth ₹86.29 crore, whereas movable assets are worth ₹111.78 crore. Kishor has a large portion of his fortune invested in financial assets, in contrast to many politicians. The affidavit shows that movable assets include fixed deposits, bank deposits, shares, mutual funds, bonds, insurance policies, jewellery and cash. Kishor himself has declared movable assets worth ₹22.19 crore, while his wife accounts for the lion's share with assets worth ₹89.51

crore. A dependent has declared movable assets worth ₹7.19 lakh. Among the biggest disclosures are fixed deposits of about ₹7.36 crore in Kishor's name with HDFC Bank and other financial institutions. He also declared ₹65,570 in cash, while his wife reported ₹1.95 lakh in cash. According to the statement, Kishor's wife, Jahnvi Das, a physician, owns a significant amount of the family's wealth.Shares in Vedhas Ventures Private Limited, which have a reported book value of roughly ₹95.26 crore, are her largest asset. In addition, she owns bank savings, bonds, and mutual fund assets, making financial investments the family's biggest source of wealth. In addition, Kishor has declared ₹73.87 crore in immovable assets, while his wife has properties worth ₹12.42 crore. In addition to a share in an ancestral home in the Rohtas district, his real estate portfolio consists of residential properties in Patna, New Delhi, Ghaziabad, and Buxar. His inherited residential assets are valued at ₹14.62 crore,



while his self-acquired residential properties are valued at ₹59.25 crore in the affidavit. A demolished rice mill in the Rohtas area of Bihar is one of the affidavit's more peculiar entries.The non-agricultural property has been valued at ₹9.75 crore despite no longer being active, making it one of the more remarkable disclosures in Kishor's asset declaration. While his wife has gold and silver jewelry valued at approximately ₹64.58 lakh, Kishor has acknowledged ownership of a gold ring set with an emerald that is worth ₹1.35 lakh.A loan

from HDFC Bank secured by fixed deposits makes up the majority of Kishor's ₹5.77 crore in liabilities listed in the affidavit. A personal loan and a rental security deposit totaling ₹55.38 lakh are among his wife's obligations. According to the election affidavit, Kishor and his spouse have no outstanding GST, income tax, or other government obligations. The affidavit was submitted prior to Kishor's first election from Bankipur, where he opened Jan Suraj's account in the Bihar Assembly by defeating Neeraj Kumar Sinha of the BJP.

Concerning Gen Z Employment, the Center Says 17 Crore Employment Created in Ten Years

New Delhi, Aug 04: The government released a report card on employment generation on Tuesday, saying that over 17 crore new jobs were created in India between 2014 and 2024, amid growing worries among Generation Z about unemployment and restricted job options.During a meeting of NDA MPs, Labour and Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya presented the data, outlining what the government called significant advancements in employment, skill development, and social security during the previous ten years. In contrast to the previous UPA administration's tenure from 2004 to 2014, the NDA government prioritized skill development and job creation in its vision for a developed India. According to the presentation, throughout the UPA era, India's economy ranked as the tenth largest in the world, and employment growth continued to be sluggish. Citing Reserve Bank of India data, Mandaviya said more than 17 crore employment opportunities were generated in the country between



2014 and 2024. According to the presentation, this represents nearly six times higher growth than during the UPA period. According to the government, the nation produced 1.7 crore jobs on average every year during the course of the decade. With a notable increase in the number of businesses and employment registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO), it also shown notable growth in the formal sector.Additionally, improvements in India's standing on global employment indices were highlighted in the presentation.India's unemployment rate fell to 3.1% in 2025, below the world average of 4.8%, according to World

Bank and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) figures that the government reported.According to the government, India outperformed a number of significant developed and emerging G20 nations in terms of employment indices. Mandaviya emphasized the government's commitment to enhancing youth employment and capacity building, resulting in a workforce participation rate exceeding 41.4% and a 66% increase in graduate employability. Various initiatives, such as Make in India, Start-Up India, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Vishwakarma Scheme, and Lakhpati Didi, have been credited with promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship. A new-

ly announced employment package worth Rs 2 lakh crore aims to support over 4.1 crore young people by improving skills and facilitating access to formal jobs, with a target of generating over 3.5 crore jobs under the Prime Minister Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana.

Substantial capital expenditure in infrastructure projects—including railways, highways, and urban development—is projected to create around 5.88 crore direct and indirect jobs. The manufacturing sector's workforce participation has grown to 25.14%, comparable to that of developed nations. Mandaviya correlated employment growth with economic and social progress, noting that from 2014 to 2023, nearly 25 crore individuals have risen out of poverty and per-capita household consumption expenditure has increased significantly. Additionally, social security coverage expanded from 19% of the population in 2015 to over 68.4% by 2026, benefiting more than 101 crore people.

Amid a dispute about PM's video, the center summons the head of meta public policy once more

New Delhi, Aug 04: For the second time in a week, the center has called in the head of Meta Global Public Policy. Joel Kaplan, the head of public policy at the digital giant, has been called to meet with government representatives on Wednesday, according to sources. Sources claim that Instagram technical officials have also been called in addition to Kaplan.According to sources, the government wants to know how the Meta Algorithm operates. Sources claim that the government has received several complaints regarding the increased popularity

of some anti-government posts on social media. The Information and Technology Ministry called Kaplan last week on the removal of a Prime Minister Narendra Modi video from Facebook. Additionally, the government is probably going to want a written apology from Meta regarding the removal of the Prime Minister's video from Facebook as well as a written explanation of the "technical glitch" that caused the removal.At the Parliamentary Committee on Information Technology meeting on Monday, Meta officials were subjected to harsh questions from the

administration. Officials from the corporation apologized for the "technical glitch" that caused PM's video to be momentarily removed.In the midst of the student protest led by the Cockroach Janta Party, or CJP, on July 23, PM Modi posted a video to Gen Z that was momentarily blocked. In it, he promised strict measures against paper leaks. At a recent parliamentary panel meeting, officials from Google, YouTube, and the Home and IT ministries discussed the removal of a video featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi by Meta. BJP MP Nishikant Dubey insisted

that Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg must apologize for this action and warned that failure to do so could result in Meta losing its "safe harbour" protections in legal matters.

The panel emphasized the need for accountability and legal action while questioning Meta on the protections available to users if the PM's content could be removed so easily. Meta officials previously assured the government of enhanced safeguards for PM Modi's posts, stating that future removals would be vetted by senior officials to ensure rigorous oversight.

More than two tons of garbage are removed from the Itanagar River by volunteers



Itanagar, Aug 04: During a cleanup effort organized by the Youth Mission for Clean River (YMCR) and the Abralow Memorial Multipurpose Society (AMMS), with assistance from the

Itanagar Smart City Development Corporation Ltd., volunteers removed 2,160 kg of waste from the Yagamso riverbed and its banks at Chandranagar in Itanagar. After Sunday's cleanup, vol-

unteers conducted a waste audit and discovered that the primary pollutants influencing the river were single-use plastics, packaging materials, construction debris, old clothing, and domestic waste.Keyom Doni, vice chairman of YMCR, stated that the audit would assist in locating pollution sources and bolster initiatives to enhance waste management. He emphasized the need for tighter garbage disposal regulations and increased public awareness. In order to encourage sustainable trash management, the YMCR stated that it will regularly host similar clean-up campaigns and disseminate the audit's conclusions to local authorities and citizens.

Yaks in Tawang are being vaccinated against FMD



Itanagar, Aug 04: In order to save livestock and sustain the livelihoods of the Brokpa pastoral community, the Indian Army and the Animal Husbandry, Veterinary, and Dairy Development Department of Tawang district organized a three-day Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccination campaign for yaks in Dopokhar.Nearly 300 yaks will be vaccinated against the extremely contagious disease as part of the initiative, which is being carried out at an elevation of 15,400 feet. With the help of a six-person departmental team, senior veterinary officers Dr. Thupten Tashi and Dr. Sang Khandu are spearheading the effort. During the field visit, the Indian Army supplied logistical support to conduct the drive in the high-altitude border region, and the veterinary team also treated sick animals and gave medications to yak herders.

In the Assam camp, a CRPF jawan kills two of his coworkers before shooting himself to death

New Delhi, Aug 04: Inside a camp in the Nagaon district of Assam on Tuesday morning, a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan allegedly shot and killed two of his coworkers before taking his own life, according to officials. The incident resulted in injuries to another member of the CRPF.Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Ballani Premabaram, stationed at the main gate of the 34 Battalion camp in Katimari, opened fire on his colleagues at around seven in the morning. According to officials, ASI Mane Govind Sripul was hurt in the attack, and two CRPF jawans, Vishnu Prasad Baghel and Ramnawal Singh Yadav, were slain. The injured jawan was taken to a nearby hospital and later referred to the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital for advanced treatment. According to officials, Andhra Pradesh resident ASI Prem-



abaram later killed himself by shooting himself inside a barracks.Premabaram was not carrying his service rifle when he was on duty at the camp's main gate, according to PTI, which cited Nagaon Senior Superintendent of Police Partha Protim Das.He grabbed an INSAS gun from the guard room and proceeded to the back of the quarter guard, firing at Vishnu, who instantly perished. Ramnawal Singh, who had come for

passport verification, was then shot by him. Singh also passed away instantly, he claimed.

Premabaram then fired at ASI Mane Govind, according to the SSP, gravely injuring him. "After firing at his colleagues, Premabaram went inside a barrack and shot himself dead," the officer stated.An probe into the incident has been started, and senior CRPF and police officials raced to the scene.

West Jaintia Hills forbids hoarding and black marketing and instructs vendors to post pricing

Shillong, Aug 04: The West Jaintia Hills district government has urged all wholesale and retail traders to prominently display the prices of basic commodities and warned of harsh action against stockpiling, black marketing and overpricing.Deputy Commissioner Abhinav Kumar Singh issued an order on Monday, August 3, directing vendors operating in open markets throughout the district to abide by the directives issued by the Directorate of Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Government of Meghalaya, with immediate effect. Under the or-



der, all traders have been asked to clearly display the prevailing wholesale and retail prices of essential commodities at their shops, market stalls and business premises to ensure transparency for consumers.

The district administration also prohibited black marketing, hoarding, creating artificial scarcity and the sale of essential commodities above government-approved or notified prices. The order warned that

strict legal action would be taken against traders found selling adulterated food items or commodities that do not meet the standards prescribed under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and other applicable laws. Additionally, traders have been instructed to assist the Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department and the district administration's inspection teams by keeping stock registers, purchase bills, and other pertinent records up to date and providing them when needed for inspections.Additionally, the administration directed dealers to follow all guidelines

provided under the Price Monitoring System for necessities.Officials said any dealer caught breaking the order or the terms of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, and other applicable laws will face punitive action, including seizure of stocks, cancellation of trade licenses and prosecution in accordance with the law. Additionally, the district administration has asked Trade Associations, Market Committees, and Dorbar Shnongs to distribute the directive among their members and guarantee strict adherence. The directives went into effect right away.

Twelve people were hurt when turbulence struck an Air India Phuket-Delhi flight

New Delhi, Aug 04: On Tuesday, there was a brief moment of mid-air turbulence on an Air India Phuket-Delhi route, frightening the passengers. Twelve individuals on board, including two crew members, were reportedly hurt, and turbulence also caused some damage to the aircraft.Air India confirmed the incident in a statement, stating that on August 4, aircraft AI1379, which was traveling from Phuket to Delhi, encountered a minor turbulence-related occurrence during cruise that caused a transient shift in altitude. The aircraft made a safe landing in Delhi, and all of the crew and passengers departed without incident, according to the statement.The aircraft carried 134 passengers. The airline said there have been no serious injuries as of now. "A small number of passengers and crew members with minor injuries requiring medical assessment have been taken to a medical facility at the airport for precautionary examination and care by Air India's airport team and medical personnel," the statement added.Passengers said after landing that there was a sudden altitude drop due to which some flyers were injured. "There was a sudden drop in the plane's altitude. I hit my head on the roof and then fell down," a passenger said. A few travelers have sustained minor head injuries and bruises.Air India's first goal continues to be the security and welfare of its passengers and employees. The airline stated, "We are fully cooperating with the relevant authorities as part of the investigation and are offering all necessary support to those affected."

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Gaza’s fragile future hinges on the illusion of disarmament

Nearly three years after the deadly Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel set off a devastating war in Gaza, the Palestinian armed group has agreed to a disarmament plan. The announcement, made by Donald Trump, the president of the United States of America, late last week could potentially represent a major breakthrough towards a peaceful future for Gaza, Israel, and even the neighbourhood. Yet, both the past and the present offer multiple clues to the difficult path ahead. The Hamas disarmament plan is rooted in the controversial Gaza peace blueprint under which the Palestinian territory is supposed to be in a state of ceasefire which it is now: yet, Israel has still killed more than 1,000 people since last October despite the cessation of hostilities. Pushed by Mr Trump, the Gaza peace plan has little legitimacy in the eyes of the people of Gaza, which is to be ruled by a multi-tiered set of undemocratic boards with a panel led by the US president at the top. This lack of broader consensus for the plan means it will always carry the stain of a project imposed from above on a people who have suffered one of modern humankind's deadliest wars: Israel has killed more than 70,000 people in Gaza since October 7, 2023.

