

Korea masters 2026: Ashmita Chaliha creates history, clinches women's singles title

Guwahati, Aug 09: Assam shuttler Ashmita Chaliha came back from a game down to beat fourth seed Han Qian Xi of China in the Korea Masters final on Sunday, becoming the first Indian in history to win the competition.

The 26-year-old left-hander got the better of Han 14-21, 21-14, 21-14 in 53 minutes to clinch the biggest title of her career and join the exclusive club of Super 300 winners from India. Ashmita, who trains at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati, joined the list on Sunday.

While former world number one Saina Nehwal and former world champion PV Sindhu have won many titles at this level, Devika Sihag won the Thailand Masters in February and Tanvi Sharma clinched the Chinese Taipei Open crown last week.

"I feel really great and unbelievable. But then I am trying to digest it. Now, I am hungry for more," said Ashmita after winning the Korea Masters crown. The World number 50, who had packed off top seed Hina Akechi in the quarterfinals, began the final with a flourish and



opened up a 9-5 lead before a flurry of errors saw her drop five straight points and conceded the advantage in the

opening game.

But the Guwahati-born shuttler made amends in the next two games, showed patience to stay in the rallies and find the winners on crucial junctures to wrap up the final. "In the first game, it was a little bit tricky because of the drift condition. So I was not able to manage it. But in the second, the other side was more comfortable and there was less drift. So I was able to control it. And in the third, after 11 points, I changed again. So, I was on the good side. I'm glad that I could pull it off," she said.

ED attach Porsche, Mercedes-Benz cars in Assam fraud case

Guwahati, Aug 09: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached luxury cars, a Porsche and a Mercedes-Benz, bank balances, fixed deposits, and a stock trading account worth around Rs 15.25 crore in a money laundering case linked to GoMillions LLP, a product-based multi-level marketing entity accused of running an unregulated deposit collection scheme in Assam.

The agency had begun its probe based on a CBI FIR registered by its Guwahati zonal office. According to ED, the company's promoters Rishiraj Gogoi, Joy Modak and their associates allegedly

operated a marketing agency called 'TradeBull' and collected deposits from people by promising fixed daily returns of 0.85 per cent and doubling of investments in around six months. This was being operated without registration or authorisation from any regulator to collect public deposits.

Investigation revealed the data relating to more than 25,410 unique investor identities on the entity's server. The total payment liability was found to be around Rs 34.93 crore. The probe agency alleged that approximately Rs 63.41 crore was credited into the principal bank accounts

of GoMillions LLP. The alleged proceeds of crime were subsequently layered through connected entities, including Rightway Infocom Pvt. Ltd., Carely Solutions Pvt. Ltd. and Lotus Corporation, before being diverted into personal accounts of the promoters and their family members. Officials said the alleged proceeds of crime were later invested in high-end vehicles, a stock market trading account and fixed deposits, while unaccounted cash was also recovered during the predicate investigation. Further investigation in the case is underway, they added. (EOM)

Assam to seek reduction of Kaziranga eco-sensitive zone to 1 km



Guwahati, Aug 09: The Assam government plans to approach the Centre within the next two months seeking a reduction in the default eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) around Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve from the existing 10 km to a scientifically determined

1 km. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the proposed move while speaking in Bokakhat, stating that the present 10-km buffer has been restricting infrastructure and urban development around the national park. The

10-km ESZ is currently applicable as Kaziranga has not yet received its final ESZ notification. Sarma said that once the final notification is issued, the state government will seek a scientifically defined 1-km ESZ.

"Since Kaziranga has not yet been finally notified, the default eco-sensitive zone is 10 km. Once the notification is completed, we will propose a scientifically defined 1-km eco-sensitive zone," the Chief Minister said. According to Sarma, reducing the ESZ would remove what he described as unnecessary restrictions and facilitate development works in Bokakhat while continuing to protect Kaziranga's wildlife.

The proposed change is expected to facilitate several long-pending infrastructure and civic projects in the area, including the construction of a modern stadium. Sarma maintained that the state government's proposal would seek to balance development requirements with the protection of Kaziranga's fragile ecosystem and wildlife.

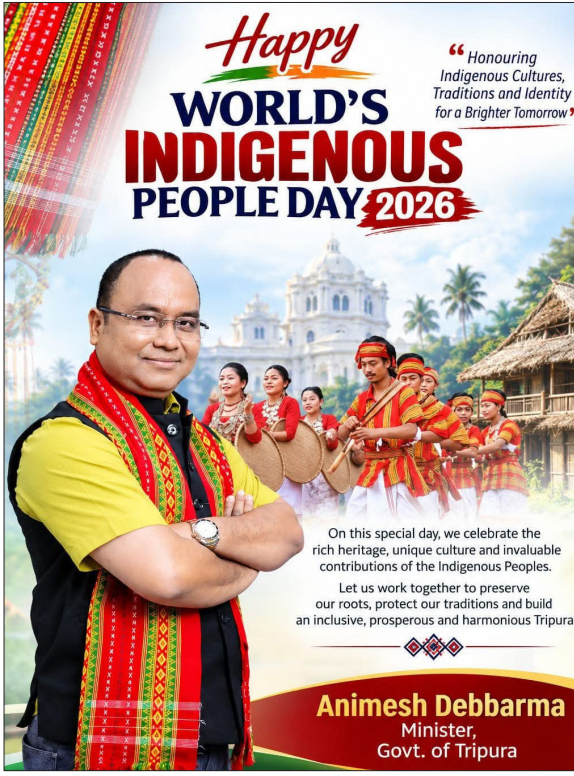
Tripura minister highlights significance of world indigenous peoples day

Agartala, Aug 09: The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is an occasion to create awareness about protecting the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, preserving their languages, culture and traditions, and eliminating social discrimination, said Tripura Forest Minister Animesh Debbarma.

The Minister was speaking at a programme organised by the Tripura Government at the Sukanta Academy Auditorium in Agartala to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. Observed every year on August 9, the day seeks to promote and protect the rights, traditions, languages and cultural heritage of indigenous peoples across the world. The observance was initiated by the United Nations.

Chief Principal Conservator of Forests R. K. Shyamol also highlighted the significance of the day and stressed the need to preserve the rich cultural heritage of indigenous communities. The programme featured colourful cultural performances by various indigenous communities of Tripura. Traditional performances, including Lebang Bumani, Mamita, Malsum community hunting dance and Garia dance, showcased the vibrant cultural heritage of the state's indigenous communities.

A group of local artists also presented a Kokborok song during the programme. On the occasion, nine distinguished personalities, including poets, writers and social workers, were felicitated for their outstanding contributions to society.



Mizoram CM appeals to Centre to refer FCRA Amendment Bill to JPC

Guwahati, Aug 09: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma has urged the Centre to refer the proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) Amendment Bill to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), saying wider consultations are necessary before the legislation is finalised.

Lalduhoma said the state government had raised its concerns over the proposed amendments during his recent meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi. The chief min-

ister was accompanied by representatives of two major church bodies in Mizoram -the Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee (MKHC) and the Council of Churches in Mizoram (CCM), which represent several Christian denominations across the state. According to Lalduhoma, the delegation discussed its concerns and suggestions regarding provisions of the proposed legislation with Shah and also submitted a memorandum to the Union Home Ministry.

In a post on Facebook,

the chief minister made a fresh appeal for the Bill to be referred to a JPC, saying such a process would allow views from different parts of the country and various stakeholders to be considered before the legislation is passed. Lalduhoma said the request was being made in the interest of inclusive and transparent policymaking and expressed hope that the Centre would consider the appeal.

The proposed FCRA amendments have become a major concern



in Mizoram, particularly among churches and civil society organisations that receive foreign contributions. Several groups have

convene a special session of the Mizoram Assembly and pass a resolution opposing the proposed amendments.

Meanwhile, the Council of Churches in Mizoram, a grouping of nine major churches including the Presbyterian Church of India and the Baptist Church of Mizoram, has announced a protest rally in Aizawl on August 11. CCM president Rev. Dr Lalbiakliana said the rally would begin simultaneously from Zarkawt and Sikulpuikawn at 10:30 am. The participants will later

converge outside Vanapa Hall, where a public programme will be held. The church body has particularly objected to a proposed provision under which properties, land and other assets acquired through foreign contributions could be confiscated if an organisation's FCRA registration is cancelled.

CCM has described the provision as a significant expansion of the powers available under the existing law. The church organisation has also raised concerns

over the proposed creation of a Designated Authority, which it claims could be given extensive powers to seize and dispose of assets belonging to churches and NGOs without prior court approval or judicial oversight.

The developments come as Mizoram continues to press for greater consultation on the proposed FCRA changes, with the state government, churches and political parties raising concerns over their potential implications.

Security forces recover arms, ammunition and suspected IED in Manipur



Imphal, Aug 09: Security forces recovered a large cache of arms, ammunition, a suspected improvised explosive device (IED) and combat equipment from

Khema Reserved Forest near the Office of the Forest Beat Officer at Napet Palli in Manipur's Imphal East district on Saturday. The recovery was made

during an operation conducted on August 8. The seized cache included four 9mm pistols with magazines and two single-barrel guns. Security personnel

also recovered a suspected 4.6-kg IED, along with 14 grenades and 162 rounds of live ammunition of different calibres.

The cache further contained 26 empty ammunition cases, two additional magazines, two stun shells and one rubber bullet. Among the other items recovered were military fatigues and combat-related equipment, including a BP iron plate, BP jacket cover, ammunition charger and communication set, besides other miscellaneous articles.

The recovered weapons, ammunition and suspected explosive device have been taken into custody for further investigation. Security agencies are examining the origin of the cache and probing the possible involvement of armed groups operating in the region.

Meghalaya HC summons NHAI officials over poor condition of NH-6

Agartala, Aug 09: The Meghalaya High Court has taken strong exception to the continuing poor condition of National Highway-6 between Jowai Pass and Ratacherra, directing senior officials of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and other agencies to appear before it on August 17.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Justice Wanlura Diengdoh was hearing PIL No. 11/2022 and took on record a site-inspection report submitted by Amicus Curiae S. Panthi, who inspected the 102-km stretch on July 19. The report highlighted large potholes in Thadlaskein, Khliehriat, Um Salieh, Lumshnong and Ratacherra, besides damaged bridge railings and missing drain slabs. The deteriorated road condition has persisted for months, restricting vehicle movement and creating particular difficulties for ambulances while posing risks to life and property.

The report also pointed to substandard work and incomplete repairs under earlier contracts, raising concerns over the alleged wastage of



public funds. The Bench noted that the PIL has remained pending since 2022 and that road work scheduled for completion in 2024 was still incomplete in 2026. It also observed that potholes had reappeared soon after repairs.

The court warned that any death or injury caused by the potholes could invite action along the lines of a Bombay High Court order. The Bench directed NHAI Chairman

Santosh Kumar Yadav to appear through video-conferencing, while Regional Officer M.L. Purbia of Guwahati and NHIDCL Executive Director Biju Patin have been asked to remain physically present in court on August 17.

The court has also sought details of proposed action against contractors and supervisors responsible for the road work. The matter will be taken up again on August 17.

East Khasi Hills DC assures support for voters during electoral roll verification

Shillong, Aug 09: East Khasi Hills Deputy Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal has assured genuine Indian citizens that there is no need to panic if their names are missing from the draft electoral roll or if they are asked to furnish additional documents during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls.

The Deputy Commissioner said the district administration would provide full assistance to eligible voters throughout the verification process and ensure they are given sufficient time to submit the required documents. He said the objective of the exercise is to ensure that every

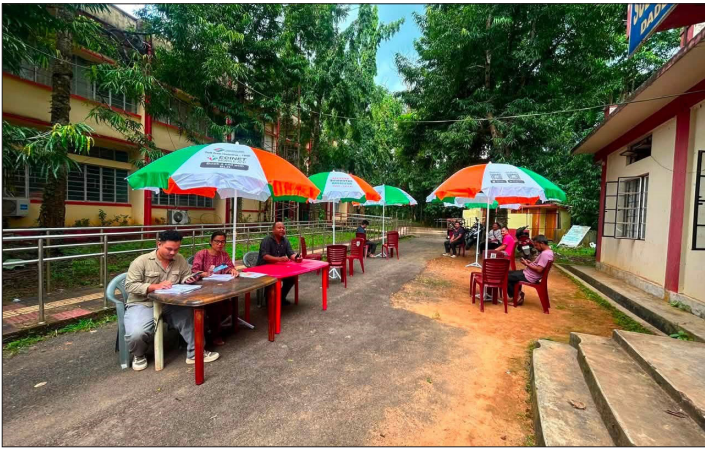
eligible Indian citizen is included in the electoral roll while identifying and removing any non-citizens who may have obtained electoral documents.

Baranwal attributed the relatively high number of proposed deletions in East Khasi Hills to the district’s cosmopolitan nature. He explained that many Central government employees obtain Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) while posted in Shillong but often fail to remove their names from the electoral roll after being transferred elsewhere. Describing the month-long verification exercise as a “Herculean task,” the Deputy Commissioner said each

Booth Level Officer (BLO) had covered between 700 and 1,000 electors, handling the distribution and collection of forms, digitisation of records and assistance in filling up forms.

Despite limited working days, officials completed the exercise within the stipulated deadline, which he said reflected their dedication and commitment. Baranwal also clarified that in cases where residents refused to accept the forms, BLOs were instructed to paste the forms at the premises or photograph the house as proof of visit, ensuring compliance with verification procedures while respecting citizens’ privacy.

He reiterated that the administra-



tion remains committed to assisting all genuine voters and ensuring a fair and transparent electoral roll revision process.

Minister Kaushik Rai reviews Dibrugarh growth and public services

Dibrugarh, Aug 09: Assam Minister for Housing & Urban Affairs, Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs and Cooperation, Kaushik Rai, conducted an extensive review of key development and public service initiatives in Dibrugarh on Saturday, inspecting ongoing infrastructure projects, sanitation facilities, the Public Distribution System, and preparations for paddy procurement.

During his district tour, Rai inspected the ongoing drain construction at Chaulkhowa and the Town Hall project under the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs. Reviewing the progress of the projects, the minister directed officials to ensure their timely completion without compromising quality standards. The drainage project from Banipur Convoy Road to the Sesa river is expected to help address artificial flooding and improve drainage management in Dibrugarh city. Rai also reviewed the ongoing municipal sanitation and waste-management infrastructure, including the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP).

At the MRF and FSTP, the minister examined waste processing, material recovery, and scientific sludge-treatment mecha-

nisms. He instructed officials to improve operational efficiency, hygiene, and environmental compliance. Rai also visited a Fair Price Shop at Lahowal to assess the functioning of the Public Distribution System. He inspected the quality and availability of foodgrains and essential commodities and checked the digital weighing system.

He further inspected the Kheremia Gaon Panchayat Cooperative Society’s godown, where he assessed the availability of essential foodgrain stocks. Officials and cooperative members were instructed to ensure adequate preparedness for the distribution of subsidised pulses and sugar from August 10, alongside the ongoing ‘Anna Sewa Din’ initiative. As part of the tour, Rai visited the Tengakhat Paddy Procurement Centre and reviewed preparations for the second crop cycle of Kharif Season 2026–27. He examined the procurement process, storage arrangements, and operational preparedness to ensure smooth procurement from farmers.

Later, Rai chaired a joint review meeting at the Dibrugarh Deputy Commissioner’s Office involving the Housing & Urban Affairs, Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs, and Cooperation departments.

Centre and Kuki-Zo groups sign revised Suspension of Operations agreement



Imphal, Aug 09: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Government of Manipur and Kuki-Zo insurgent groups have signed a renewed and revised Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement in New Delhi.

The updated agreement upholds the territorial integrity of Manipur and provides for political dialogue within the framework of the Constitution of India, officials said on Sunday. The tripartite meeting brought together senior representatives of the central government, the state government and two major Kuki-Zo insurgent groups, the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and the United People’s Front (UPF).

The revised ground rules and terms of the agreement took effect immediately upon signing and will remain valid for one year. Under the revised operational norms, seven designated

camps will be shifted away from sensitive and conflict-prone areas, while the overall number of active camps will also be reduced. As part of the camp consolidation process, cadres will be required to deposit their weapons with the nearest Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) or Border Security Force (BSF) camps.

Official estimates put the combined number of designated camps operated by the KNO and UPF at around 14, mainly located in the hill districts of Churachandpur and Kangpokpi. These camps house approximately 2,200 armed cadres. The original tripartite SoO agreement was signed in 2008 with 25 Kuki-Zo insurgent groups operating under the KNO and UPF, comprising 17 groups under the KNO and eight under the UPF. The agreement has since been extended periodically.

Assam Christian forum opposes proposed FCRA amendment bill 2026; calls for natural justice, protection of services to the poor

Guwahati, Aug 09: The Assam Christian Forum has expressed deep concern over the proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill 2026, introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 25, 2026 and expected to be reintroduced in the Monsoon Session.

“We urge Members of Parliament from the Northeast and the Union Government to abandon these draconian provisions and instead amend the existing Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, in accordance with the norms of natural justice,” Allen Brooks, spokesperson for the Forum, said. Brooks stated that the proposed amendments pose a severe threat to civil society organisations, churches, and institutions that serve the poor, Dalits, tribals, and marginalised communities across Assam and the Northeast.

Key provisions include forfeiture of all assets — movable and immovable— built in whole or in part with foreign contributions since the original 1976 Act, if an organisation is denied permission to receive foreign funds, surrenders its registration, fails to renew it, or ceases to exist; and creation of a “Designated Authority” empowered to take over such assets and dispose of them under undefined norms. Remaining foreign funds would be transferred to the Consolidated Fund of India. The Authority would also possess powers of a civil court to summon evi-



dence, take possession, and even supervise or run organisational activities in an undefined “public interest.”

The provisions also include the transfer of remaining funds of organisations whose registration is discontinued to the Consolidated Fund of India, with assets permanently vested in the Authority, which may hand them over to any government body or sell them. “These measures reverse the earlier position under which organisations denied or surrendering registration retained their assets (with remaining funds merely frozen). They go far beyond regulation and amount to punitive confiscation,” Brooks said.

“Natural justice demands that punishment be proportionate to the offence. Studies show that of more than 15,000 organisations denied permission to receive foreign contributions in recent years, only about a dozen faced denial for corruption-related offences. The vast majority lost registration for minor technical issues such as delayed reporting or accounting errors. Depriving organisations of assets built since 1976 for such lapses is grossly disproportionate and violates basic principles of fairness. The most that can justly be accepted is the takeover of a specific asset after a transparent process proves corrupt acquisition or construction of that particular asset,” he said.

The ACF spokesperson warned that the consequences for beneficiaries will be severe. “Many schools, health centres, dispensaries, and other institutions in remote tribal areas of the Northeast—including Assam—were built partly or wholly with foreign contri-

butions precisely because state infrastructure remains inadequate. In large parts of the hills and remote regions, two-thirds of the population still depend on traditional healing systems because government health centres often lack staff, medicine, testing facilities and electricity. Schools frequently operate with a single irregular teacher, and mid-day meals exist largely on paper. Poor rural transport further isolates communities from the few better institutions concentrated in places such as Guwahati and Shillong,” he said.