More specifically, the disarmament project has run into a familiar chicken-and-egg question. Hamas insists that it will fully give up its weapons only if Israel withdraws from Gaza. But Israeli officials have said they will only exit Gaza once Hamas disarms. Deeper uncertainties linger too. Hamas might be the most dominant armed group in Gaza but it is not the only one. How will the disarmament of other groups be carried out? Who will verify their disarmament? And what happens to these weapons? An international police force is supposed to maintain law and order once Hamas gives up arms. But its constitution remains

unclear. Gaza's reconstruction plans also remain up in the air, with no consultation on those between the Gaza Board of Peace led by Mr Trump and the actual people of the territory. A fundamental imbalance hovers over the Hamas disarmament plan. While the disarmament of all armed groups such as Hamas would be a positive development, the roadmap ahead has no mention of a Palestinian military. Without that, Gaza will always be vulnerable to Israeli annexation, much like the West Bank. Only a future that Gaza's people have a say in can bring sustainable peace.

Beyond technical military logistics, the plan suffers from a crisis of political legitimacy on the ground. The top-down governance model—which replaces Hamas with a committee of technocrats backed by international guarantors—risks being viewed by ordinary Gazans not as self-determination, but as an externally imposed administrative holding pattern. Without a broader political horizon that explicitly resolves core Palestinian statehood questions and addresses long-term Israeli security requirements, disarming non-state actors in an enclave reeling from massive structural devastation is an uphill battle. The promise of billions in reconstruction capital relies entirely on "absolute security," yet absolute security cannot be manufactured solely through signed pledges. As ceasefire violations and sporadic exchanges of fire continue to disrupt diplomatic timelines, the roadmap's fragility is glaringly obvious. A single unverified rocket launch or a delayed troop movement could immediately shatter fragile trust and plunge the region back into active warfare. Until international mediators bridge the vast gap between signed disarmament pledges and the messy, zero-sum security realities on the ground, Gaza's roadmap to peace will remain less of a concrete blueprint and more of a brittle illusion.

The education crisis: why policy promises fall short without ground-level reform



Something is rotten in the state of India's education, with apologies to William Shakespeare; a harsher law will not do the job that an overhaul, without ideological bias, would. Paper leaks, as India knows, is a yearly phenomenon; the victims of the government's decades of ineptitude and unintelligent approach to public examinations are everywhere.

In Bihar, victims of a botched railway recruitment exam set rail coaches on fire, blocked railway tracks, pelted stones. More than one crore applicants had taken the test for a total of 35,000 jobs, that would have given them tenured employment starting at around Rs 20,000 per month. In Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Telangana, young men and women, exploded in rage over the change in the rules for recruitment to the armed forces the "Agnipath" scheme. For the Narendra Modi government, not to know this is impossible. The solution to paper leaks does not lie in harsher punishment for the small fry who are invariably nabbed for paper leaks. The paper leaks business is big, an estimated Rs 1,000 crores at least. A punishment of Rs 10 crores is chicken-feed and entirely affordable. The "system" needs to be fixed; tokenism is not a solution. Education, in the context of public examinations, be it for admission into under-graduate, post-graduate or fellowship programmes or for recruitment in the safest and most secure jobs in the country, namely government jobs, has been reduced to a competition. It is a fierce fight to "crack the exam" turning education into a commodity. By doing so, a market is created, of a supply mechanism of leaked papers to meet the demand to succeed.

The National Education Policy and revisions of history and science curricula, dismantling institutions to replace them with new ones like the utterly untrustworthy National Testing Agency, which keeps springing leaks on unsuspecting students and helps the exam mafia rake profits contribute to the stench, but they aren't solutions. Nor is tinkering with mid-day meals satvik (pure vegetarian) menus versus menus with animal proteins that fail to serve the purpose of a government-sponsored meal in schools. Students know

what needs changing; so do educationists and experts; it is evident the government does not. Paternalistic, patriarchal and pathetic as the political class reveals itself to be, Gen Z or Gen Alpha knows it must stand up for itself or it will be thrown under the bus by a political class that talks about AI but does little to educate India's young adequately to tackle an AI-appropriated world that eats up low-skilled jobs and has no value for the poorly qualified products of India's ramshackle universities.

The numbers, show exactly the pits of destroyed desires to which India's youth have been consigned, with little chances of escape. Of 307 million young people in the 15-29 age group who entered the labour market, roughly 141 million are in the labour force; while 127 million are "employed", but less than one in eight (15 million) have regular salaried jobs with a contract and social security, decent working conditions, fair pay and career prospects. Put differently, a quarter (25.7% of the young, and in India, the legal age for a young person to have a job is only 14) are engaged in unpaid family work. About 21.3% of the young are, euphemistically, engaged in "own account work," while 22% are engaged in casual work, and 18% are employed in regular work, but without social security and only 11.8% have jobs with social security. Qualifications: a degree in medicine, engineering, or even law and in accountancy, are investments that the student and his/her family make to buy a chance at a better quality of life. It's also true these families know there are no guarantees; the qualified young may not land the jobs that are worth the investment. Education needs capacity-building reforms that create the capabilities required by an economy that must adopt and adapt to AI technologies. It doesn't need ideological reform of the Vedic maths variety. India needs massive investment in education; not the chicken feed of private investment in education as a safe profit-making route, but public investment to produce young Indians who can join a workforce that is transforming with AI technologies.

There is a mismatch between expectations of the aspiring and it must be recognised; the meritorious young are frus-

trated by the very restrictive choices they have because of the serious scarcity of opportunities for work with adequate compensation. The Neet process is a test that excludes those deemed ineligible; a hit-and-miss event, that can destroy dreams, of the family and the tested, regardless of his/her talent. The job recruitment tests are also a method to exclude the eligible from the rest. In both instances, the number of vacancies — of seats in medical colleges and tenured jobs in various government services — are seriously disproportionate; over one crore aspirants for 35,000 low-paying, effectively dead-end jobs. The basic point is that India cannot get to being "Viksit Bharat" anytime soon if it doesn't invest in two things: education and health. The Chinese did, way back in the 1950s; India said it was doing so, but failed. It only got to making education a fundamental right in 2009, and that too for children below 15. India's per capita income is several times lower than China's; Bharat pretends it has potential and a demographic dividend; but it does not. Its students said as much at Jantar Mantar; the education system is hopelessly inadequate; its teachers are incapable and its examinations and curricula are hopelessly antiquated, regardless of the rhetoric about digital classrooms and AI learning.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's memory can't be either short of selective. Mr Modi ought to have remembered that the Jantar Mantar protests were tame compared with the violence in 2022 that resulted in the police using firepower to subdue protestors. He cannot have forgotten the occasions in Uttar Pradesh when recruitment for government jobs as sanitary workers led to protests, because jobless youth with PhDs had taken the test for a job that required a standard qualification of Class 8 pass. That he remembers very little of what his government promised to do is obvious; he forgot when delivering yet another monologue to friends/children and his constituents that his government in 2024 had pledged itself to transforming the lives of four "castes" Garib, Yuva, Annadata and Nari. The harsh law enacted after the paper leaks reveals that he has no understanding of how to fulfil his guarantees.

A tale of two seouls: how extreme heat magnifies income inequality

In Seoul's affluent district of Gangnam, a severe heatwave has changed the currency of cool: access to air conditioning now defines the line between the haves and the have-nots. The ritzy neighbourhood was made globally famous by K-pop star Psy's 2012 hit single "Gangnam Style" -- lauding the lifestyles of its ultra-rich residents.

But under million-dollar luxury apartments chilled by whirling air conditioners, tenants in one of Seoul's last shanty towns suffer headaches in the savage heat. "It's so hot it's hard to breathe," said one resident of Guryong Village, a settlement of crude wood and tarpaulin shacks hosting around 160 households according to officials. The woman -- asking to be identified by her surname, Jeong, for privacy reasons -- said she could not afford to cool the one-room home shared with her husband and disabled daughter. "The poor really suffer," said the woman in her 60s, washing vegetables by the open door of her residence as temperatures outside soared up to 38C.

South Korea is sweltering in a streak of searing weather -- new all-time highs set three times over the past week alone, peaking at 42.5C on Sunday. The capital was under a "severe heat-wave warning" Tuesday for the first time since the new category was introduced this year to alert citizens to increasing extremes. Scientists say volatile weather events are becoming more



intense and frequent owing to climate change, which is man-made. But heatwaves are not experienced equally across the wealth divide. In exclusive Gangnam, south of the Han River, homes near the Guryong Village sell for up to 5.4 billion won (\$3.7 million) and boast all cutting-edge mod-cons. Tree-shaded boulevards are lined with flagship Ferrari, Lamborghini and Rolls-Royce showrooms, as well as designer boutiques and Michelin-starred restaurants.

Jeong Eun-woo, who lives in one of Gangnam's modern high-rises, has not found this summer particularly difficult. "I'm keeping the air conditioning running full blast. I drink iced coffee and wear light clothes," said the 20-year-old. "So far, it's been fine." But in Guryong Village, set among mounds of accumulated refuse,

access to air conditioning -- or even a reliable supply of electricity -- is far from guaranteed.

Ko Jae-ok, 87, has collected handheld battery-powered fans discarded by wealthier Seoul citizens, but found they provide little relief. "We're just surviving," she said. South Korea's economy is thriving amidst a manufacturing boom in microchips vital to the AI industry. But the country is also witnessing a widening wealth gap. In 2025, the richest 20 percent of the population held average net assets 45 times those of the poorest 20 percent, according to official data. Vladimir Tikhonov, Korean Studies professor at the University of Oslo, told AFP Guryong "symbolises the alienation of the urban poor from the mainstream of South Korean society". Not having access to air conditioning

"puts their health into extremely grave, perhaps deadly danger" despite living in one of Asia's richest cities, he said. The makeshift settlement, long earmarked for demolition, was founded by residents evicted in Seoul's redevelopment drive ahead of the 1988 Olympic Games. Built without formal planning, it has proven vulnerable to floods and fires -- and now the record-setting heatwave.

Local authorities have converted a community centre into an emergency heat shelter and distributed 67 million won worth of cooling appliances to vulnerable households in Gangnam. The summer temperature's death toll reached 16 on Sunday. On Tuesday the weather agency warned of "life-threatening heat", and Seoul residents received mass texts advising them to stay inside. But Baek Su-hyun said that offers no respite in Guryong. "If it's 35 degrees outside, it's over 40 degrees inside," said the 65-year-old, complaining that ageing residents were being afflicted with increasing headaches. Baek's home burnt down in a recent blaze, evicting him to a life in temporary shelter. But South Korea's heatwave has made it uninhabitable, forcing him to seek refuge under a makeshift tarp just a stone's throw from Gangnam's gleaming skyscrapers, where the wealthy remain cool in their aloof abodes. "We just lie outside under the shade because we can't stay indoors," he said.

Air pollution is an insurance crisis waiting to happen

As policymakers debate how to clean Delhi-NCR's air, a striking comparison has emerged. Recent analysis suggests that around ₹3,000 crore of targeted public support could significantly accelerate the electrification of heavy trucks in the region, delivering substantial air-quality benefits. Health insurers pay roughly the same amount every year in air-pollution-related hospitalisation claims in Delhi alone. The comparison raises the question: If pollution imposes a direct and growing financial cost on insurers, shouldn't they become active investors in prevention? Air qual-

ity-linked illnesses now constitute 9% of all hospitalisation claims in India, up from 6.4% in 2022. Delhi, home to just 2.5% of India's population, accounts for 38% of hospitalisation claims attributable to poor air quality. The insurance industry's reported discussions with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) on a 10-15% premium loading for Delhi residents reflect this reality.

According to the IRDAI Annual Report 2024-25, health insurers paid roughly ₹0.80 in claims for every rupee of premium collected. With air pollution accounting for an estimated

8-9% of claims, the industry's annual pollution-linked payout burden may exceed ₹7,500 crore. In Delhi alone, as mentioned earlier, insurers are estimated to pay around ₹3,000 crore annually - far exceeding public expenditure on air quality improvement. The Union government recently announced a vehicle replacement scheme for Delhi-NCR, which has reignited debate on transport emissions. Some analysts argue that stronger incentives for electric freight vehicles could deliver significantly larger air-quality benefits. Viewed differently, the NCR vehicle replacement scheme

may have inadvertently created the perfect pilot for testing an air-quality improvement market: a defined geography, measurable interventions, established monitoring systems, identifiable beneficiaries, and a potential buyer base in the insurance sector with an economic interest in cleaner air. India already has a policy instrument that could provide the architecture for such a pilot. The Green Credit Programme (GCP), launched in 2023, is designed to monetise verified environmental improvements. Unlike the Carbon Credit and Trading Scheme (CCTS), the GCP is not

narrowly focussed on emissions. With an appropriate methodology, the programme could potentially be extended to recognise verified air-quality improvements, creating a mechanism through which their environmental value can be measured and monetised. A 2022 study using health insurance records in China found that every 10 µg/m³ reduction in PM2.5 reduced healthcare expenditure for respiratory and circulatory patients by 16%. Applied to India, where the average insured air-quality-related hospitalisation costs ₹55,263, the savings can be substantial.