The Bill also raises serious concerns about freedom of religion. “Provisions allowing state management of churches, mosques, and temples “while maintaining religious character” under government oversight threaten the autonomy of places of worship. Judicial recourse is narrowly restricted to appeals before a District Judge or specified judicial officer within 90 days, denying adequate opportunity for defence,” he said.

“We therefore appeal to all Members of Parliament from Assam and the Northeast, and to the Union Government, to reject the proposed Amendment Bill 2026 in its present form and to reform the FCRA in a manner that upholds natural justice, protects the rights of the poor, and enables genuine collaboration between the state and civil society,” he added.



Day of the world’s indigenous peoples observed in Aizawl



Aizawl, Aug 09: The International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples was observed at Vanapa Hall, Aizawl on Saturday under the theme “Indigenous Peoples and AI: Defending Rights, Shaping Futures.”

The programme was organised by the Zo Re-unification Organization (ZORO), with Art and Culture Minister C. Lalsawivunga attending as the Chief Guest. Addressing the gathering, the Minister highlighted the importance accorded to Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations (UN).

He stated that the UN General Assembly had adopted Resolution No. 49/214 on December 23, 1994, designating August 9 as the International Day of the World’s

Indigenous Peoples. The Minister noted that following India’s independence from British rule, the Zo people became dispersed across different countries. Although political boundaries have resulted in the Zo people living in different countries, he emphasised that such boundaries should not divide them from their shared identity as Zo people.

He stressed the importance of preserving their identity and remaining conscious of their common roots and heritage. He further called upon the Zo people, wherever they may live and under whichever government they may come, to move forward with a stronger sense of unity and brotherhood while remaining firmly rooted in their Zo

identity. Robert Romawia Royte, MLA, also addressed the gathering as a Guest of Honour.

He called upon the Zo people to remain firmly grounded in their identity and, despite having distinct clans and ethnic identities, to continue strengthening their bonds of unity and brotherhood. He also encouraged the people to make effective and constructive use of advancing technology and social media as tools for strengthening communication, connection and unity among the Zo community.

ZORO President R. Sangkawia, in his address, stated that the Zo people have inhabited Zoram from the earliest times and are the indigenous people and rightful

inhabitants of the land. He referred to the 46 articles adopted by the United Nations concerning Indigenous Peoples and stated that the Zo people are recognised as an indigenous people.

He urged the gathering to cherish, preserve and protect Zoram, which, he said, had been lovingly nurtured by their forefathers and safeguarded from external influences over generations. The programme was chaired by ZORO Vice President L. Ramdinliana Renthlei. School students presented a cultural programme showcasing Zo traditions, while the Zonunpar Cultural Club and MCO Performing Troupe presented performances highlighting Zo culture and heritage. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by ZORO Adviser Rohningthanga Kawlni.

The day’s programme was divided into two sessions. The first session featured a Unity March, with participants marching from Millennium Centre to Vanapa Hall. The second session comprised the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples observance, which was held at Vanapa Hall. (EOM)

CID interrogates Abhishek Banerjee’s former aide Sumit Roy over land case

Kolkata, Aug 09: Sumit Roy, former personal assistant to Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee, faced CID interrogators on Saturday, two days after the Supreme Court stayed his arrest in connection with an alleged land fraud in Salboni, West Midnapore.

The CID had served a notice on Roy, who had been absconding since mid-June. The state agency recently took over the investigation into two cases in which Roy is allegedly involved the land fraud and a job scam in Debra, also in West Midnapore.

While staying Roy’s arrest, a Supreme Court bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohan directed him to cooperate with the investigation and remain available for questioning at the concerned police station between 10am and 6pm. “It is further directed that the petitioner shall remain available for investigation with the concerned police station from 10am to 6pm with the allotted usual breaks. The petitioner shall not be accompanied by an advocate, or any other person,” the order said.

On Saturday, Roy arrived at the state police headquarters at Bhabani Bhawan minutes before the 10am deadline. Sources said he was taken to the building’s third floor after completing formalities at the reception. A team of officers then escorted him to a conference hall, where the questioning began. The police said Roy’s name surfaced while officers were interrogating former Trinamool MLA Sujoy Hazra, who was arrested earlier in June. A probe was initiated after a



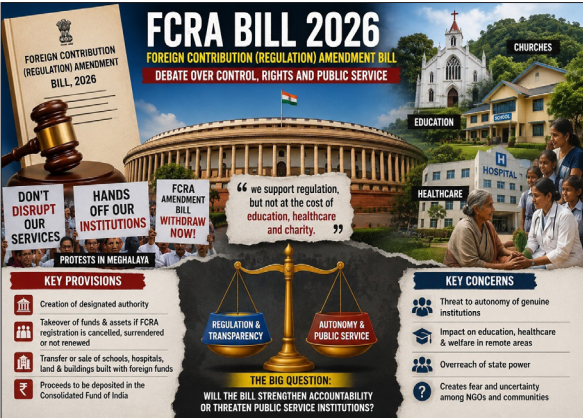
person recently lodged a complaint at Salboni police station alleging extortion by Hazra.

Hazra’s questioning led the police to uncover his alleged involvement in the sale of large tracts of government land in Salboni using fabricated deeds. Sources said the investigation subsequently suggested that Hazra was not acting alone and that a transaction of around ₹1 crore had taken place between Hazra and Roy. “A detailed examination of Hazra’s several bank transactions revealed that Roy was one of the beneficiaries of this

alleged land scam,” a senior police officer said.

As the police dug deeper into Roy’s alleged involvement, a team from Salboni reached Abhishek’s Kalighat residence in the early hours of June 13 after Roy’s mobile tower location allegedly indicated his presence there. The police brought gas cutters to break into the house and search the premises for Roy, accompanied by central forces, until 8am. They did not find him. Roy had been untraceable after that. On Saturday, he appeared for the first time to face the interrogators.

Church leaders seek wider consultations on proposed FCRA Amendment Bill



Shillong, Aug 09: Church leaders from Meghalaya and the Northeast have renewed their appeal to the Centre to hold meaningful consultations with all stakeholders before enacting the proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, expressing concern over provisions that could allow the Designated Authority to take control of assets.

Rev. Amminot T. Sohliya recalled that on July 5, a delegation of church leaders led by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi and submitted a memorandum seeking amendments to several provisions. Shah had assured the delegation that the Ministry of Home Affairs would consult all stakeholders. Sohliya said it was still unclear whether the concerns raised

by churches and the Meghalaya government would be reflected in the version of the Bill to be considered by Parliament.

A major concern relates to Section 16A(1), which provides for provisional vesting of foreign contributions and assets following cancellation or cessation of an FCRA registration. Church leaders have sought judicial oversight and adequate legal safeguards for such action. They have also demanded protection for church and minority institutions under Section 16A(7), opposed retrospective application under Section 16B, and sought safeguards for properties located in Sixth Schedule areas under Section 16D. Meghalaya Cabinet Minister Lakhmen Rymbui said certain provisions, in their current form, could adversely affect organisations in the state and should be modified.

Rymbui particularly objected to the proposed powers of the Designated Authority, including property seizure over procedural lapses such as delayed licence renewal. He also raised concerns over extending personal liability beyond office-bearers. He said organisations could face indefinite liability and that producing records dating back several decades would be practically difficult. Rymbui suggested that the amendments should apply only to future funding, while minor procedural violations should attract financial penalties rather than property seizure. Rymbui said the state government supports strict action against misuse of foreign funds but would continue seeking suitable amendments to protect genuine institutions and Meghalaya’s interests.

Sule slams ‘gungi gudiya’ comment; notes congress disowns it

Mumbai, Aug 09: NCP (SP) working president and Lok Sabha member Supriya Sule on Saturday called the Maharashtra Congress’ “Gungi Gudiya” (silent doll) remark against Deputy Chief Minister and NCP national president Sunetra Pawar inappropriate. She said the Congress’ national leadership had clarified that the post was made by the party’s Maharashtra IT cell and did not reflect the Congress’ official stand.

Ms. Sule, who is also Ms. Pawar’s sister-in-law, said she had raised the issue with the Congress central leadership and thanked it for clarifying its position. “The statement made by the Maharashtra Congress about Sunetra Pawar was inappropriate. I spoke to the Congress leadership about it and thank them for clarifying their position. Within half an hour of my discussion with

the leadership, the Congress made it clear that the post was made by the Maharashtra Congress’ local IT cell and did not represent the national Congress’ position,” she said.

The controversy erupted after the Maharashtra Congress posted a video clip of Ms. Pawar’s press conference on X, showing NCP MLA Dhananjay Munde preventing her from taking questions from reporters about the law-and-order situation in Beed district in the Marathwada region. The post was captioned: “How long will Sunetra Pawar remain Gungi Gudiya (silent doll)?” The remark drew sharp criticism from the NCP and its alliance partner, the BJP. However, Maharashtra Congress president Harshwardhan Sapkal and other party leaders subsequently backed the remark. NCP workers staged protests against the Congress and



Mr. Sapkal at several places across the State.

Mr. Sapkal defended the post, saying that the term “Gungi Gudiya” was not objectionable. Following the criticism, he said he had tried to speak to Ms. Pawar but could not establish contact. “It is a misunderstanding. Do not take it personally,” he said. Mr. Sapkal also said that Ms. Pawar had spoken to him five times over the phone when the Baramati bypoll was scheduled.

Ms. Sule also said that eight NCP (SP) MPs would meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his office in Parliament on Monday at 11 a.m. to raise key issues concerning Maharashtra. “The delegation will meet the Prime Minister to raise serious issues concerning Maharashtra,” she said. She said the MPs would raise issues including water shortages, farmer suicides and the challenges posed by rapid urbanisation.

Odisha pulls Rs 66,392 crore in Delhi-NCR investments

New Delhi, Aug 09: Odisha has attracted investment proposals worth Rs 66,392 crore, with the potential to generate around 54,135 jobs, following a two-day investment outreach programme in the Delhi-NCR region, the state government said on Sunday.

As many as 38 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed during the programme, with proposed investments spanning sectors such as manufacturing, textiles, engineering and aluminium. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi held a series of one-on-one meetings with investors and representatives of leading industries as part of the outreach programme aimed at attracting fresh investments to the state.

According to the state government, 46 high-level meetings involving representatives of 208 industries were held during the



programme. Discussions focused on potential investments and facilitating the establishment of new industrial projects in Odisha. The outreach followed the Odisha Food Pro 2026 event held in Delhi, after which Majhi met investors from various sectors to explore opportunities for industrial expansion in the state.

During his Delhi-NCR visit, the Chief Minister also toured the manufacturing facility of a private compa-

ny in Noida and interacted with its representatives. At a meeting with Chinese home-appliance major Haier, Majhi said Odisha was preparing to support the development of a white-goods manufacturing ecosystem, with Haier potentially serving as an anchor investor.

“Our industries, MSMEs and skill-development teams are ready to support a new white-goods manufacturing ecosystem with Haier as the anchor investor. Today’s

meeting with you is just a beginning. We will continue to engage with you,” Majhi said. He invited Haier’s leadership to visit Odisha and explore investment opportunities in the state. “We hope Haier will find huge opportunities in Odisha with a long-term vision. I look forward to welcoming the Haier leadership to Odisha. Come to Odisha and become a part of the new growth story of India,” he said.

The state government said the investment outreach was part of its efforts to strengthen Odisha’s position as an investment destination, accelerate industrialisation and create employment opportunities. The latest proposals come amid the Odisha government’s broader efforts to attract large-scale investments across manufacturing and other industrial sectors and strengthen the state’s role in India’s emerging industrial growth landscape.

KSU to hold public meetings across Khasi, Jaintia Hills from August 10

Shillong, Aug 09: The Khasi Students’ Union (KSU) will organise a series of public meetings across the Khasi and Jaintia Hills from August 10 to 14 to mobilise support for five key demands. The union has also decided to proceed with its proposed meeting at Khliehriat on August 11 despite the East Jaintia Hills Deputy Commissioner refusing permission.

KSU general secretary Reuben Njarjar said the campaign will begin at Mawkyrwat on August 10, followed by Khliehriat and Mawryngkneng on August 11, Umsning and Mairang on August 12, Sohra and Jowai on August 13, and Nongstoin on August 14. The KSU said the meetings would educate the public about issues concerning indigenous welfare and warned of intensified agitation if the government fails to act before its 15-day deadline ends on August 17.

The Khliehriat meeting, proposed near the U Kiang Nangbah statue on the Deputy Commissioner’s office premises, is linked to the union’s demand for the removal of the DC following the July 31 public hearing on the Shree Cement limestone mining project. The KSU has alleged that the

hearing was manipulated to suppress opposition and has demanded its cancellation, removal of the DC, SP and senior police officials, as well as Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board officials, and departmental action against those involved. The union challenged the permission denial on August 7, arguing that the prohibitory order issued under Section 163 of the BNSS had already lapsed after two months. It said the meeting would remain peaceful and proceed as scheduled.

Its other demands include implementation of the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act, 2016, activation of District Task Forces, verification of residents through Dor-



bar Shnongs, enforcement of migrant worker registration amendments, changes in NEIGRIHMS nursing recruitment and reservations, state-based examinations, abolition of personal interviews for Grade B, C and D posts, and reforms in recruitment bodies. The KSU has urged Khasi indigenous communities to participate in the meetings, calling the campaign the beginning of a wider agitation.

Delimitation will benefit central India most: Manish Tewari

Chandigarh, Aug 09: Congress MP Manish Tewari voiced concern over the Delimitation Bill, stating that it primarily benefits Central India. He said that the Bill is not in the interest of North India and the Northeast regions where strategic and security challenges prevail. “It neither aids South India,” he added.

“India’s strategic and security-related challenges are concentrated in the North-East and North India. There-

fore, we must ensure that these regions and states do not get the impression that their political weight within India’s landscape is diminishing,” he said. “This delimitation is not in the interest of North India, South India, or the North-East. It will primarily benefit Central India,” Tewari said.

On women’s reservation, Tewari said the government could implement the provision by reserving one-third of the existing 543 Lok

Sabha seats for women. “You want to implement women’s reservation, go ahead and reserve one-third of the 543 seats for women. But the Lok Sabha doesn’t function with 543 members alone. By raising the number to 850, do you intend to turn it into something like China’s National People’s Congress?” he said.

Reacting to the Shiromani Akali Dal’s support for the delimitation bill, Tewari said the party was entitled to take

its own decision, but reiterated his opposition to the proposed exercise. “That is their own decision. However, I believe this delimitation serves neither Punjab nor North India,” he said. The remarks come as the government pushes for the implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, which seeks to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women.

The Nari Shakti Van-

dan Adhiniyam, 2023 was passed in both Houses of Parliament, but failed to move ahead with implementation after the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill fell in the Lok Sabha on April 17, not being able to receive the constitutionally required two-thirds majority of members present and voting. The Bill proposed the implementation of the 33 per cent women’s reservation in legislatures and delimitation in the Lok Sabha.



Delhi HC to hear Kejriwal bail plea

New Delhi, Aug 09: The Delhi High Court will on Monday hear the Enforcement Directorate’s plea challenging the bail granted to former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in the 2021-22 excise policy-linked money laundering case.

The Enforcement Directorate’s (ED) petition, filed in 2024, is listed for hearing before Justice Manoj Jain. Kejriwal has been since granted relief in the case by the Supreme Court. On July 12, 2024, the top court granted interim bail to Kejriwal in the alleged money laundering case while referring to a larger bench three questions on the aspect of “need and necessity of arrest” under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Earlier, on June 20, 2024, Kejriwal was granted bail by a trial court on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh, which was subsequently stayed by the high court on the ED’s petition. On October 14, 2025, the high court granted a “last and final opportunity” to the agency to argue the petition. Kejriwal’s counsel objected to the “repeated” adjournments sought by the agency in the case, accusing it of prolonging the proceedings without any reason.

65 Master Trainers Prepared for Seven-District Training Drive



Shillong, Aug 09: A six-day training programme for 65 Master Trainers under the MPOWER Training of Master Trainers Programme was held from August 3 to 8 at the Meghalaya Teacher Training Academy (MTTA), Malki, Shillong.

The programme, now in its second year, focused on Life Skills, Financial Literacy, Mental Health, and Sexual and Reproductive Health. MTTA provided institutional support and facilities, while Magic Bus India Foundation and WorldBeing India

conducted the technical sessions. The 65 Master Trainers came from seven districts, East Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi, East Jaintia Hills, South West Khasi Hills, West Garo Hills, East Garo Hills and North Garo Hills.

Following the training, the Master Train-

ers will train 1,729 teachers from SSA and government schools in their respective districts as part of the next phase of the MPOWER programme. The training covered thematic knowledge, practical facilitation techniques, learner-centred teaching practices and inclusive approaches. Participants also took part in interactive sessions, practical demonstrations, peer-learning activities, mock facilitation sessions and classroom simulations. The programme began with an orientation on MPOWER, followed by an inaugural address by Smti. J.U. Kharpuri, MCS, Director, DERT. She spoke about the importance of strengthening teacher capacity in improving education.

The final day included a review of key learnings, a post-training assessment and the preparation of district-level teacher training plans for the next phase of the programme. Speaking about the training, David M. Nongrum, Associate Professor, DERT and Additional Director, MTTA, said, “The MTTA Master Trainer training marks an important step towards strength-

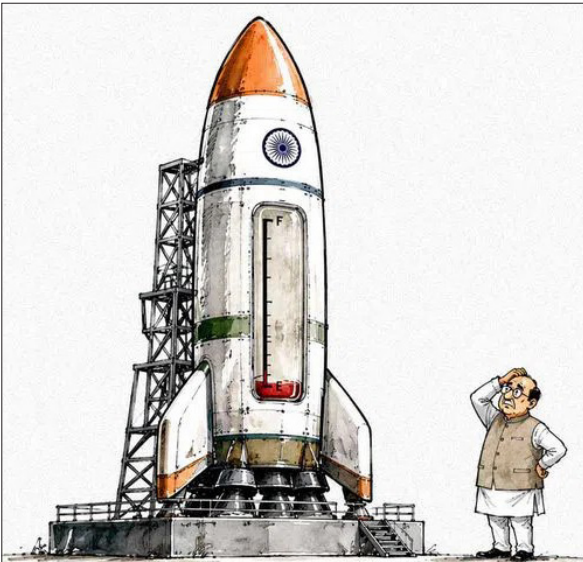
ening teacher capacity across Meghalaya. By equipping our Master Trainers with practical facilitation skills and a deeper understanding of Life Skills, Mental Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Financial Literacy Education, we are laying the foundation for more inclusive and learner-centred classrooms. I sincerely appreciate the dedicated efforts of the MPOWER team and our partner organisations in making this training a success.” Caroline Y. Kharmalki, Assistant Professor, DERT and Nodal Officer, MPOWER, said, “The enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated by the Master Trainers throughout the programme have been truly encouraging. We hope that the learnings on Life Skills, Mental Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Financial Literacy Education will enable teachers to create a safe, supportive, inclusive and engaging learning environment where every child learns and feels accepted.” MTTA said it would continue to support teacher capacity-building and promote inclusive and child-centred teaching practices across Meghalaya.