Bajaj Life reinforces financial resilience with priority flood claims support in Assam

Golaghat: Bajaj Life Insurance has introduced a special claims assistance framework for policyholders affected by the floods in Assam, a move that reflects the insurance sector's expanding role in strengthening financial resilience and supporting disaster-hit households through quicker access to insurance benefits.

The company has established a dedicated claims settlement desk and simplified documentation requirements for eligible death claims in the flood-affected districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat. The insurer said claims linked to the floods will receive the highest priority to ensure timely financial assistance reaches beneficiaries.

Under the revised process, nominees or legal heirs can submit proof of death due to floods issued by local municipal authorities, designated government officials or hospital authorities, along with a



claim intimation form, bank account details and KYC documents. In the absence of an immediate death certificate, claims will also be accepted based on official lists issued by hospitals, police, armed forces or State and Central government authorities, wherever applicable.

The initiative aligns with the broader policy objective of enhancing financial security and improving the efficiency of post-disaster relief through insurance. Faster claim settlements help reduce the economic burden on affected families

while complementing government-led rehabilitation efforts.

Formerly known as Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance, Bajaj Life serves over 3.47 crore customers through 598 branches and more than 1.61 lakh insurance consultants. The insurer manages assets exceeding Rs 1.40 lakh crore, reported an individual claim settlement ratio of 99.33 per cent in FY2025-26 and maintained a solvency ratio of 266 per cent, underscoring its financial strength to respond during large-scale natural disasters.

Tax Refunds Likely to Reach Taxpayers

Mumbai: Income tax refunds for Assessment Year 2026-27 are expected to start reaching eligible taxpayers from mid-August after more than 5.9 crore returns were filed by the July 31 deadline. The Income Tax Department has begun processing returns, with refunds generally taking around four to six weeks after successful e-verification. Refunds are issued when tax paid through TDS, TCS, advance tax or self-assessment tax exceeds the final liability after applicable deductions and exemptions. Taxpayers who filed and verified their returns in the final week of July could receive refunds between mid-August and mid-September, provided there are no errors or data mismatches. Taxpayers can monitor their refund status through the income tax e-filing portal. Any discrepancy detected during processing may result in an intimation or notice being sent to the registered email address, potentially delaying the refund until the issue is resolved.

ITR Refunds Likely to Reach Taxpayers in Coming Weeks

Mumbai: The Union Government launched an Offer for Sale on Tuesday to divest up to a 6.5 percent equity stake in Life Insurance Corporation of India, aiming to mobilize approximately ₹31,400 crore. The capital-raising initiative marks the largest public divestment via the transaction mechanism in the history of Indian equity markets.

According to official disclosures submitted to stock exchanges, the transaction comprises a base offering of 31.6 crore shares, representing a 2.5 percent stake in the state-owned insurance entity. The transaction framework incorporates a green-shoe over-allotment option allowing the sale of an additional 50.6 crore shares, or 4 percent equity, in the event of robust institutional and retail demand. The floor price for the equity issuance has been fixed at ₹382 per share, reflecting a 10 percent concession against



the previous closing price of ₹424 recorded on the BSE.

The subscription window opened for non-retail institutional buyers on Tuesday, with allocation access expanding to retail investors on Wednesday. Department of Investment and Public Asset Management Secretary Arunish Chawla indicated that the equity dilution will elevate public shareholding in the life insurer from the existing

3.5 percent to 10 percent. The movement fulfills the Minimum Public Shareholding requirements mandated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India ahead of stipulated compliance schedules.

A complete subscription of the offered equity tranche will expand total government disinvestment realizations for the current fiscal year from ₹21,000 crore to roughly ₹52,000 crore.

Combined with state asset monetization proceeds exceeding ₹6,300 crore, total capital generation will approach ₹60,000 crore against the annual budgetary target of ₹80,000 crore. The capital inflow provides fiscal latitude to absorb elevated state outlays for fertilizer and fuel subsidies while preserving target national fiscal deficit parameters of 4.3 percent of gross domestic product.

LIC Stake Sale Opens With Discount for Retail Investors

New Delhi: The Union Government has opened an Offer for Sale to divest up to a 6.5 per cent stake in Life Insurance Corporation of India, offering a discounted floor price to attract wider investor participation while moving the state-owned insurer towards compli-

ance with minimum public shareholding requirements. The offer has a base size of 31.62 crore shares, representing 2.50 per cent of LIC's equity. The government has also retained a green-shoe option to sell an additional 50.60 crore shares, equivalent to 4 per cent of the company, if demand exceeds the base offering.

The floor price has been fixed at ₹382 per share, substantially below LIC's previous closing level of around ₹424 on the BSE. Retail investors and eligible employees will receive an additional ₹10 discount per share below the final cut-off price, making the offering more attractive to smaller



investors.

The subscription process began on August 4 with bids restricted to non-retail institutional investors. Retail investors and eligible LIC employees will be allowed to participate from August 5, giving individual investors an opportunity to acquire shares at preferential pricing under the offer.

A separate employee reservation of 50 lakh shares, representing 0.04 per cent of LIC's paid-up capital, has been created under the transaction. Eligible em-

ployees can apply for shares worth up to ₹5 lakh. In addition, at least 10 per cent of the total offer has been reserved for individual retail applicants whose bids do not exceed ₹2 lakh.

The government's stake sale is primarily aimed at increasing public ownership in LIC. Its public shareholding currently stands at 3.5 per cent and is expected to rise to 10 per cent if the entire proposed stake is sold. The move is intended to bring the insurer in line with the Minimum Public Share-

holding norms prescribed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

The government is undertaking the dilution ahead of the regulatory deadlines for meeting the prescribed public shareholding requirement. The transaction therefore serves both as a disinvestment exercise and as a measure to bring LIC's ownership structure in line with applicable capital market regulations.

The offer is being managed by a group of merchant bankers comprising

IIFL Capital Services, BNP Paribas, Goldman Sachs and Motilal Oswal. Their role includes coordinating the share sale and facilitating participation from institutional, retail and eligible employee investors.

The green-shoe provision gives the government flexibility to expand the transaction beyond the base offer if investor demand is strong. A full subscription would make the stake sale a significant contribution to the Centre's disinvestment programme while increasing the proportion of LIC shares available to public investors.

The discounted floor price and additional concession for retail participants are also intended to broaden ownership of the insurance major. With institutional bidding preceding participation by individual investors, the government will have an early indication of demand before the offer is opened to retail and employee categories.

RBI Likely to Hold Repo Rate at 5.25% Amid Global Uncertainty



New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee has begun its three-day meeting, with economists and financial markets widely expecting the central bank to keep the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent amid geopolitical tensions, volatile crude oil prices and currency fluctuations.

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra is scheduled to announce the policy decision on August 5. If the repo rate remains unchanged, it would mark the fourth consecutive policy meeting at which the central bank has maintained borrowing costs following a cumulative reduction in

rates during earlier policy cycles.

The expected pause comes as policymakers weigh steady domestic economic activity against risks arising from the global environment. Domestic high-frequency indicators have remained relatively resilient, while uncertainty over international markets, energy prices and currency movements continues to influence the policy outlook.

Bank of Baroda Chief Economist Madan Sabnavis said the policy review was taking place against a backdrop of considerable global uncertainty, even as domestic growth indicators remained stable. The

prevailing expectation is that the RBI will retain its neutral policy stance while assessing developments in growth and inflation.

Financial markets are likely to focus as much on the RBI's guidance for the coming months as on the rate decision itself.

Investors will closely examine the central bank's assessment of inflation, economic growth and liquidity conditions for signals on the direction of monetary policy.

The benchmark 10-year government bond yield has remained around 6.7 per cent, indicating that markets have largely factored in a pause in rate action. Attention is therefore expected to centre on the RBI's approach to managing liquidity in the financial system and its assessment of medium-term inflation risks.

The policy decision will provide an indication of how the central bank intends to balance domestic growth momentum with external pressures as global economic conditions remain uncertain.

FSSAI Restricts Dabur Products Over '100%' Claims

Mumbai: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has prohibited Dabur India from selling several food products carrying absolute claims such as "100% Natural", "100% Pure", "100% Purity Guaranteed", "100% Organic" and "100% Tender Coconut Water", holding that such descriptions were ambiguous, unverifiable and potentially misleading to consumers.

The regulatory action covers a range of Dabur products, including honey, cow ghee, edible oils, apple cider vinegar, virgin coconut oil, sesame oil, coconut water and coconut milk.

FSSAI found that the disputed descriptions did not comply with provisions of the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising & Claims) Regulations, 2018, which govern how food products can be advertised and labelled.

The regulator also identified specific violations involving the use of the Jaivik Bharat logo on certain organic honey and apple cider vinegar products. The logo was displayed without the required statutory organic certification or endorsement, prompting additional compliance concerns.

FSSAI further objected to the use of

absolute purity claims on composite food products such as coconut milk. Such products contain multiple ingredients, and the regulator has restricted the use of absolute terms such as "100% pure" for compound formulations where the claim cannot be objectively established.

The action followed earlier communications from the food safety authority seeking voluntary removal or correction of the disputed claims. As the requested corrective measures were considered inadequate, the regulator proceeded with the prohibition on the sale of the identified non-compliant products.

Dabur has been directed to immediately stop selling inventory carrying the disputed claims and submit an Action Taken Report to the regulator within 15 days. The company has also begun reviewing the product descriptions and claims identified in the regulatory notice.

"We have received the FSSAI notice and are in the process of checking the content mentioned in the notice on our website," Dabur India said in response to the regulatory action.

The case highlights the regulator's scrutiny of food marketing practices,



particularly claims that use absolute terms suggesting complete purity, natural composition or organic status. Such descriptions can influence consumer purchasing decisions and therefore need to meet prescribed standards for accuracy and verification.

The action also places greater emphasis on the distinction between marketing language and claims that can be substantiated under India's food safety regulations. Companies are required to ensure that product labels, online listings and promotional descriptions comply with applicable standards before making claims about the quality, composition or certification of food products.

L&T Lands Rs 15,000-Crore-Plus Offshore Contract From ADNOC

New Delhi: Larsen & Toubro has secured an offshore contract worth more than ₹15,000 crore from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company Offshore, giving a major boost to the Indian engineering and construction company's hydrocarbon order book and strengthening its position in the Middle East energy infrastructure market.

The order has been awarded to L&T's Hydrocarbon business, whose offshore unit will undertake engineering, procurement, construction and installation work for critical offshore infrastructure in the United Arab Emirates. The project will involve the development and integration of facilities required to support offshore energy production.

The scope of work includes the design and integration of offshore structures, subsea pipelines and specialised production facilities.



These installations are intended to support the expansion of energy extraction capabilities across offshore fields in the UAE and will require extensive engineering and construction expertise.

L&T has placed the contract in its "ultra-mega" order category, which covers projects valued at more than ₹15,000 crore. The size of the award makes it

a significant addition to the company's international project portfolio and reinforces its ability to execute large and technically complex hydrocarbon projects.

The contract also deepens L&T's engagement with the UAE's energy sector, where the company has been expanding its presence through major engineering and infrastructure assignments. The

latest award is expected to strengthen the company's pipeline of Middle East projects and contribute to its long-term hydrocarbon business growth.

The project will involve coordinated offshore engineering, procurement and construction activities along with the installation of subsea and production infrastructure. Its execution will require specialised capabilities for working in offshore environments and integrating multiple components into operational energy facilities.

The latest order comes as energy companies in the Gulf continue to invest in offshore infrastructure to maintain and expand production capacity. For L&T, the award further demonstrates the growing importance of international markets to its hydrocarbon business and adds another major project to its portfolio of large-scale energy developments.

Cargo Ship Attacked Near Oman as Iran-Hormuz Talks Continue, Regional Tensions Escalate

Tehran: Tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, which have persisted since February 28 this year, continue to unsettle the international community. The ongoing confrontation involving the United States and Iran has had far-reaching implications across the Middle East (West Asia). As Iran and Oman continue negotiations over the Strait of Hormuz, a fresh attack on a cargo vessel near Oman has raised fears that diplomatic efforts could face renewed obstacles. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has warned that Iran has a final opportunity to accept Washington’s conditions, while Tehran has asserted that it is unfazed by the threat and that its armed forces are fully prepared to respond to any military action.

According to reports, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) Operations Centre said a cargo vessel was struck by an unidentified projectile near Oman. In an update posted on X, the UKMTO stated that the incident occurred approximately 20 nautical miles (37 kilometres) northeast of Khasab, Oman. Authorities are investigating the attack, while vessels operating in the area have been advised to exercise caution and immediately report any suspicious activity.

Iran has, for the first time, publicly confirmed that negotiations with Oman regarding the Strait of Hormuz are making progress. However, Tehran denied claims that it is engaged in direct talks with the United States. Regional mediators, including Qatar and



Pakistan, are reportedly working behind the scenes to help restore stability in the strategically vital waterway.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry announced on Monday that discussions with Oman are focused on establishing a temporary maritime corridor for commercial shipping. If the negotiations succeed, the proposed arrangement would integrate Iranian

and Omani shipping routes within the Strait. Mediators believe such an agreement could serve as an important confidence-building measure between Iran and the United States.

Amid the ongoing diplomatic efforts, Iran reiterated that it is not intimidated by American warnings and maintains full military readiness. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) stated that it is prepared to respond decisively to any threat against the country.

In response, the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) said American forces remain fully prepared to safeguard commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. Despite ongoing peace initiatives, President Donald Trump confirmed that the United States had prepared plans for a major military strike against Iran but decided to postpone the operation.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, President Trump said the planned strike would have been significantly larger than previous military actions taken since February 28. He said he chose to delay the operation after appeals from Gulf nations urging restraint, adding that the attack could have resulted in thousands of deaths inside Iran.

Trump reiterated that the next course of action now depends on Iran. He warned that Tehran has one final opportunity to halt its nuclear weapons programme and alter its approach toward the Strait of Hormuz. Failure to do so, he cautioned, would result in severe consequences.

NHS radiographers report rise in overt racist abuse by patients

NHS radiographers are experiencing racist abuse by patients, who have called them “monkeys” and refused to be seen by black and Asian staff, according to a report.

A survey of 381 members of the Society of Radiographers revealed a “noticeable” rise in instances of overt racism experienced and witnessed by radiographers across the health service over the past 18 months. Examples included staff being called “dirty foreigners”, patients complaining about the skin colour of those attending to them, and patients making comments in front of staff about “people coming over here and taking our jobs”.

One patient made jokes about a radiographer’s headscarf and complained they couldn’t understand her; she speaks with a mild Yorkshire accent. Another patient waiting to be X-rayed refused to accept a black radiographer and said: “Black people frighten me.”

The chief executive of the NHS Race and Health Observatory, Prof Habib Naqvi, said such cases were a “sobering reminder of the racism, prejudice and hatred



that persist in our society, and of the profound impact they have on healthcare staff and the communities they serve”.

“They create real fear, trauma and anxiety among our diverse workforce, who continue to provide diligent, compassionate care to patients at some of the most vulnerable moments in their lives,” he said.

“The NHS could not function without the skill, dedication and compassion of healthcare workers from across the world. We strongly condemn these reported racist incidents, and there

must be a clear, consistently enforced zero-tolerance approach across the NHS, including in cases where patients display racist or otherwise unacceptable conduct.”

Paul Awah, 39, a radiographer based in Bedfordshire who moved to the UK from Nigeria five years ago, has frequently experienced patients claiming they are unable to understand what he’s saying even though English is his first language. “Sometimes no matter how clear you’re speaking to a particular patient, a white patient, independent of whether the patient is sick or not, they

just pretend not to understand,” he said.

“They seem to understand people speaking with an Irish or a Scottish accent, but they claim to not understand me even though I am speaking clearly. Some patients also assume that we are not qualified.”

For Awah, the current political climate and rhetoric about immigration from the far right has a part to play in the increase in racism experienced by NHS staff. “What used to be something people wouldn’t say, now the rhetoric has changed,” he said.

“Immigrants are blamed

for the cost of living, energy bills, the worsening situation in the country, and people feel it’s OK to say it.”

Previous surveys have revealed the extent of racism directed at staff throughout the NHS. The Royal College of Nursing revealed in October that the number of racist incidents experienced by its members had risen 55% over a three-year period, while the latest NHS staff survey found that one in five black and minority-ethnic staff had reported abuse, bullying or harassment from patients or the public, compared with just one in 20 white staff.

The chief human resources and organisational development officer at NHS England, Thomas Simonssaid: “Racist abuse towards NHS staff is completely unacceptable and has no place in our health service.

“Our new national staff standards are clear that NHS organisations must take meaningful action to prevent and respond to racism, support affected staff and ensure there are clear consequences for patients who racially abuse or discriminate against NHS staff – including the option to refuse care in non-emergency situations.”

HIV prevention drug could reduce cases globally



America: New innovations in HIV prevention could dramatically reduce the number of new HIV cases around the globe, but US foreign aid cuts will mean that those that most need the new medication will be unable to access it, according to experts at the Aids 2026 Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

One year ago, the World Health Organization recommended that governments around the world prioritize expanded access to lenacapavir, an injectable version of the HIV prevention medication PrEP that requires only two injections annually. PrEP, which also comes in the form of daily oral medications and bimonthly injections, is 99% effective in preventing sexually transmitted HIV for people who take it consistently.

In its announcement, the WHO noted that access to lenacapavir is limited outside clinical trials. But the organisation recommended that governments around the world prioritise scaling up availability of the injectable medication, because it could be gamechanging for populations that face considerable barriers to access for the medications that are currently available. For people who face poverty or stigma, or who live in rural areas that are far away from healthcare services, accessing a daily pill or an every-other-month injection can be close to impossible. Lenacapavir would provide strong protection against HIV while only requiring patients to access healthcare twice annually. A mathematical modeling study from the WHO and the United Nations estimated that widespread availability of lenacapavir could prevent 41% of new HIV infections in South Africa, Zimbabwe and western Kenya.

Notably, when the WHO

recommended global investment in lenacapavir for HIV prevention in 2025, the Trump administration was already in the process of dissolving USAID, which provided 73% of donor-funded resources for HIV prevention globally, according to a study in the Lancet Global Health. As of July 2026, multiple reports show that investment in HIV prevention has declined dramatically around the world.

“We have these major achievements in prevention. On the other hand, we are facing these major funding cuts that are affecting deeply the delivery not only of these new prevention technologies but also decreasing the number of people engaged in care, engaged in prevention services,” said Beatriz Grinsztejn, president of the International Aids Society, during a press conference at the Aids 2026 Conference.

Grinsztejn is also an infectious disease physician and researcher at the HIV prevention organisation Fio-cruz in Rio de Janeiro.

The funding cuts not only affect the availability of medications themselves, but also the ability of organisations to reach the people who need them.

“When funding cuts came, one of the big things that’s been impacted is peer outreach workers, which are crucial to reaching people who use drugs, to building trust with people who use drugs and engaging them with services,” said Ailish Brennan, a policy analyst at Harm Reduction International.

People who inject drugs are at a particularly high risk for contracting HIV, especially if they do not have access to clean syringes. A report from the International Network of People Who Use Drugs found that organisations were most

likely to respond to the loss of funding by cutting outreach services.

Brennan said that many harm reduction and HIV prevention organisations around the world were having to shut down locations, including mobile locations, which can mean clients at risk for HIV lose trust in the organisation. But also just if they have to travel further they lose their local point of contact, and ultimately this means the innovations that we’re seeing, the long-acting injectables that have so much hope and opportunity, are not going to reach the people who need them most,” Brennan said.

At the press conference, Grinsztejn noted that even before the dissolution of USAID, much of Latin America had been left out of agreements with US-based pharmaceutical companies to make innovative HIV prevention more affordable.

Gilead Sciences provides generic versions of long-acting medications to low- and middle-income countries for far below sticker price, but justifies excluding countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Argentina by classifying them as “upper middle-income countries”. HIV advocates dispute this justification, partly because people in these countries played a key role in clinical trials to test these medications.

“We do have prevention technologies that are our dream,” Grinsztejn said during the conference, adding that it should be possible to fulfill the UNAIDS long-held goal of eliminating AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Grinsztejn then added: “From my personal perspective, I think that it’s really hard that we will get to the targets given the current scenario.”

Two helicopters collide outside Athens as Greece battles to control wildfires

Greece: Two firefighting helicopters have collided west of Athens, killing the two-person crew of one of the aircraft, as efforts to control a massive wildfire barreling towards the outskirts of the Greek capital intensified.

Footage showed one of the helicopters losing control in the face of gale-force winds that have pushed flames towards settlements on Athens’ western fringes.

“The pilots ... were taken unconscious to hospital, where their death was confirmed,” said the fire department’s director of communications, Vassilis Vathrakogiannis.

The Greek prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis said the two dead were a Dane and a Greek. The two crew members of the second helicopter were rescued.

The helicopters had been leased from Australia’s McDermott Aviation, part of a fleet of 15. The company has said it has supported

operations in Greece for the past seven years.

As Europe’s wildfire crisis fractured along different routes, and in further proof of the destructive force of climate-driven wildfires across the continent, the blazes ripped through Greece’s tinder-dry landscape, up mountain slopes and down to the sea, before encroaching on the capital.

Warning of “extremely difficult” days ahead, Mitsotakis underlined the threat posed by gusts that in recent days have exceeded 78mph (125km/h).

“When the winds blow with such force, even the dozens of aircraft we have at our disposal cannot operate safely,” he wrote on social media.

More than 100 homes were destroyed overnight in fires that broke out around the popular coastal village of Porto Germeno, about 45 miles (70km) northwest of Athens. By Sunday, more than 500 firefighters

and forest commandos had been dispatched to keep the flames at bay. The eastern Mediterranean, no stranger to wildfires, has had a relatively calm summer to date, leaving Greeks to watch in horror as the blazes have hit farther west.

As the advance of wildfires in Spain was finally curbed and officials in France announced that a mega-fire – four times the size of Paris – had begun to be contained, the blazes in Greece have prompted mass evacuations and devastated huge swathes of land from Crete to the southern Peloponnese, the Ionian isle of Cephalonia and islands across the Aegean.

Last week three Greek firefighters died from injuries sustained while they fought blazes.

Extreme winds have been a blessing – in bringing down summer temperatures – but also a curse, with their-gale force strength obstructing firefighting efforts.

Greece’s civil protection minister, Evangelos Tournas, a retired air force general, said at the weekend that the fire department had been “pushed to its limits”. He said high winds had created “extremely difficult conditions resulting in many cases where aircraft either cannot draw water or cannot carry out drops due to extreme turbulence”. France’s largest wildfire remained contained after 224,000 people were forced to flee in what may have been the largest peacetime evacuation in French history. But active pockets still burned across 160 sq miles (420 sq km) of devastated forest.

Thousands remained unable to return home, and nearly 3,000 firefighters were deployed against the Gironde mega-fire and a second blaze in Provence that had stopped advancing but remained uncontained.

“The fire is now fixed, which does not mean that

the fire is extinguished,” the Gironde prefecture said on Sunday, using the French firefighting term for a blaze whose advance has been stopped and whose perimeter has been contained.

The region remained under France’s highest red forest fire alert. Dry conditions and soaring temperatures around Bordeaux, combined with afternoon winds, created a continued risk of renewed flames. Additional firefighters from Ukraine, Lithuania and French Polynesia were expected on Sunday and Monday to reinforce the operation. Hundreds of miles away, nearly 1,500 firefighters were battling a separate fire in the south-eastern Var department that tore through roughly 7 sq miles in little more than a day. Authorities said the fire in the Gros Bessillon hills was stabilised on Sunday morning, meaning its perimeter had not expanded overnight.

These seven lip serums are a daily regimen for lip care

I have consistently been an admirer of lip balms. Indeed, it is one makeup necessity I would never leave home without. I have experimented with nearly all varieties, from tinted to matte. However, the experience of using lip serums was truly delightful. It was only after incorporating lip serums into my routine that I recognized my lips required additional attention, particularly as I began to use long-lasting lipsticks more frequently. What are lip serums?

Unlike traditional lip balms, lip serums are usually packed with nourishing ingredients such as hyaluronic acid, peptides, vitamin E, jojoba oil and plant-based oils that help hydrate, repair and improve the overall appearance of the lips. They feel lightweight, absorb quickly and leave my lips looking naturally plump and healthy without feeling sticky.

And after trying a couple of lip serums, these seven have become my everyday favourites. They are the ones I keep reaching for, whether I am heading out

with makeup or spending a day at home.

1. e.l.f. Glow Reviver Lip Oil, Nourishing Tinted Lip Oil For A High-shine Finish, Infused With Jojoba Oil, Vegan & Cruelty-free, Jam Session: One of my favourite products for daily use is the e.l.f. Glow Reviver Lip Oil. Although it is marketed as a lip oil, it delivers the nourishing benefits of a serum. The lightweight formula contains nourishing oils that help keep my lips soft throughout the day. I love wearing it alone because it gives my lips a healthy shine without feeling heavy. It also works beautifully over lipstick whenever my lips need a quick moisture boost.

2. Laneige Glaze Craze Tinted Lip Serum | Plumping, Nourishing Hydration with Polypeptide and Ceramides | Lip Balm for Dry & Chapped Lips: We focus on products from brands with a proven reputation and long-standing market trust. Whenever my lips feel dry after wearing matte lipsticks, I reach for the Laneige Glaze Craze Tinted Lip Serum. Infused with

barrier-boosting ceramides and polypeptides, it provides long-lasting hydration while leaving my lips smooth and supple. I often use it during the day as a lightweight alternative to the brand's famous overnight lip mask. It instantly makes my lips feel comfortable and well-moisturised.