North East Chronicle

AUGUST 10 2026 VOL 02 NO. 167



Why India’s R&D spending must match tech ambitions



Though India has emerged as one of the world’s largest producers of scientific publications and patent filings, it continues to lag behind in research spending relative to the size of its economy. One of the reasons for this poor performance, compared with other major economies, is that R&D spending has traditionally been the exclusive domain of the public sector since independence, and the private industry was largely insulated from innovation. However, a positive shift is happening now. The latest report by the Department of Science and Technology on India’s research profile reveals a major milestone. For the first time in the country’s history, private industry’s share of the Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) stood at 51.8% in 2023-24, overtaking the combined spending of the central and State governments. This significant jump from 45.5% in 2021-22 is a welcome development. According to the Economic Survey 2025-26, India’s GERD stands at roughly 0.64% of GDP — a figure that has been virtually stagnant for more than a decade and is dwarfed by those of Israel (5%), South Korea (4.8–4.9%), the United States (3.5%), Japan (3.3%), and China (2.4%). The R&D spending hovered in the range of 0.6% to 0.85% for nearly 20 years despite India’s economy growing several-fold. The optics of private industry crossing the 50% threshold are encouraging, and they do bring India structurally closer to advanced economies where business enterprise typically funds 70–80% of national R&D.

While the private sector’s rising R&D share is

a positive and necessary correction to India’s historically state-dominated research funding model, it is by itself not sufficient to close the technology gap with the countries it wants to compete with. India crossing the 50% mark in private contribution while spending less than 1% of GDP on R&D is a very different achievement from the US or China doing so while spending 2.5-3.5% of GDP. Understandably, private R&D follows sectors that promise near-term commercial returns: generic and specialty pharmaceuticals, IT services and software products, automotive components and EVs, and consumer-facing digital technologies. These sectors are undoubtedly important for boosting exports and generating employment, but they are not fully aligned with the areas most consequential for India’s strategic autonomy and long-term economic security: semiconductor fabrication, advanced materials, critical minerals processing, defence and aerospace systems, foundational AI models, and clean energy storage. A large share of private R&D is concentrated in a narrow set of sectors. Decades of a protected, import-substituting economy, followed by a services- and IT-outsourcing-led growth model, meant Indian firms could compete and profit without deep in-house research — unlike Korean or Chinese firms, which were pushed by export-oriented industrial policy. Also, public research institutions and private industry have historically operated in separate silos, with limited co-funded research or faculty-industry mobility, unlike the tightly integrated innovation ecosystems of the US or Germany.

The changing meaning of neighbourhood

The traditional neighbourhood was built around familiarity. People knew the shopkeeper, greeted the security guard, borrowed things from neighbours and often gathered in shared spaces. Modern apartment complexes and digital lifestyles have changed that pattern. People may live beside one another for years without forming meaningful connections. Technology has

made communication easier, but it cannot completely replace local relationships. A strong neighbourhood does not require everyone to be friends. It simply requires enough familiarity and trust for people to look out for one another. The physical boundaries of a neighbourhood may never look the same again. But the fundamental human need for a place to belong, to be seen, and to be safe remains unchanged.

Citizens’ assemblies: re-centering parliament on the people

The word “parliament” traces its origin to the French word *parler*, which means “to speak”. In April, during a discussion in the Lok Sabha on increasing the number of Lok Sabha seats, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor highlighted the need to increase opportunities for interventions in Parliament. However, irrespective of the issue of numbers, enabling more focussed interventions by parliamentarians needs conscious efforts to reform the procedures of Parliament.

Public expectations from legislators mostly tend towards “getting things done”, i.e., administration work particularly at a constituency level. Limited attention is paid to the interventions they make on the floor of the House. Recently, during the Tamil Nadu assembly elections, debates focused on the alleged lack of development in the constituency of an incumbent minister. It is unfortunate that MLAs, MLCs and MPs are expected to do the same job as that of a councillor/ward member entrusted with local governance and are often assessed on “development works” in their respective constituencies as opposed to their performance in the respective Houses. This partly explains why initiatives tracking parliamentary performances of MPs and assembly performances of MLAs have not received the kind of public support they deserve. BR Ambedkar, during the Constituent Assembly debates, hoped that the frequency at which future legislatures met would make legislators tired. While the first Lok Sabha (1952-57) managed to sit frequently, with an average annual sitting of 135 days, the 18th Lok Sabha (June 2024-present) has met on 135 days over two years a yearly average of 67 days. MPs from all parties have advocated a minimum of 120 days of sittings annually with a tentative schedule to help them better prepare for the sessions. Instead of an 11 am start, House proceedings could start at 10 am,

allowing more time for Zero and Question Hours. More starred and unstarred questions should be allowed while facilitating increased transparency in balloting and listing of questions. To address frequent disruptions, procedures could be suitably amended to allocate at least one hour every day or every few days in a session as “Opposition Hour”, where the Opposition sets the agenda, prioritising matters requiring a response from the executive. We could emulate the UK’s and Canada’s parliaments which allocate 20 and 22 days a year to the Opposition, respectively.

To reduce friction between MPs and promote civility in public discourse, the practice of Treasury and Opposition MPs being seated separately could also be discontinued. Ultimately, they are not enemies, and their political rivalry should not be considered during the allocation of seats. From a lawmaking point of view, all bills reaching Parliament should be subject to public consultation during the drafting stage and by committees during scrutiny stage. Decisions in Parliament should be driven by consultation, consensus, and concurrence. Essentially, copies of the bills featuring in the session’s tentative list of business should be handed out as the list gets published to enable more effective and informed discussions upon their introduction. After introduction, all these bills should mandatorily be referred to the Standing Committees, similar to what happens in Kerala however with more time than is usual in the Kerala instance, to ensure detailed scrutiny. Private member bills, initiated by non-minister MPs, seldom get noticed, especially because this happens on alternative Friday afternoons when attendance is low. Only around 2-3% of the hundreds of private members’ bills introduced in Parliament are taken up for discussion, and several parliamentary sessions have ended without any private members’ business having

been transacted. A conscious effort should be made to increase the time allocation for private members’ business during the week, to encourage policy endeavours by MPs. Procedural interventions should also ensure that at least one-third of the private member bills gets discussed, with the concerned minister’s attendance made mandatory.

Committees, known as mini-parliaments, while allowing flexibility to scrutinise matters of public importance, suffer from structural issues. Most consultative committees have not met even once, against the mandatory requirement to hold at least four meetings a year. The tenure of department-related parliamentary standing committees should be increased to at least two years to ensure their sustained and effective working. In addition to the staff deployed from the parliament secretariat, there should be a provision for the appointment of sectoral experts as advisors to the committees. The committees’ interactions with external stakeholders should be broadcast and submissions should be made publicly available. A verbatim record of evidence tendered before committees must be made public alongside committee reports. Standing committees must also assess the impact of laws, facilitating strong post-legislative scrutiny. Mandatory post-legislative scrutiny should be undertaken by the standing committees five years after the passage of a bill. Committees should allow the public to also depose before them. For example, select committees of the Kerala legislature regularly host public hearings in district collectorates, allowing the public to participate in the process. Parliamentary committees could also consider a non-Parliament venue where the public gets to appear before them. During discussions on salaries and allowances in 2010, then Rajya Sabha MP NK Singh emphasised the need to have qualified researchers to

support MPs in performing their duties. Many public officials below the protocol rank of MP have personal staff, funded by the government, for support in daily work. The parliament secretariat currently gives only ₹40,000 a month to a Lok Sabha MP to appoint one computer-literate staff member; this research support gap is serious and needs to be bridged by allowing every MP to hire two-three research staff whose salaries are borne by the parliament secretariat. This will elevate the quality of discourse and interventions in Parliament, making it an investment in improved legislative quality.

Recently, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla emphasised the importance of public participation in a parliamentary democracy. Parliament should also evolve more ways in which citizens interact with its proceedings. States such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu are contemplating how citizens can raise issues directly in the state legislative assembly. The parliament website should have a dedicated citizen’s corner: Apart from simple explainers on the working of Parliament and process flow for visiting Parliament, the section should clearly explain how citizens could get to know the work of their MP, interact with MPs and committees, and submit petitions. In the interest of inclusivity, broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings in sign language could also be considered. As the chair of International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) for the year 2026, India should proactively implement the institute’s eight principles of parliamentary public engagement. Global Parliamentary Reports, published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNDP, also offer important insights into meeting public expectations, improving oversight, and facilitating effective public participation. These should essentially act as the guiding principles for our legislatures in shaping the 21st-century reforms.

Strait of Hormuz is the pivotal key to peace as regional conflict widens



Anxiety over the impending attacks in the Gulf intensified further as Trump had met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington just three days prior, on July 28, as well as by a security advisory from the US Embassy in Israel urging American citizens to consider leaving the region.

However, the tension was defused by Trump’s announcement that he was cancelling the strikes on condition that a deal with Iran is finalised quickly. He noted that the pause was in response to requests from countries in the region and Iranian officials who assured him that a framework had been reached. Since the conflict began on February 28, the US President has halted planned military strikes against Iran on six distinct occasions. This recurring pattern reveals reliance on maximum rhetorical escalation followed by sudden retreats. Every time Trump makes threats to attack Iranian energy infrastructure, Gulf partners quickly intervene to plead for restraint to protect their critical assets from the fallout. This time, the turnaround happened after a phone call from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and coordinated pressure from other Gulf states.