3. The Ordinary PHA 5% Exfoliating Lip Serum, Hydrating Overnight Lip Exfoliator Treatment, 15ml: I love how The Ordinary PHA 5% Exfoliating Lip Serum gently smooths my lips without feeling harsh. Formulated with 5% polyhydroxy acids (PHA), it helps remove dead skin cells while keeping my lips soft and comfortable. The lightweight, non-sticky texture absorbs quickly, making it ideal for daily use or as a prep step before lipstick. It leaves my lips looking smoother, healthier, and ready for any lip colour.

4. INTIMIFY Beetroot Lip Serum | For Dark & Pigmented Lips | for Women & Men 15 ml: I like using the INTIMIFY Beet-



root Lip Serum whenever my lips need an extra boost of nourishment. Enriched with beetroot extract, vitamin E, and moisturising plant oils, it helps keep my lips soft, hydrated, and naturally fresh-looking. The lightweight formula feels comfortable throughout the day and adds a subtle healthy glow. With regular use, my lips feel smoother, well-conditioned, and less prone to dryness.

5. Sammmm LOVE Mois-

turizing Lip Tint Oil(10g) | pH Reactive Lip Oils with Natural, Glossy Pink Finish: I enjoy wearing the Sammmm LOVE Moisturizing Lip Tint Oil because it combines hydration with a hint of colour. Infused with jojoba oil, vitamin E, and nourishing botanical oils, it keeps my lips moisturised while delivering a glossy finish. The non-sticky texture feels lightweight and comfortable, making it perfect for every-

day wear. It gives my lips a healthy-looking tint while helping them stay soft and supple.

6. Clarins Instant Light Lip Comfort Oil Multi-Free Size: If I want my lips to feel pampered, the Clarins Lip Comfort Oil is my go-to pick. Enriched with plant oils such as jojoba and hazelnut oil, it nourishes my lips while adding a beautiful glossy finish. I love how comfortable it feels even after hours of

wear. It is perfect for days when I want hydrated lips without applying heavy makeup.

7. TIRTIR My Glow Rosy Lip Oil |Moisturizing Lip Care |5.7ml: I reach for TIRTIR My Glow Rosy Lip Oil whenever I want glossy, deeply hydrated lips. Formulated with jojoba oil, avocado oil, and vitamin E, it helps lock in moisture and leaves my lips feeling smooth and nourished. The silky texture glides on effortlessly without feeling heavy or sticky. It adds a beautiful rosy shine while helping my lips look plump, healthy, and well cared for. My everyday lip care routine

These lip serums have completely changed the way I care for my lips. I always start by gently exfoliating my lips once or twice a week to remove dry skin. During the day, I apply a lightweight serum or lip oil to maintain hydration, especially before wearing lipstick. At night, I use a richer serum or treatment to help repair my lips while I sleep. For me, lip serums are no longer an optional

beauty product; they are an essential part of my skin-care routine. These seven favourites have helped me maintain softer, smoother and healthier-looking lips throughout the year, and I genuinely find myself reaching for them every single day. If you're looking to upgrade your lip care routine, these are the products I would confidently recommend trying.

Benefits of Lip Serums

Provides deep and long-lasting hydration. Helps repair dry, cracked, and chapped lips.Makes lips feel softer, smoother, and healthier.Improves lip texture with regular use. Helps reduce flakiness and rough patches.

Nourishes lips with vitamins, peptides, and botanical oils.

Supports the skin barrier to prevent moisture loss.

Gives lips a naturally plump and fuller appearance. Prepares lips for a smoother lipstick application.Adds a healthy, glossy finish without feeling sticky. Can help minimise the appearance of fine lines on the lips.

3 Common Kitchen Items That Are Just Taking Up Space

The kitchen looks like new. A mound of stuff begins to build up there over time. The cupboards are stocked with a variety of items after a few years. You have no idea what to preserve and what to discard! Add three categories to the list of objects to eliminate.

1. Instead of discarding little items like broken pots, old oil bottles, broken cups, and vegetable knives, many people save them in the hopes that they may be useful in the future.

And the kitchen is filled with that. These must be thrown away right away.

2. There are a lot of superfluous appli-

ances and devices in the kitchen. Certain gadgets, such as fruit juicers, vegetable cutters, and milk frothers, aren't always helpful. The kitchen will be freed up if you frequently remove the items that are not needed from the shelves.

3. The kitchen also contains food and spices that have expired.

Rose water, fragrant scent, and white vinegar are used more frequently than baking soda. They are frequently discovered to be expired.

Additionally, they take up kitchen space. You won't have a lack of room in the kitchen if you get rid of such superfluous items.

These short kurtis have become an essential part of my daily wardrobe

There was a period when nearly every ethnic garment in my closet consisted of long kurtas and kurta sets. They were reliable, adaptable, and consistently exuded elegance. However, recently, I have noticed that I am opting for short kurtis much more frequently, and this is not solely due to their resurgence in popularity.A good short kurti does something that long silhouettes often don't: it gives you endless styling possibilities. Pair it with straight-fit jeans for coffee runs, cigarette pants for work, linen trousers for brunch, or even wide-leg denims for an Indo-Western look. It feels lighter, fresher and far less predictable than throwing on another matching kurta set.

What I love most is how today's short kurtis are moving beyond the basic printed styles we grew up wearing. Designers are experimenting with handcrafted Jaipuri prints, chikankari embroidery, subtle threadwork, modern necklines and structured silhouettes that feel polished rather than overly traditional. The result is a piece that looks equally at home in an office meeting, weekend lunch or festive family gathering.

Fabric also makes all the difference. Breathable cotton remains my favourite because it survives Indian summers and humid weather effortlessly, while embroidered cotton instantly elevates an otherwise simple outfit. Chikankari continues to be timeless because it adds texture without overwhelming the

look, and block prints bring just enough personality to everyday dressing.

Styling a short kurti is surprisingly easy if you want it to look modern rather than dated:

Swap leggings for straight trousers, relaxed denims or wide-leg pants.

Keep accessories minimal with silver hoops, chunky bangles or a statement watch. Kolhapuris, sneakers, loafers or even kitten heels work depending on the occasion.Add a structured tote or sling bag instead of a heavily embroidered handbag for a contemporary finish.

After browsing through plenty of options, these are some short kurtis that stand out for their quality, versatility and everyday wearability.

Kurtis worth checking out

1. Liboza Cotton Short Kurti for Women
2. Amazon Brand Myx Printed Straight Cotton Short Kurti
3. Amazon Brand Myx Printed Regular Cotton Short Kurti
4. MEERA FAB Cotton Short Kurti Stylish Women's Floral Printed Top
5. ANNI Designer Cotton Short Kurti for Women | Stylish Kurti | Short Kurti Top | Casual Kurta for Women

One thing I've started appreciating about short kurtis is how much more wearable they feel than heavier ethnic outfits.They don't require matching dupattas.They don't need elaborate styling.

And unlike many co-ord sets or kurta sets, each piece can be styled in multiple ways, giving you far better



value for your wardrobe.A single short kurti can create five completely different outfits depending on what you pair it with.For me, that's exactly what great everyday fashion should do.My favourite ways to style short kurtis

One thing I've learnt is that short kurtis don't always have to be styled traditionally.Some combinations I keep repeating are:

Straight jeans with juttis for casual Fridays.Linen trousers with loafers for office.Cotton palazzos with oxidised jewellery for brunches.White cigarette pants for family gatherings

Denim shorts and sneakers while travelling.It's amazing how one garment can work across so many occasions. Fashion trends may come and go, but short kurtis have quietly remained one of the most versatile pieces in my wardrobe. They're breathable, comfortable, easy to style and surprisingly modern when paired with the right bottoms. If you're looking to refresh your everyday wardrobe without investing in heavy ethnic wear, a few well-made cotton short kurtis are honestly a great place to start.

Maintaining a well-groomed beard requires more than just occasional trimming. Dust, sweat, excess oil, and food particles can accumulate in your facial hair, resulting in a dull appearance and an itchy sensation. This issue is particularly prevalent during the monsoon season. This is where beard shampoo becomes essential. Utilizing a beard shampoo effectively cleanses your beard while preserving its natural oils, ensuring it remains soft, fresh, and easy to manage. In fact, regular use helps reduce beard itch, keeps the skin underneath clean, minimises unpleasant odours and leaves your beard softer and easier to style. Choose a beard shampoo based on your skin type and beard texture, and use it two to three times a week for the best results. According to Celebrity Hair and Beard Stylist, Darshan Yewalekar, "Monsoon is filled with a lot of moisture and humidity; you're mostly indoors with less sunlight. So, it is advisable to wash your beard more often than regularly; if you wash twice, it has to be four times to make sure there is no fungal infection underneath your beard".

If you're looking for the right beard shampoo, then here are 6 options worth considering.

1. L'Oreal Paris Men Expert Barber Club, Beard + Face + Hair, 3-In-1 Wash, 200ml: Keep your beard feeling clean, soft and fresh with the L'Oréal Paris Men Expert Barber Club Beard Shampoo. Enriched with cedarwood essential oil, gentle cleansing agents and conditioning ingredients, it helps remove dirt, excess oil and food residue without drying the beard. It also leaves facial hair easier to manage while keeping the skin beneath comfortable. Amazon customers appreciate its

pleasant woody fragrance, rich lather and ability to soften coarse beards, making daily beard care simple and effective.

2. Bulldog Original 2-in-1 Beard Shampoo And Conditioner 200ml: The Bulldog Original 2-in-1 Beard Shampoo and Conditioner offers cleansing and conditioning in one easy step. Made with aloe vera, camellina oil and green tea, it helps wash away impurities while nourishing both the beard and the skin underneath. The formula leaves facial hair smoother, softer and easier to style without feeling greasy. Amazon reviewers often praise its mild fragrance, gentle formula and noticeable improvement in beard softness after regular use.

3. Beardo Godfather Beard Wash for men, 100ml | Aromatic, Woody Scent | Purifying & Hydrating Beard and Skin Cleaner with Avocado Oil: Refresh your beard with the Beardo Godfather Beard Wash, specially designed to cleanse facial hair without stripping away natural moisture. It contains aloe vera, glycerine and mild cleansing agents that help remove dust, sweat and excess oil while keeping the beard soft and manageable. Suitable for regular grooming, it also supports healthier-looking facial hair. Amazon customers like its refreshing fragrance, good cleansing performance, and the way it leaves beards feeling fresh and smooth.

4. The Man Company Beard Wash for Men-100ml | Active Cleansing with Almond & Thyme Essential Oils | Natural Ingredients: The Man Company Beard Wash helps maintain a clean, healthy-looking beard with every wash. Formulated with argan oil, tea tree essential oil and aloe vera, it gently removes dirt and oil while moisturising



These six beard shampoos ensure that your beard remains clean and hygienic



facial hair and soothing the skin beneath. It helps reduce dryness and keeps the beard soft and easy to comb. Amazon buyers appreciate its refreshing scent, gentle cleansing action and ability to leave the beard feeling clean without excessive dryness.

5. Beardo Irish Royale Prive Beard Wash For Men, 100 ml | Washes & Smoothens the Beard | Refreshing Aromatic After-Use Effect: Enjoy a premium grooming experience with the Beardo Irish Royale Privé Beard Wash. Infused with aloe vera, glycerine and mild cleansing ingredients, it effectively removes dirt, pollution and excess oil while keeping facial hair hydrated and manageable. Its luxurious fragrance adds an extra touch of freshness throughout the day. Amazon reviewers frequently mention its long-lasting scent, rich lather and ability to leave the beard soft, clean and easy to style.

6. Mancode Beard Wash & Conditioner - 200ml | Conditions & Cleans Beard Mustache | Blended with Licorice, Vitamin C & Aloe vera: The Mancode Beard Wash & Conditioner combines cleansing and conditioning to simplify your beard care routine. It is enriched with argan oil, aloe vera, glycerine and conditioning ingredients that help cleanse away impurities

while moisturising facial hair. The formula helps reduce roughness, improves manageability and supports a softer beard. Amazon customers often praise its pleasant fragrance, value for money and the smooth, refreshed feeling it provides after every wash.Benefits of a beard shampoo

Using a beard shampoo is an important part of maintaining a healthy, clean, and well-groomed beard. Unlike regular hair shampoo, beard shampoos are formulated to cleanse facial hair gently without stripping away the natural oils that keep your beard and the skin underneath healthy.

Here are some key benefits of using a beard shampoo: Cleanses dirt and oil

Beard shampoo removes dirt, excess oil, sweat, food particles, and environmental pollutants that can build up throughout the day, leaving your beard feeling fresh and clean.

Prevents beard dandruff

A quality beard shampoo helps eliminate dead skin cells and reduces dryness, minimising beard dandruff (commonly known as beardruff) and flaking.

Keeps the skin hydrated

Beard shampoos are typically enriched with moisturising ingredients that cleanse without over-drying, helping to maintain healthy skin beneath the beard. Reduces itchiness

Dry skin and product buildup can make your beard itchy. Regular washing with a beard shampoo soothes irritation and provides lasting comfort.

Softens beard hair

Conditioning ingredients help make coarse facial hair softer, smoother, and easier to manage, improving the overall feel of your beard. Promotes a healthier-looking beard

A clean beard creates a healthier environment for hair growth and helps reduce clogged pores, resulting in a fuller, fresher-looking beard. Controls unpleasant odours

Facial hair can trap sweat, smoke, and food smells. Beard shampoo effectively removes these odours, keeping your beard smelling clean.Makes beard styling easier

Clean, soft beard hair is easier to comb, shape, and style with beard oil, balm, or wax, helping you achieve a neater appearance.

Helps prevent breakage

By maintaining proper moisture levels, beard shampoo reduces dryness and brittleness, making facial hair less prone to breakage and split ends.

Enhances beard appearance

Regular use leaves your beard looking shinier, healthier, and more well-groomed without making it feel greasy.

ENTERTAINMENT

Sonakshi Sinha extends support to Jharkhand students’ demand for fair recruitment



Mumbai : The Jharkhand student protest over alleged irregularities in government exams is gaining momentum, and several celebrities are backing the protest. Actress Sonakshi Sinha, who openly supported the CJP’s Jantar Mantar protest, has come out in support of the Jharkhand student protest as well. Taking to her Instagram Stories, Sonakshi Sinha posted a reel in which a content creator is seen speaking about the ongoing student protest and how thousands of students have been standing in protest for days. While sharing the reel, Sonakshi wrote in the caption, “It’s

so disheartening to see students of our country go through this... When will it stop???” Earlier, Rupali Ganguly also took to her Instagram to back the student protest. Taking to social media, the Anupamaa actress urged the government to listen to the students and take the necessary steps to address their demands. “The students of Jharkhand are standing firm in the pouring rain, peacefully demanding justice. Their determination deserves respect, not silence. The government must listen, ensure accountability, and address their concerns,” wrote Rupali on X. She further added, “They

are the future of the state and the nation. May justice prevail soon, and may they return home with hope. #JharkhandStudents #JusticeForStudents.” The student-led demonstration in Ranchi, which comes close on the heels of the widespread CJP protest, originally began as a small gathering at Ranchi’s Vapu Batika ground. However, it spiralled into a large-scale campaign, fetching support from students across the state.Hundreds of students assembled at Ranchi’s Jaipal Singh Munda Stadium on July 29, four days after the Jantar Mantar protest ended, raising slogans and waving the Tricolour while also seeking accountability from the Hemant Soren-led government. Soon, the protest began drawing parallels to the one that unfolded at Jantar Mantar and culminated in the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Like activist Sonam Wangchuk, who was on a 26-day indefinite hunger strike, the protest in Ranchi, too, has found a leading face. Student leader Devendra Nath Mahto is at the forefront of the campaign. He has also begun an indefinite hunger strike with a simple demand: cancel the 14th JPSC examination.

‘Dhurandhar’ Singer Afsana Khan alerts fans after instagram account gets hacked



Mumbai : Bollywood singer Afsana Khan, popular for her songs in the blockbuster movie, Dhurandhar, has informed her fans of her official Instagram account being hacked. The singer has appealed to everyone to not engage in any conversations, click on any links, or respond to any messages sent from her Instagram account until she officially confirms that access has been restored. In a video message shared by her team, Afsana is seen expressing her disappointment over the incident and strongly condemned the misuse of social media accounts. She said that Instagram has always been the primary platform through which she connects with her fans and shares updates about her music, live shows and personal milestones.Speaking about the incident, Afsana said, “Whoever has done this has

done something very wrong. Instagram is where we share all our personal and professional updates, our shows and our daily activities. Misusing someone’s account like this is completely unacceptable.” The singer also reassured her fans that the recovery process is already underway and that the matter has been reported to the concerned

team. She remains hopeful that the account will be restored shortly.Ending her message on a hopeful note, Afsana said, “We have submitted the account for recovery and I will be getting it back soon. With Mahadev’s blessings, everything will be solved.”Until the account is officially recovered, Afsana Khan has urged everyone to stay cautious and ignore any

suspicious activity originating from her Instagram profile.Talking about the singer, her recent song Tere Naal Nachna, from Dhurandhar, went on to become a rage on social media amongst young audiences.Her songs over the years mostly have turned out to be chartbusters.Afsana was also seen in the reality show Bigg Boss, a few years ago.

Spider-Man: brand new day post-weekend slowdown: day 5 drops 69%



Agency : After rewriting the record books over its opening weekend, Spider-Man: Brand New Day has finally slowed down at the Indian box office. The Tom Holland-led Marvel blockbuster witnessed an expected dip on its first Monday, but there’s no reason to worry just yet. Even with the weekday drop, the film continues to dominate theatres across the country and

is now inching closer to the ₹350 crore gross milestone in India. According to trade website Sacnilk, Spider-Man: Brand New Day earned an estimated ₹23.80 crore net on its fifth day at the Indian box office. The film was screened across 16,874 shows on Monday. While the collections dropped by 69.4% from Sunday’s impressive ₹77.75 crore, the

decline was largely expected as weekdays typically see lower footfalls after a blockbuster opening weekend.The English version continued to lead the film’s earnings with an estimated ₹12.50 crore net, followed by the Hindi dubbed version at ₹8.75 crore. Meanwhile, the Tamil version contributed around ₹1.50 crore, while the Telugu version added another ₹1 crore to the total. With Day 5’s earnings, the Tom Holland starrer has now amassed ₹281.75 crore net at the Indian box office. Its gross collection has reached ₹336.91 crore, putting the Marvel film within touching distance of the ₹350 crore mark. Spider-Man: Brand New Day recently became a victim of online piracy. Just two days after its theatrical release, a high-quality

pirated copy of the Marvel film surfaced on X (formerly Twitter) and spread rapidly before it was eventually removed. According to Variety, the leaked version was first uploaded by an X account named Fredrick Bryan at 6:05 a.m. PT. Before it was taken down at around 3:25 p.m. PT, the post had reportedly reached nearly 5.9 million accounts. It also received over 143,000 likes and was reshared more than 10,000 times.The leak didn’t stop there. Several other users also uploaded copies of the film, although many of those posts were later removed following copyright complaints. Even so, pirated versions continued to pop up online as fresh uploads kept replacing the ones that were taken down.

Bigg Boss Hindi season 20 premiere date announced: show to launch on September 6

Mumbai : JioHotstar and Colors have unveiled the teaser for Bigg Boss Hindi Season 20, confirming that the milestone edition of the popular reality show will premiere on September 6. The teaser marks the return of Bollywood superstar Salman Khan as host. He makes a grand entry alongside a majestic horse before delivering the cryptic line, “Jo Karan Arjun mein hua tha, woh hoga ab Bigg Boss mein... Thathastu!” The dialogue, coupled with subtle visual hints, teases a mystery that is expected to be central to the new season. Speaking about the upcoming edition, Salman Khan said every season of Bigg Boss brings a fresh game, new dynamics and unexpected twists, but Season 20 has a mystery at its core that makes it different from previous editions. He added that the teaser contains the first clue, encouraging viewers to look closely and piece together the mystery when the show begins.



The makers have kept details of the contestants and the season’s format under wraps, adding to the anticipation surrounding the landmark edition. Bigg Boss Hindi Season 20 will premiere on September 6, streaming

exclusively on JioHotstar while also airing on Colors. The new season promises fresh twists and unexpected developments as it ushers in a new chapter for the long-running reality franchise.

'Ramayana' designers respond to backlash over Lara Dutta's Kaikeyi look

Mumbai : The makers of Ramayana have reacted to the online criticism surrounding the film’s costumes, with designers Rimple and Harpreet Narulah defending the creative choices behind Sai Pallavi’s Sita and Lara Dutta’s Kaikeyi. Their comments come days after the trailer sparked debate over whether the looks stayed true to popular depictions of the epic. After the trailer was released, social media users praised the film’s scale and visual effects but also questioned some of the costume choices. While Sai Pallavi’s blouses as Sita drew

criticism from a section of viewers, Lara Dutta’s appearance as Kaikeyi also became a talking point. One scene showing Lara in a maroon saree, green blouse and open hair led some users to call the styling “too modern” for a retelling of the Ramayana. Addressing the criticism in an interview with The Times of India, costume designer Rimple Narulah said the team expected different opinions about the film. “An epic like Ramayana has lived in our collective consciousness for generations. There will always be opinions about the casting, costumes, visual effects and



what people believe is right or wrong. We were prepared for that. What has kept us grounded is our honesty towards our craft."She also

explained why Sai Pallavi’s Sita was designed the way she was, saying the decision was driven by emotion rather than historical recon-

struction. “When I close my eyes and think of Goddess Sita, I don’t think about archaeological authenticity. I wanted my Goddess, the

one sitting in my mandir, to look like the image that has lived in my consciousness. That was a deliberate choice.” Harpreet Narulah also reacted to the backlash around Lara Dutta’s Kaikeyi, explaining that every element of the costume carried symbolic meaning. “The green in her costume represents motherhood, while the deep maroon reflects the emotional strength and darkness of the decision she has to make. She is torn between her own son and Ram. Every colour was chosen with intention. Sometimes people react too quickly before understanding

the thought behind it."He urged audiences to watch the film before judging its visual choices. “This is our attempt to make an ancient epic speak visually to a new generation. There’s thought behind every thread. We want to appeal to viewers – don’t decide before you see it. Watch it, experience it and then form your opinion." Rimple added that there are no surviving garments from the period that could be recreated exactly, making interpretation an important part of the design process. “There aren’t preserved garments from that period that we can simply recreate.

We’ve all grown up seeing calendar art, miniature paintings, temple imagery and Raja Ravi Varma’s interpretations. Ramayana itself has been interpreted differently across cultures and countries. This is our interpretation." The Ramayana trailer opens with Yash’s Ravana proclaiming himself the ruler of all three worlds. As he unleashes chaos and destruction, Lord Vishnu takes the avatar of Ram to restore balance and protect the earth. The trailer then introduces Ranbir Kapoor’s Ram, who battles demons and safeguards his people before growing up and marrying Sita.

Actor Mrunal Thakur condemns misuse of AI deepfakes, vows legal action

Mumbai : Mrunal Thakur is someone who never shies away from speaking her mind. Recently, some AI-generated deepfakes using her image and identity went viral on social media. The actress reacted to that, sharing a strong message on Instagram. Mrunak warned that any further circulation of such content could lead to legal action. Without naming anyone, Mrunal called the creation and sharing of deepfake content “illegal and unacceptable” and asked people to stop using her likeness without permission. She wrote, “Creating or sharing deepfake content using my likeness is illegal and unacceptable. Consider this your



formal notice to stop immediately. Any further misuse of my identity will result in legal action.” Mrunal is not the only celebrity raising concerns over AI misuse. In recent months, several actors have approached courts to protect their image, voice and personality rights from unau-

thorised AI-generated content. Among those who have taken legal steps are Akshay Kumar, Varun Dhawan, Anil Kapoor, Shilpa Shetty, Preity Zinta, Kartik Aaryan and Suniel Shetty. Not only that, earlier a manipulated video of Rashmika Mandanna had also gone viral. Reacting to the incident, Rashmika had

described it as “extremely scar,” and urged authorities and the public to take the issue seriously. On the film front, Mrunal has several projects lined up. After Dacoit and Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai received mixed reactions, she is now working on Raaka, an upcoming action drama directed by Atlee Kumar. The film also stars Allu Arjun, Deepika Padukone and Rashmika Mandanna. While the makers have not officially announced a release date, reports suggest it is aiming for a December 2027 release. According to reports, the film will have two timelines one set in the Puranic/ Vedic era and another in the present day.

Sonam Kapoor revisits debut memories with Ranbir Kapoor in ‘Saawariya’

Mumbai : Actress Sonam Kapoor took a nostalgic trip down memory lane as she looked back at her debut film ‘Saawariya’ and the memorable journey associated with it. Taking to her Instagram stories, the ‘Neerja’ actress reshared a post shared by Bhansali Productions. The production house shared the song ‘Ayat’ from the film ‘Bajirao Mastani,’ featuring visuals of Sonam Kapoor’s romantic moments with Ranbir Kapoor from their film ‘Saawariya.’ The video collage also featured glimpses of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan from “Devdas” and Amitabh Bachchan from “Black,” celebrating memorable moments from Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s iconic films. Resharing the video, Sonam wrote, “Baarish mein har nazar, har lamha....ek naya Ehsaas ban jaata hai.” “Saawariya,” directed and produced by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, based on Fyodor Dostoevsky’s 1848



short story ‘White Nights.’ The film marked the debuts of Ranbir Kapoor and Sonam Kapoor. The musical romantic drama also marked the last film appearances of both Zohra Sehgal and Begum Para before their deaths. The film also featured special guest appearances by Rani Mukerji and Salman Khan. “Saawariya” was released on November 9, 2007, and received mixed reviews from critics and audiences upon its release. On the acting front, Sonam Ka-

poor was last seen in the 2023 crime thriller “Blind,” directed by Shome Makhija. The film also featured Purab Kohli, Vinay Pathak, and Lillete Dubey in key supporting roles. A remake of the 2011 Korean film of the same name, “Blind,” revolved around a visually impaired police officer who attempts to track down a serial killer. Sonam was also set to headline the film adaptation of Anuja Chauhan’s novel “Battle for Bittora,” but the project has been delayed for several years. Produced by her sister Rhea Kapoor, the film was planned as a romantic political drama. Sonam began her journey in the film industry as an assistant director on Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s 2005 film Black. She made her acting debut with Bhansali’s romantic drama “Saawariya” in 2007. After a series of unsuccessful films, she achieved her first major breakthrough with “Raanjhanaa” in 2013.