This collective intervention was done after they received calls from Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who warned that

Iran would be forced to retaliate by attacking their energy and vital desalination infrastructure. This cycle of threatening attacks followed by withdrawals has exposed the limits of Washington’s leverage beyond strikes on military assets in Iran. The latest episode has also demonstrated the US’s dwindling options for ending the war, particularly the opening of the Strait of Hormuz. Repeated heavy US bombardments have reached their limit in securing further military advantages, and a full-scale ground invasion to force an Iranian surrender is not an option. Simultaneously, the US is fast depleting its stockpile of precision long-range missiles and interceptors needed for other global theatres. In the meantime, Iran has broadened the scope of the war by activating the Houthis in Yemen and Shia militias in Iraq. The uneasy truce between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis has collapsed in recent weeks after they declared a maritime embargo against Saudi shipping and Red Sea ports. The Houthis also quickly acted on their threat, striking Saudi oil tankers as well as key energy facilities along the Red Sea. This has undermined Riyadh’s contingency strategy of using its East-West Pipeline to bypass the Strait of Hormuz, leaving it no choice but to reroute its oil tankers around Africa to supply its major buyers in Asia. The Houthis are continu-

ing their attacks, with the latest targeting an airport in southwestern Saudi Arabia.

In addition, Iran-backed Iraqi militias launched a two-day drone and missile attack on the crude stabilisation units in Saudi Arabia’s oil-rich Eastern Province to undermine the Kingdom’s export reliability. This forced Saudi Arabia to abandon its strategic restraint to join with the US to launch retaliatory airstrikes against militia command centres across Iraq. The war further expanded to the Eastern Mediterranean when unidentified drones struck an American floating storage vessel in the Egyptian port city of Damietta. While neither Iran nor the Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack, it was a clear message that Western energy supply chains remain vulnerable beyond the Gulf region as well.

While Iran is under severe economic strain, compounded by the US naval blockade on its ports, it is determined to endure the short-term pain, rather than accepting a temporary truce. Iranian leadership is holding out for a decisive outcome that permanently ends the cycle of war with the US and Israel. It is also equally determined to maintain control of the Strait of Hormuz. The US and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are encouraging Oman to find an acceptable solution for opening the Strait. The debate over

the deadlock in Hormuz has shifted from whether Iran will exert control on the route to how it will enforce this control, culminating in Iran’s announcement late Wednesday that a tentative agreement with Oman has been reached, but emphasising that finalising a bilateral transit corridor cannot ensure maritime security until the US lifts its naval blockade.

While the Gulf countries will be deeply unhappy about Iran’s control over maritime traffic or the imposition of a service fee, their immediate priority remains securing the reopening of the strait for their exports. Though the US remains opposed to making concessions to Iran on the Strait of Hormuz, Article 43 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides a legal framework for sharing the financial burden of keeping an international strait safe and clean through consensus-driven, voluntary partnerships, offering Washington a viable diplomatic off-ramp. Unless the US is willing to make concessions to Iran on the issue of Hormuz, the present cycle of military attacks, paused by temporary ceasefires, will continue with severe consequences for the world economy. Resolving the Hormuz deadlock offers the only plausible path for Washington and Tehran to resume negotiations on nuclear and other issues.

UPI transactions to remain free for consumers, government reassures



Mumbai: Consumers will not have to pay for using the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and most merchant transactions will also remain free, the Government of India clarified on August 9.

If a merchant discount rate (MDR) is introduced in the future, it will apply only to a limited category of merchant payments above a specified threshold according to the clarification. The rate will also be lower than the usual MDR on debit and credit card transactions. According to a recent social media post

on X by the Ministry of Finance, person-to-person (P2P) UPI payments will not attract any charges. The Centre has also clarified that the proposed amendment to Section 10A of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, does not itself introduce an MDR on UPI payments.

The clarification follows questions over changes proposed to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act and whether they could result in charges for UPI users. The Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, has already been passed by the Lok Sabha. If it is cleared in the Parliament, the UPI and Services Steering Committee, headed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), will take a call on the MDR, if any. The government has linked the proposed framework to the rising cost of running and upgrading the UPI network. Higher transaction

volumes require regular spending on cybersecurity, fraud prevention and payment infrastructure.

It has also flagged the limits of depending solely on subsidies to fund the next phase of UPI's expansion. A revenue model could give payment companies greater scope to expand and compete in the market.

The government also rejected claims that external pressure prompted the proposed changes, calling such claims false and misleading. UPI was launched in 2016-17 and has been free for citizens and merchants since January 2020. UPI has processed over 23 billion transactions worth Rs 29.9 lakh crore in July 2026 itself. The payment system is now available in 11 foreign countries, including Singapore, UAE, France, Mauritius, Nepal, Bhutan, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Greece, and Malaysia.

Leqembi, an Alzheimer's medication approved by CDSCO, is introduced by Eisai in India

Mumbai: After receiving clearance from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO), Japanese pharmaceutical company Eisai debuted Leqembi (lecanemab) in India, making it one of the first businesses to offer a disease-modifying treatment for patients with early Alzheimer's disease in the nation. Patients with mild dementia brought on by Alzheimer's disease and mild cognitive impairment (MCI) are candidates for this treatment. Instead of only relieving symptoms, it is intended to address the underlying biology of the illness.

The debut coincides with a sharp increase in the prevalence of dementia in India. The AIIMS-USC Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) estimates that 8.8 million Indians 60 years of age and older had dementia in 2023; by 2036, that figure is predicted to almost treble. Leqembi is administered through intravenous infusion and works by clearing amyloid-beta plaques in the brain while preventing the formation of new plaques, one of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease. Patients must undergo biomarker testing to confirm amyloid pa-

thology before becoming eligible for treatment.

"The therapy has demonstrated a slowing of cognitive decline, which is a clinically meaningful benefit for patients. It is designed to address the underlying disease process and help preserve cognitive function for a longer duration compared to the natural progression of the disease," the company said. The treatment will be priced on a weight-based dosing schedule, with a maximum retail price of Rs 21,682 per vial. Total treatment costs will vary depending on a patient's body

weight and dosing requirements. Eisai said Indian patients were not included in the pivotal Phase III clinical trial that supported the drug's approval.

The global study enrolled more than 800 patients.

As part of the Indian regulatory approval, the company will conduct a Phase IV post-marketing study to generate efficacy and safety data in Indian patients. "What is promising about Leqembi is its ability to intervene early in the disease process. Identifying the right patient at the right time will be critical to maximis-

ing outcomes," said Ritesh Jain, head of commercial operations at Eisai India. The launch comes about a month after Eli Lilly introduced Lormalzi (donanemab) in India, intensifying competition in the country's nascent market for disease-modifying Alzheimer's therapies. Despite the availability of new therapies, adoption is expected to remain gradual because of challenges including delayed diagnosis, limited availability of biomarker testing, infusion infrastructure requirements and the absence of widespread reimbursement.

RBI public funds stance dictates Tata sons deregistration



New Delhi, Aug 09: The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) criterion covering "indirect access to public funds" has emerged as a key issue in Tata Sons' pending application to surrender its registration as a core investment company (CIC). Legal experts, however, differ on whether equity investments by Tata group companies that have access to public funds would bring the holding company within the scope of the rule.

Tata Sons applied to surrender its CIC registration after repaying all outstanding debt. If the RBI accepts the application, the holding company could avoid the listing requirement applicable to upper-layer NBFCs. If the application is rejected, Tata Sons may have to pursue a listing. One interpretation is that the public-funds criterion is primarily intended to cover funds that a CIC is obliged to repay, such as bank loans, debentures, inter-corporate deposits and public deposits, where tighter regulation is required to safeguard public money.

Group companies like Tata Steel and Tata Consumer Products Limited (TCPL), which have access to such fund-raising instruments, also hold varying degrees of stake in Tata Sons. "Tata Sons is not expected to return the equity investment as a fixed income or floating rate security generally covered under the definition; and accordingly, it may be argued that despite the group companies mentioned above having access to 'public funds', the obligation to undertake

compliances to secure repayment of such 'public funds' does not extend by way of an equity investment to Tata Sons," said Kaushik Mukherjee, partner at CMS INDUSLAW.

He also pointed to cross-holdings within the Tata group, arguing that a broader interpretation could create an inconsistency: listed operating companies are not subject to NBFC regulations merely because they raise public funds, but their downstream equity investments could potentially bring Tata Sons within that framework. Another legal expert said the distinction between the letter and the intent of the rule would be important. "One needs to separate letter and intent/spirit when interpreting the criteria. The question is whether the 'spirit' of the rule is to capture the ultimate beneficiary of public funds, even if the legal chain of ownership separates it from the actual borrowing," the expert said.

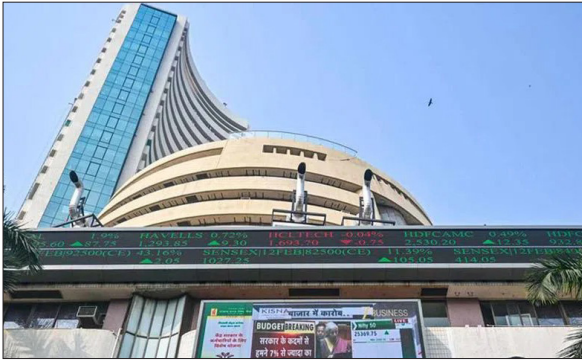
Experts also pointed to the principle of the corporate veil in considering the RBI's criteria. "Owning shares in a company does not make an investor personally liable for its debts. Otherwise, every shareholder of a bankrupt listed company would be expected to repay its creditors," one expert said. Another expert said the criterion could also be examined from a threshold perspective. Tata group companies collectively hold around 13% in Tata Sons, while individual group companies hold no more than about 3%, the expert noted.

Indian equities register weekly gains on sliding crude oil prices

Mumbai, Aug 09: The Indian equity benchmarks posted gains for the second consecutive week, over sharp corrections in crude oil prices and strong Q1 FY27 earnings results.

Nifty jumped 0.77 per cent during the week and shed 0.27 per cent on the last trading day this week to reach 24,570. At close, Sensex was down 455 points, or 0.58 per cent, at 78,499. It added 0.52 per cent during the week. Small-cap stocks continued to outperform, supported by strong earnings traction and stock-specific catalysts, while PSU banks led sectoral gains on improving fundamentals.

Metals benefited from a stronger growth outlook and resilient domestic demand, while automobiles gained momentum on expectations of healthy festive-season de-



mand, said market watchers. The week started on a volatile note triggered by the roll-out of the new F&O Closing Auction Session (CAS), but markets regained stability as participants adapted to the revised framework, an analyst said.

"Sentiment improved meaningfully with the sharp decline in crude oil prices, which helped strengthen the macro-economic outlook and sup-

ported expectations of easing inflationary pressures," he added. Globally, softer labour market indicators reduced the likelihood of a near-term Fed rate hike, leading to a moderation in US bond yields and a weaker dollar. This, coupled with sustained safe-haven demand ahead of key US economic data releases, provided additional support to gold prices.

On the domestic front, the

RBI reinforced confidence by maintaining its policy stance, while modestly upgrading its growth outlook and lowering inflation projections. The ongoing Q1 FY27 earnings season has further strengthened investor confidence, with results broadly exceeding expectations and driving broad-based buying interest. Broad market indices outperformed the benchmark indices, as Nifty Midcap100 added 0.87 per cent, while Nifty Smallcap100 jumped 2.73 per cent during the week.

Investors are looking for cues from upcoming US labour market and inflation data for further clarity on the Fed's policy trajectory. Domestically, CPI and WPI inflation readings, along with credit growth trends, will provide key insights into India's growth-inflation dynamics.

CIAL posts record ₹502 crore profit, announces entry into airport consultancy

Kochi: The Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL) has said that it has reported its highest-ever annual financial performance, registering a record profit of over Rs 500 crore, for the first time in the company's history.

CIAL, in a statement, further said that the Board of Directors, which met for the first time under the chairmanship of Chief Minister V D Satheesan, has approved a series of strategic initiatives most notably the company's entry into the airport consultancy business aimed at leveraging the country's rapidly expanding aviation infrastructure sector. The Board also recommended a dividend of 55 per cent for shareholders for the financial year 2025-26, subject to the approval of the company's Annual



General Meeting, which is tentatively scheduled to be held in September, the statement said.

Giving details, CIAL said that in the financial year which ended on March 31, 2026, it reported a total revenue of Rs 1,220 crore, registering a 6.6 per cent year-on-year growth. "Net profit increased from Rs 499 crore in the previous financial year to Rs 502 crore, making it the first time the airport operator has recorded an an-

nual profit exceeding Rs 500 crore," it said.

It further said that the key decision to diversify into the airport consultancy segment was aimed at positioning CIAL to capitalise on the projected expansion of India's aviation infrastructure, as investments exceeding Rs 50,000 crore are expected in this sector over the next decade. The company intends to offer specialised consultancy services, like airport master planning, runway development, cargo infrastructure, ground handling services, duty-free operations, commercial development and real estate management, to airports across India, CIAL said. It further said that it handled 1,14,42,583 passengers during the 2025-26 financial year, while recording 73,134 aircraft movements.

L&T obtains a massive ADNOC offshore deal valued at more over Rs.15,000 crore



New Delhi: The offshore hydrocarbon division of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) said on Tuesday that it has received an order from ADNOC Offshore for a significant project in West Asia worth over ₹15,000 crore. As the project's primary partner, L&T Energy Hydrocarbon Offshore (LTEH Offshore) will carry out the project through a consortium arrangement. The project entails the construction of several offshore facilities. The majority of the project's scope, including the engineering, procurement, construction, installation, and commissioning of offshore facilities,

will be carried out by LTEH Offshore. Upgrading current facilities is another aspect of the effort. Using the company's integrated engineering, procurement, construction, installation, and commissioning capabilities, a large amount of the fabrication work will be done in L&T's fabrication yards. L&T classifies orders valued at more than ₹15,000 crore as "ultra-mega". The company did not disclose the project's precise order value. "This prestigious award from ADNOC reflects the trust our clients place in L&T's engineering excellence, project execution capabilities and

unwavering commitment to delivering complex energy infrastructure projects safely and on schedule," said S N Subrahmanyan, chairman and managing director of L&T.

"As a long-standing partner in the region, we remain committed to supporting the UAE's energy ambitions through innovative, sustainable and world-class offshore solutions," he added. LTEH Offshore provides engineering, procurement, construction, installation and commissioning solutions for the offshore oil and gas industry. It has in-house engineering capabilities, fabrication facilities and a dedicated fleet of marine vessels. The business has delivered shallow-water and deep-water field developments across geographies. Over the past four decades, it has executed offshore projects involving fixed platforms, subsea pipelines and structures, brownfield upgrades and decommissioning work.

SBI Chief Setty admits India missed the boat on digital payments leadership

Mumbai: State Bank of India (SBI), the country's largest lender, may have missed the bus on digital payments, with Walmart-backed PhonePe and Google Pay already capturing a dominant share of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) market, Chairman C S Setty said on Friday.

Even a lender of SBI's scale would find it difficult to catch up with these entrenched players despite its efforts to build its digital ecosystem through YONO, Setty said at the bank's post-earnings press briefing. "I think we have definitely missed the payments bus, and it is too late to catch up. Through YONO Pay, we are trying to get at least our own loyal customers to use the platform, and we are seeing good traction. But we are nowhere near the players you mentioned. I don't think any bank can reach the kind of volumes they have built." He was responding to a question on why banks like SBI have ceded space to UPI apps like PhonePe and Google Pay.

According to data from the Nation-



al Payments Corporation of India, PhonePe and Google Pay together account for nearly 80 per cent of UPI transactions by volume. In contrast, SBI's app ranked 19th among UPI applications, processing just over 23 million transactions worth

nearly ₹6,000 crore in a month. Recently, the Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, was passed by the Lok Sabha, amending the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, thereby empowering the government to decide which digital

payment instruments should remain free and which can attract charges. The change replaces the existing mechanism linked to the Income Tax Act, 2025, opening the door for the government to introduce a merchant discount rate (MDR) on UPI transactions in the future.

"We will have to see the fine print and whether the government chooses to exercise the enabling provisions in the Act. As of now, it is only an enabling provision. We'll have to wait and see what the final framework looks like," he said. This week Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra said discussions on the structure of a potential MDR for UPI are still premature, adding that continued investment is needed to further strengthen the real-time payments system.

A MDR is the fee a merchant pays to accept digital payments. It is charged as a percentage of the transaction value, while customers pay nothing extra. The fee is shared among the entities that facilitate the transaction.

Taylor swift music purged from white house and trump campaign posts

Washington: Some Taylor Swift songs have been removed from social media videos posted by President Donald Trump’s campaign and the White House, which has used two of the American superstar’s songs over the past week.

The White House and a representative for Swift did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Swift has not spoken recently about Trump, although she endorsed his Democratic rival, then-Vice President Kamala Harris, in 2024. During the 2020 campaign, Swift posted on social media that Trump was “WELL AWARE we do not want him as our president.” Trump has repeatedly criticized Swift. After she endorsed Harris, the Republican said on social media, “I HATE TAYLOR SWIFT!” Last year he wrote: “Has anyone noticed that, since I said ‘I HATE TAYLOR SWIFT,’ she’s no longer ‘HOT?’” Dozens of artists, including Sabrina Carpenter and Ariana Grande, have called on the Trump administration not to



use their songs.

The Trump campaign used two Swift songs over the last week on its TikTok page. One, playing on her lyrics, featured the caption: “Red (Donald Trump’s Version). Red (Taylor Swift Wrote A Whole Album About Republicans). Donald Trump. Everything Has Changed (At Our Southern Border). Donald Trump. We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together

(The Biden Harris Administration). Donald Trump. The Last Time (An Autopen Runs The Country).” It referenced famous songs by the pop star. In June, Trump’s campaign posted a video on the short-video platform with Swift’s new “Toy Story 5” song “I Knew It, I Knew You.” The short video was captioned “Nobody loves our country & the American People more than @President

Donald J Trump.” It showed him interacting with children at the White House, dancing at a UFC match and appearing at a rally.

It was the third time the Trump administration or his campaign had used one of the Grammy Award-winning pop star’s songs in recent months. In April, the White House shared a video showing the crew of Artemis II meeting with Trump at the

White House the day before. The video used Swift’s “High Infidelity” and lyrics from the song: “Do you really want to know where I was April 29th?” The White House shared another TikTok video in November featuring “The Fate of Ophelia” from Swift’s “The Life of a Showgirl” album, which had been released the month before. That video featured images of the U.S. flag, monuments and various photos of Trump, including his 2023 arrest mugshot.