Anand Mahindra is keeping a close eye on India’s impressive CWG 2026 performance



Glasgow: India had a special challenge at the 2026 Commonwealth Games. Hockey, badminton, and wrestling—disciplines that typically account for the majority of India’s medals at the CWG—were left out. There were concerns that India would not be able to

complete even half of their medal total from the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in 2022 (61). But with a total of 39 medals, boxers and judokas made sure India placed fourth in the medal standings. Boxers won seven gold and three silver medals. Runner

Gulveer Singh won silver and bronze in the 10,000m and 5,000m respectively. Judokas won two gold medals, one of them by Asmita Dey. Anand Mahindra praised the efforts of the Indian athletes. “Glasgow 2026 just concluded yesterday. A slew of medals & a

fourth-place overall finish for India. But of everything from these Games, two stories touched me deeply. A judoka whose father fixed cycles for Rs 300 a day, lived in a mud house, and didn’t live to see his daughter become the first Indian, man or woman, to win Commonwealth Games judo gold,” Anand Mahindra wrote on X. “And a farmer’s son from an Aligarh village who ran on dirt trails just to pass the Army fitness test, and last week became the first Indian ever to win two track medals at a single Games. Asmita Dey. Gulveer Singh. No shortcuts, no head starts. Just hunger and the refusal to stay where they started. This is what ‘Rise’ actually looks like. A mud house and a village trail. No words would be enough to explain why they inspire me.”

Gen Z on Politicians Speaking Their Language in Parliament “Fails To Land”

New Delhi, Aug 04: Hundreds of Gen Z students participated in one of the biggest rallies from a generation that will shape the future of the Indian voters at Jantar Mantar. To make sure their demands were heard, students made reels about popular trends, shouted slogans, danced, and sang songs on the platforms that they found most appealing. The Union Education Minister’s resignation marked the end of the huge protests, but the fallout continued into the corridors of Parliament. Parliamentarians spoke in a language seldom heard in formal chambers—the language of Generation Z—as the discussion about competitive test paper leaks made its way to the legislature. Defending government action, BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj remarked that “Modi-ji clocked it” and provided a legislative solution, calling the Bill a “transformative amendment.” Slamming the Opposition’s delayed response to the student agitation, Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde said that the opposition went “MIA” for the first 37 days, then felt “FOMO” so held a protest. Pushing back on the government’s response, NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule slammed the Centre by calling the government “delulu” over their policies. Among the parliamentarians who employed Gen Z language was Congress MP Deepender Singh Hooda, who used the viral protest catchphrase “vaste-guna-huiya”-a meme popularised during the student demonstrations-to poke fun at the government’s response. The shift in lingo and communication patterns is not just limited to Parliament but extends beyond as well. As students made reels to express their opinions, the Prime Minister too joined in, sharing late-night reels speaking to the protesters. Using a casual approach, the PM released videos recorded in a selfie format, referring to Gen Z students as his “friends”. We chatted with Gen Z students directly to find out if this linguistic shift has any significant effects on them as lawmakers switch from traditional parliamentary jargon to Gen Z



slang. Nikita Singh, a student from Delhi, responded to the linguistic shift among politicians by characterizing the abrupt adoption of Gen Z vernacular as performative. “Politicians should be authentic and not try to be someone they are not. Reflecting on the switch in outreach, another student, Lalit Kumar, said he feels that politicians often fail to understand the Gen Z thought process, mistaking care-free energy for a lack of seriousness. “Parliamentarians do not get the mindset of Gen Z. They think they can suppress the protest,” Lalit noted. “Gen Z is more relaxed and carefree, but not a generation that does not work. The paper leak was an excuse, but what was evident was the dissent of Gen Z.” He emphasised that politicians must use platforms like Instagram and Snapchat. However, the 18-year-old cautioned that leaders must address core problems rather than just mimic youth culture. Aanchal Kapoor, a student studying at a top college in Delhi University, highlighted that accessibility and tone are vital for political engagement. “Politicians must be keen on listening. They should understand Gen Z’s opinion, understand students’ needs, and support them. A casual tone works be-

cause that’s what Gen Z understands, and we connect with Gen Z slang, but they must actually support us.” During the recent protests, attention was paid not only to the demands raised by the protesters, but also to their language. As protesters expressed their demands, many received political backlash regarding the nature of the language used-whether against a leader in an interview or through a banner made by the demonstrators. Reacting to the backlash, Aarnavi Jain said, “Gen Z is straightforward and they have their own point of view. Gen Z does not mince words, and that may come across as rude. But if you view it from their point of view, it is not wrong.” Mannat Bains also stated that, while young people do not fear authority, there is a boundary that must not be passed. “Gen Z has no fear of anybody, but demonstrations should not be defamatory or harmful to anyone. Other generations may find our tone weird, yet it is typical of our generation. However, neither side should cross the line.” While there may be age and linguistic differences between Gen Z and politicians, one thing is certain: in order to advance and win elections, one must speak the language of the youth who determine who will take power next.

Owais Yaqoob, a Kashmiri martial artist, writes India’s history; Omar Abdullah responds

Burgas: Owais Yaqoob, a mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter from Kashmir, was congratulated by J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday for defeating the unbeaten two-time IMMAF World champion at BRAVE CF 107 in Bulgaria. Omar Abdullah’s office placed on X, “The chief minister congratulated J&K’s talented MMA fighter Owais Yaqoob on his remarkable victory at BRAVE CF 107 in Bulgaria, where he defeated an unbeaten two-time IMMAF world champion.” The Chief Minister wished him ongoing success and many more honors on the international scene, characterizing the accomplishment as a proud moment for Jammu & Kashmir and the country. Yaqoob scripted a memorable international victory on August 1 after defeating previously unbeaten Bulgarian fighter



Delyan Georgiev via first-round technical knockout (TKO) at BRAVE Combat Federation (BRAVE CF) 107 held at Burgas Arena in Bulgaria. He produced a dominant performance, stopping Georgiev at the 4th mark of the opening round to register one of the biggest wins of his professional career. Georgiev entered the

contest with an impressive record, having won two International Mixed Martial Arts Federation (IMMAF) Amateur World Championship titles. The defeat marked the first loss of his career. Hailing from Murrn village in South Kashmir’s Pulwama district, Owais displayed composure, determination and technical supe-

riority throughout the bout to outclass the Bulgarian fighter on one of the world’s leading MMA platforms. Owais gave a speech following the triumph, dedicating it to the people of Jammu & Kashmir and India. “This victory means everything to me,” Owais declared. Carrying the hopes of my family, my people in Jammu and Kashmir, and the whole nation, I entered the cage. Although defeating an undefeated world champion is an incredible accomplishment, this is just the start. As I proudly represent India on the international scene, I’ll keep working harder and striving for even more success.” Yaqoob was the first athlete from Kashmir to achieve an international milestone, despite the fact that numerous Kashmiri wrestlers have made their mark in the past.

“No Time For Opposition Unity, Agenda Is Bihar”: Prashant Kishor Following Bankipur’s Victory



Patna: Prashant Kishor said, “Bankipur will not be embarrassed by its representative now,” one day after defeating the BJP in the Bankipur by-election in Bihar. Kishor, a former poll strategist who currently leads the Jan Suraj Party (JSP), defeated his BJP opponent by more over 19,000 votes to become the newest MLA from Bankipur in Bihar. Following his election victory, Kishor made a pledge to develop Bankipur right away. You’ll notice a

shift in Bankipur after three months. “I have pledged to eradicate corruption in Bankipur at the local level,” he declared. The Bankipur bypoll was keenly watched as it was a BJP stronghold and the party’s new president Nitin Nabin had vacated the seat after moving to the Rajya Sabha. It was a prestige battle for the BJP. Prashant Kishor thanked the voters of Bankipur and vowed to work for the development of Bihar. He also said that the people

have sent a message to the BJP that they must choose a leadership in Bihar that improves education and creates employment. “My agenda is to ensure a good chief minister for Bihar. The state needs a government whose mission is to stop migration, promote education and bring jobs,” he said. On the education front, Kishor said that he will start an experiment in his constituency. “I will ensure visible improvement in the government schools in Bankipur and if

that doesn’t happen, I will make sure that the children of the poor in this area get the facility to go to private schools.” Kishor claimed he had “worked tirelessly for three years and people have rewarded us” in response to his party’s poor performance in the Assembly election last year. Prashant Kishor pointed out that the BJP lost two-thirds of the 422 booths in Bankipur, indicating that voters from all castes and communities supported him. I have been encouraging people to vote regardless of their caste and community, and they have done so this time.” Kishor dismissed the idea of working on opposition unity in the state, insisting that his attention will continue to be on Bihar’s advancement. “I am not concerned with opposition unity, but rather with Bihar. There is no need to focus on opposition unity while we are in Bihar. My attention is on Bihar’s development.”

Boxers Sachin Siwach and Preeti Pawar Eye Asian Games Gold After CWG 2026 Triumph

Glasgow: Indian pugilists Sachin Siwach and Preeti Pawar are aiming for Asian Games gold after winning gold medals at the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow. The Indian boxing contingent was greeted warmly at Delhi Airport after winning seven gold medals and ten overall in the CWG 2026. Sachin, who won the gold medal in the men’s 60 kg final, told ANI that seeing the national flag hoisted after the gold medal win is a “different kind of happiness” and the reason they all participate in sports. “When the national flag is hoisted, there is a different kind of happiness. This is what we play for. I want to bring gold from the Asian Games. I want to tell everyone to keep believing like this and keep encouraging us,” said Siwach. Sachin staged a remarkable comeback to defeat Namibia’s Tryagain Morning Ndevelo by a 3-2 split decision in a thrilling men’s 60 kg final. Also, Preeti has her eyes set on not only the Asian Games this year in Japan taking place from September 19 onwards, but also the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, saying, “Thank you very much to everyone who came here to receive us. Our next target is the Asian Games and the LA 2028 Olympics. Orating the end of Glasgow 2026 and looking ahead to the Games’ historic centenary edition.

VD Satheesan Responds to Left Criticism of Floods and Defends the Use of Helicopters



Thiruvananthapuram, Aug 04: Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan has responded to the Left Front’s criticism of his helicopter trips by claiming he didn’t utilize it for personal gain. The Chief Minister was criticized by the Left Front for utilizing a helicopter during the state’s catastrophic floods. The trip was fully formal. It was for conversations with investors. In reaction to the criticism, Satheesan stated, “I had originally reserved a Vande Bharat ticket, but the investors had limited time, so I travelled by helicopter.” He went on to say that since the previous LDF administration had chartered the helicopter, the trip did not incur any additional costs for the government. “The government paid not a single rupee more for my trip. He stated, “The helicopter was hired at the same rates set by the previous government.” The previous administration had already leased the chopper for Rs 80 lakh a month till September of the following year, with a minimum flying time requirement. My travel did not result in any additional expenses of even one penny. The government was required to cover the lease amount whether or not I traveled. Only two ministers and my official visit to Wayanad have utilized the chopper since this administration took office. I’ve never attended party conferences using it. Senior CPM leader P Rajeev said Satheesan had himself criticised former Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan’s helicopter travel in the past and was now facing

the same questions. “It is easy to comment from the gallery. Playing on the ground is different,” Rajeev said, adding sarcastically that details of the investors’ meeting would perhaps emerge as a “surprise” later. The Left had also attacked the Chief Minister for attending private events while the state faced a grave flood situation. “The Chief Minister of Kerala has failed to do his primary duty of monitoring the disaster situation and coordinating relief measures. He was busy attending almost a dozen private functions. The CM was seen inaugurating jewellery stores and various other commercial establishments,” CPM leader MB Rajesh alleged. Earlier, the Chief Minister of Kerala strongly defended himself against criticism over having lunch during his flood review tour, insisting he had not attended a felicitation function but had simply eaten at a friend’s house. Satheesan dismissed the dispute as a “malicious smear campaign” and claimed that when he arrived at Ponnani at around 3 p.m., he noticed nothing wrong with eating. At 3 p.m., I had lunch. Was it forbidden for me to eat? What specifically went wrong? I wasn’t there to be congratulated. It was only dinner at a friend’s place. “Let the people determine whether consuming food is illegal,” the Chief Minister stated. He questioned whether the then-chief minister had continued to go hungry during the catastrophe response, drawing a parallel to the catastrophic floods of 2018 and 2019.

A massive fire at a factory in Greater Noida claimed the lives of two firefighters and injured three



Noida, Aug 04: Two firemen were killed and three others were injured after a large fire broke out at an electronic chip manufacturing facility in Greater Noida, according to authorities on Tuesday. According to a police spokeswoman, the incident happened late on Monday night at the ILGIM firm in the Eco-techno-3 industrial area. After learning of the fire, at least six fire brigade trucks

were dispatched. Five firemen were hurt when a wall and an iron beam inside the business abruptly fell as they were trying to put out the fire, according to the spokeswoman. Fireman Rohit Yadav and Head Constable Driver Tirthpal passed away from their wounds after all five injured firemen were transported by ambulance to a hospital, he added. According to the spokesman, the

three other wounded firefighters—Firemen Manish Kumar, Amit Kumar, and Head Constable Driver Rajpal Singh—are receiving treatment and are not in danger. He stated that a team from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and senior police officials are on the scene. According to authorities, the cause of the fire is being looked into, and appropriate legal action is being taken.

Why the 18-year-old Greek sensation cost Dortmund a lot of money

Tokyo: Spending large sums of money on a youngster who hasn’t yet played in one of Europe’s top five leagues is uncommon for Bundesliga powerhouse Borussia Dortmund. However, if the correct amount wasn’t paid for Greek midfielder Konstantinos Karetzas, there was still a considerable chance of losing out on one of the most sought-after skills in European football. Only Ousmane Dembele’s €35 million cost ranks higher on the list of the German club’s greatest transactions than the €30 million Dortmund spent Racing Genk for Karetzas. Karetzas, who is only eighteen, has caused a stir in the Belgian league with Genk. Karetzas gained sharp creative understanding with his 68 Jupiler Pro League outings.

Selva Prabhu Reveals Food Poisoning Cost Him Commonwealth Games Gold After Bronze Win

New Delhi: Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Selva Prabhu believes food poisoning cost him a genuine chance of winning the gold medal in Glasgow, saying a jump close to his personal best would have been enough to finish on top of the podium. The Indian triple jumper claimed bronze with the best effort of 16.52m in the men's final, finishing behind compatriot Praveen Chithravel (16.58m) and Scotland's Jordon Scott, who won gold with 16.72m. Speaking to PTL after returning from Glasgow on Monday, Selva revealed he had been battling food poisoning during the competition but chose to compete despite the illness. "I wish I should have gotten that gold.

I was really hoping for gold but what can be done when the competition begins, there is illness and food poisoning. I feel that



in the end, there is always a cost to yourself. I am mentally tough so I decided, whatever happens, I will do it. Keep pushing myself," Selva said. The Tamil Nadu athlete said the illness pre-

vented him from producing his best on the day. With a personal best of 17.05m, Selva felt he had the ability to comfortably surpass the winning mark had he been fully fit. "I should have

stayed healthy, but it's for the next time I'm always ready. I can compete more, stay healthy. It's about the stage. I have the consistency. It's all about that particular day. I just always

want to stay healthy. Now, I want to work on my approach. Once I get the hang of it, I can do it," he added. Looking ahead, Selva refused to get carried away by thoughts of the 2026 Asian Games, insisting his immediate focus is on securing qualification. "I live each day. Each day requires a new performance. You just cannot target a gold like that. Yes, I am now looking forward to qualifying for the Asian Games first and then taking it from there," he said. Selva finished third at the National Inter-State Championships with a jump of 16.79m, comfortably clearing the Athletics Federation of India's Asian Games qualifying standard of 16.28m. However, with only two athletes allowed per event, his place in the Indian squad will depend on the AFI's final selection, which is yet to be announced.

Rishabh Pant Trains for Sri Lanka Tests Under Dhoni's Watchful Eye

New Delhi: India wicket-keeper-batter Rishabh Pant has begun preparations for the upcoming two-match Test series against Sri Lanka under the watchful eyes of former captain MS Dhoni. India are set to travel to Sri Lanka for their World Test Championship fixtures, with the first Test scheduled to begin on August 15. Pant is expected to play a crucial role in the middle order as Shubman Gill's side looks to overcome a challenging assignment in spin-friendly conditions. The left-hander has travelled to Ranchi, where he is training alongside Dhoni and former India spinner Shahbaz Nadeem. Videos circulating on social media showed Pant and Dhoni leaving the former captain's farmhouse together, while several fans also shared glimpses of the training sessions. The Sri Lanka tour comes at an important time for Pant, who endured a difficult outing in India's recent Test series against South Africa at



home. With conditions in Sri Lanka expected to heavily favour spin, Pant will be hoping the training stint with Dhoni helps him fine-tune his game before the two-match contest. Dhoni, widely regarded as one of India's finest readers of spin bowling and wicket-keeping conditions in the sub-continent. Pant has regularly sought his advice over the years and shares a close bond with the former India cap-

tain. The wicketkeeper-batter has also been working on his white-ball game in recent weeks under former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh as he looks to rediscover his best form across formats. India's wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant is preparing for the two-match Test series in Sri Lanka, training with former captain MS Dhoni and spinner Shahbaz Nadeem ahead of the August 15 start.

Rohit Sharma Responds Emotionally to Ex-Coach's Touching Farewell Message

Rohit Honors Dilip Following Five-Year Team Stint

New Delhi: Former captain Rohit Sharma paid a warm tribute to former India fielding coach T Dilip after the latter penned an emotional farewell note marking the end of his five-year stint with the national men's team. Calling Dilip a "legend" and a "behind-the-scenes workhorse", Rohit praised the coach for "creating magic within the group" and acknowledged his contribution to one of the most successful phases in Indian cricket. Soon after Dilip's post, Rohit shared a picture with him on Instagram Stories and wrote: "You are a legend Dilip guru. You created magic within the group and a behind the scenes workhorse. Best wishes ahead @dilip.tk.19"

Dilip first joined the Indian team in November 2021 and remained part of the support staff until the conclusion of the 2024-25 Border-Gavaskar Trophy. He returned for a second stint during India's Test tour of England in 2025 on a one-year contract but



was not retained after it expired. Subhadeep Ghosh has now taken over as India's fielding coach and will travel with the team for the upcoming tour of Sri Lanka. Dilip, whose contract was not renewed after India's T20I tour of Zimbabwe, took to Instagram on Monday to reflect on his journey with the national team. Saying it was "diffi-

cult to find the right words", the Hyderabad-based coach thanked the BCCI, former head coach Rahul Dravid, current head coach Gautam Gambhir, the captains he worked with and every member of the support staff for their trust and support. "Five years. It's difficult to find the right words for a journey that has meant so much. When I

first walked into this setup, I came in with one simple intention, to give everything I had every single day. Fielding has always been my way of contributing to the game I love, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to have played a part in this team's journey," Dilip wrote. He also looked back on the fielding medal tradition, which became a regular feature in India's dressing room and gained widespread attention during the 2023 ODI World Cup. "The fielding medal will always hold a very special place in my heart. Seeing the excitement it created in the dressing room, the smiles it brought and the value the players attached to it are memories I'll carry with me forever," he wrote, while also recalling India's two T20 World Cup triumphs, the Champions Trophy title, two Asia Cup victories and runner-up finishes in the ODI World Cup and World Test Championship during his tenure.

Aryna Sabalenka Gives Verdict on Tennis Eligibility Tests for Women

New Delhi: World No.1 Aryna Sabalenka has thrown her support behind the Women's Tennis Association's (WTA) newly introduced eligibility policy, saying the measures are essential to preserve fairness in women's tennis. Speaking ahead of the 2026 Canadian Open, the Belarusian welcomed the WTA's decision to introduce a one-time genetic test for players competing on the women's tour. Under the new regulations, athletes will be required to undergo testing for the SRY gene, a marker associated with biological sex, with the WTA stating that the process will be conducted confidentially. "It is very important to preserve fairness on our tour. It is obvious that, biologically, men are much stronger than women. Therefore, I would not find it fair for a woman to compete against a biological man," Sabalenka told reporters ahead of the tournament. "I think it took them some time to make this decision and, yes, I support it. For my part, I remain focused on myself, my goals, and everything that needs to be done to achieve them. If they want all of us to undergo these tests, I will gladly do so. I believe it is a completely fair measure, and it needs to remain that way," she added. Sabalenka arrives in Montreal as the top seed and one of the favour-



ites to lift the WTA 1000 title as the North American hard-court swing gets underway. The Belarusian will begin her campaign against Japan's Moyuka Uchijima in the Round of 64 after receiving a favourable draw. A strong run in Canada would provide the perfect platform ahead of the US Open later this month. The WTA's revised eligibility policy has generated widespread discussion across the tennis world since it was announced. The governing body said all players competing in the women's category will be required to undergo a one-

time genetic screening, either through a cheek swab or blood test, with the aim of safeguarding competitive fairness while respecting athletes' privacy. Sabalenka is among the first leading players to publicly endorse the policy, making her stance clear before taking to the court in Montreal. While the eligibility regulations continue to spark debate across the sport, the three-time Grand Slam champion insisted her primary focus remains on competing for titles, starting with her opening-round clash against Uchijima at the Canadian Open.

Ex-England Star Ben Stokes Linked With Huge BBL Contract at Sixers



New Delhi: Former England captain Ben Stokes could be on course to become the highest-paid player in Big Bash League history, with the Sydney Sixers emerging as the frontrunners to secure the all-rounder's signature ahead of the 2026-27 season. The move comes just weeks after the 35-year-old announced his retirement from international cricket, opening the door for a return to franchise competitions around the world. According to reports in Code Sports, Cricket Australia is preparing to introduce a revamped marquee-player model that would allow franchises to sign elite overseas stars directly instead of relying on the overseas draft.

Under the proposed structure, clubs would have access to a shared marquee fund, with individual contracts expect-

ed to make around \$600,000, potentially making Stokes the most expensive signing in the tournament's history. While the Sixers are believed to be leading the chase, the Hobart Hurricanes have also expressed strong interest in bringing the England great to Australia. Stokes is not the only player attracting significant interest. New Zealand opener Finn Allen is also expected to command a record-breaking contract after a sensational BBL15 campaign with the Perth Scorchers. Allen finished as the tournament's leading run-scorer with 466 runs at a blistering strike-rate of 184.18, helping Perth lift a record sixth men's BBL title. He also broke the competition record for the most sixes in a single season, further enhancing his reputation as one of the world's most

destructive T20 batters. Adelaide Strikers and Melbourne Stars are reportedly among the franchises keen to lure him away from Perth. Stokes, meanwhile, has shown he still possesses the quality to dominate at the highest level despite stepping away from international cricket. The all-rounder has impressed in England's domestic One-Day Cup, producing impactful performances with both bat and ball and reminding fans why he remains one of the game's biggest attractions. His form, coupled with his vast experience and global appeal, has only strengthened his value in the franchise market. Stokes last featured in the 2014-15 Big Bash League season for the Melbourne Renegades, marking his maiden appearance in the competition.

During that campaign, he scored 128 runs and claimed three wickets. Former England captain Ben Stokes may become the Big Bash League's highest-paid player as Sydney Sixers lead bids for his signature ahead of 2026-27. Following his international retirement, Cricket Australia's new marquee-player model could offer contracts around \$600,000. Alongside Stokes, New Zealand's Finn Allen, top run-scorer and six-hitting record-breaker in BBL15, attracts major franchise interest. Both players' recent outstanding performances highlight their continued impact and high value in franchise cricket markets.

MS Dhoni's Superbike Adventure at Chennai Circuit Delights Fans Across Social Media

New Delhi: Former India captain MS Dhoni set social media abuzz on Monday after taking to the track on a superbike at the Madras International Circuit in Irungattukottai, near Chennai. Attending a promotional event organised by TVS Eurogrip, the legendary cricketer completed high-speed laps on the permanent motor racing circuit, testing the brand's flagship motorcycle tyres before interacting with company stakeholders. In a video that has gone viral on social media, Dhoni was seen relishing the thrill of riding on an international circuit. He did not hold back, giving it full throttle as he completed a couple of high-speed laps. Photographers surrounded him as soon as he returned to the pit lane. The 45-year-old icon capped off his track stint by removing his helmet and waving to the hundreds of ecstatic fans gathered around the pit lane, sending the crowd into a frenzy as videos of the ride quickly spread across social media. For Dhoni, the event provided an ideal setting to indulge his well-documented passion for high-performance motorcycles and automobiles. Since



the conclusion of IPL 2026, the former wicketkeeper-batter has maintained a characteristically low profile away from the competitive arena, spending much of his time in his expansive garage in Ranchi, attending brand commitments, and enjoying life beyond the boundary ropes. While Dhoni spent the day focused purely on two-wheeled horsepower and brand engagements, his presence in Tamil Nadu inevitably fuelled curiosity about his cricketing

future. Speculation remains rife across the Indian Premier League landscape over whether the veteran leader will return to don the yellow jersey for one final campaign with the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in 2027 or whether he has quietly brought the curtain down on his decorated playing career. In IPL 2026, Dhoni was part of the CSK squad but spent the entire season nursing injuries. He did not even travel with the team for away matches, disappointing Super

Kings fans who turned up in huge numbers at every game, hoping to catch a glimpse of the legendary wicketkeeper. The off-season backdrop has become even more intriguing following a major managerial transition at the franchise last month. Long-serving head coach Stephen Fleming parted ways with CSK after an 18-year association, bringing to an end a legendary leadership partnership with Dhoni that yielded five IPL titles and trophies.