That post garnered widespread social media reaction and led to a White House spokesperson telling multiple news outlets the video was created because the Trump administration knew news outlets “would breathlessly amplify them.” The communications team for Trump, who is prolific on social media, has posted an array of hit songs with images including Trump’s immigration crackdown, U.S. military operations against Iran and the arrest of former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

Greenland Puts Trump-Linked Oil Firm on Notice Over Drilling



Greenland has issued a warning to a US oil company linked to supporters of President Donald Trump after the firm brought drilling equipment ashore without obtaining prior approval from authorities, according to reports.

The company, Greenland Energy, is preparing for exploratory oil drilling in the Jameson Land region, where it plans to drill an initial well. More equipment is expected to arrive in September, with drilling reportedly scheduled to begin in October. Greenlandic authorities said the company had not received permission for the landing of the equipment and stressed that activities related to mineral exploration must be notified to and approved by the relevant authorities.

Greenland halted the issuance of new oil exploration licences in 2021 because of environmental concerns. However, UK-based 80 Mile continues to hold exploration rights in the area, while Greenland Energy is expect-

ed to take a majority stake in the project and fund the exploration programme. The planned drilling has attracted additional attention because of Greenland’s strategic importance and Trump’s repeated calls for the United States to acquire the semi-autonomous territory, which is part of the Kingdom of Denmark. Greenland Energy chairman Larry Swets has denied that the drilling project is connected to Trump’s ambitions for Greenland. The company’s links to prominent Trump supporters, however, have drawn scrutiny.

Environmental groups and authorities are also watching the project closely because the proposed drilling area is covered by conservation protections under the Ramsar Convention. The dispute comes as Greenland seeks greater control over its natural resources while balancing economic interests with environmental protection and its relationship with Denmark and the United States.

Israeli prime minister rejects U.S. 15-point framework for Gaza

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu restated his rejection of Donald Trump’s latest Gaza plan in televised remarks to his right-wing government on Sunday, even as Israel’s military has effectively halted attacks in the territory under pressure from the U.S. President.

Netanyahu is in campaign mode as he seeks re-election at a vote due on October 27 but is caught between far-right ministers angered by concessions in Gaza and his key military backer, Trump, who wants progress toward ending the conflict there with a new 15-point peace plan. Israel has scaled back attacks in Gaza since Monday, when Nikolay Mladenov, the Gaza envoy for Trump’s Board of Peace that oversees the Gaza ceasefire, met with Netanyahu.

A source familiar with Israel’s position said it had agreed that the military would only act against what it perceives as immediate threats in Gaza and no longer carry out targeted assassinations as it had been doing on a near-daily basis. Trump announced last month that there had been a breakthrough in his plan to end the war, to which both Israel and Hamas agreed, with Israeli forces withdrawing as Hamas disarms and an International Stabilization Force working with a new Palestinian police force to secure the enclave. But complications have swiftly emerged. Israel has said that Israeli troops in Gaza would not move before Hamas disarms. Hamas has insisted that Israel halt attacks

before it begins implementing the part of the agreement dealing with its arms.

“Israel does not accept the 15-point document,” Netanyahu said at the start of a meeting with cabinet ministers. The military “will not carry out any withdrawal until Hamas is disarmed ... it means heavy weaponry, lighter weaponry, all weaponry. “And we are talking about genuine disarmament, not fictitious disarmament,” he said, noting that Israel is in talks with the United States on the plan. Netanyahu made similar remarks in a social media post on Tuesday. “They (the U.S.) have ideas, some of which are acceptable to us and some of which are unacceptable to us,” Netanyahu said without elaborating. Basem Naim, a senior Hamas official, told Reuters on Sunday that the group remained committed to the roadmap agreed with mediators in Cairo 10 days ago. “We expect the mediators and the U.S. guarantor to press Netanyahu and his government to adhere to the roadmap and not obstruct the process for internal political and electoral reasons, while continuing to jeopardise the region’s security and stability.” Far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich praised Netanyahu.

“We went to war with a central goal: the destruction of Hamas,” he said in a statement. “The (military) cannot withdraw even a millimetre from the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip cannot begin any process of reconstruction before the complete dismantling and

demobilization of Hamas and the Gaza Strip.” Trump said last month that Iran-backed Hamas, which ruled Gaza for nearly two decades before carrying out the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel that triggered the Gaza war, had agreed to lay down its weapons. Hamas avoids the use of the term “disarmament” and said the group agreed to hand over weapons to be stored under a U.S.-backed Palestinian technocrat administration that would run the affairs in Gaza under the supervision of Trump’s Board of Peace.

Hamas said it agreed to the plan in order to spare the people in Gaza a possible resumption of war, but it added that the implementation of the deal would depend on Israel first meeting its own commitments, including withdrawal. Since the U.S.-mediated agreement reached in October to end the war, Israel had vowed to hunt down every militant who had taken part in the October 2023 attack before stopping the targeted attacks on Monday. More than 1,250 people have been killed in the Israeli attacks since the ceasefire, most of them civilians, according to Gaza health officials. Hamas has not disclosed the number of its fighters killed. Israeli troops have occupied and depopulated two-thirds of the enclave, leaving nearly all its more than 2 million residents confined to a tiny strip of land under Hamas control along the coast, most in makeshift tents or damaged buildings.

Houthis attack Saudi Aramco; Iran sets Hormuz reopening conditions



Yemen’s Houthi said they attacked an oil facility Sunday in southwestern Saudi Arabia, the latest attack by the Iranian-backed rebels on the kingdom. Meanwhile, Iran has made new demands about the restart of negotiations and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and the Pentagon is pressing the US defence industry to accelerate production of weapons.

Yahya Saree, a military spokesperson for the Houthis, said they targeted an Aramco refinery in the city of Jazan with a drone. The attack was in response to Saudi drones’ breaching Yemen’s airspace over the provinces of Hajjah and Saada, he said. Early on Sunday, the Saudi Energy Ministry reported a fire at a facility belonging to the Aramco refinery without casualties. The ministry said the fire was extinguished but it didn’t describe its cause. Sunday’s Houthi attack is the latest in a series of missile and drone attacks that targeted Saudi Arabia and its shipping in the Red Sea. A Yemeni government official said Sunday that the Houthis also attacked a crucial port on the Red Sea.

Fayed al-Noman, assistant undersecretary of the information ministry, said the Houthis fired missiles and drones on the Mocha port. It’s one of the main ports under Yemen’s internationally recognised government, renovated in recent years to handle

shipping that avoids the Houthi-held ports in Hodeida. There was no immediate comment from the Houthis. The escalation threatens to reignite Yemen’s civil war more than four years after a 2022 truce stopped major fighting in the impoverished Arab country.

Speaking to reporters in Tehran on Sunday, Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said an “exchange of messages through intermediaries” is continuing with the United States, but that doesn’t constitute negotiations. “From our perspective, negotiations cannot resume until the violations of the memorandum of understanding have ended and the United States has remedied the provisions of the memorandum that it violated,” he said. He added that negotiations with Oman about “new maritime routes” through the Strait of Hormuz were “in the final stages.”

“This, however, does not mean that the Strait of Hormuz will reopen,” Araghchi said. “An agreement on the routes may be reached, but reopening the strait is subject to a number of other conditions, which have been conveyed through intermediaries.” Similarly, Iran’s powerful Supreme National Security Council has said the Strait of Hormuz will not open until the United States “corrects its behaviour,” issuing new demands that could shake up talks on a deal to manage the waterway. Iran’s

state broadcaster published the statement by the council’s secretary, Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr, who is also a commander in the powerful Revolutionary Guard.

The United States must never threaten Iran again, the statement said, and must permanently end the war with Iran and its armed allies in the region. The US must lift the naval blockade of Iranian ports and withdraw its military from the area. It must “completely compensate” Iran for war damage, lift sanctions and “unconditionally” release frozen assets. The US, which has wanted an acceptable deal first on the strait before ending the blockade, had no immediate comment. According to the interim deal signed in June, a schedule to end sanctions and plan on compensation would be part of the final deal, and negotiations would address frozen assets. According to the US Central Command, the blockade has redirected 53 commercial vessels, disabled two, and boarded two through Saturday.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement Saturday that the department was actively focused on boosting munitions acquisitions to provide “the weapons our warfighters need at the pace the threat demands.” The war with Iran has used up more of the US military’s already diminished stockpiles of advanced missile intercep-

tors, says a new analysis from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. Parnell said the push for speedier delivery was part of a broader modernisation effort that predated the five-month-old conflict.

The Strait of Hormuz, crucial to global supplies of oil and natural gas, was considered an international waterway before the war. But Iran and Oman are working to finalise a temporary deal that would reopen the strait with ships entering the strait through a route close to Iran and exiting through a route close to Oman, according to two people familiar with the talks who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly. Ships would cross the strait without paying fees or tolls during the interim period. The agreement is designed to restore an earlier, separate agreement between the US and Iran and restart a 60-day clock for the two countries to negotiate over Iran’s nuclear program.

According to the two people who spoke about the talks, the deal is endorsed by members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and expected when finalized to be jointly announced by Iran, Oman, the US, and the International Maritime Organization of the United Nations. But the people stressed the terms could still change before the deal is final.

Covent Garden victims stabbed in the back with pair of scissors, court hears



A woman has appeared in court accused of stabbing four men in the back with a pair of scissors in one of London’s busiest tourist districts.

Stella Gollovena, 47, is accused of attacking Patrick De Barr, Thomas Harding, Adrian Lovett and Mantas Jankus during the attack in Covent Garden on Wednesday lunchtime. She has been charged with four counts of wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm and one count of possession of an offensive weapon, a pair of scissors,

in a public place.

Gollovena, of no fixed address, faced the five criminal charges for the first time in a hearing at Highbury Corner magistrates court on Thursday afternoon. The hearing was told police were flagged down in Endell Street, a popular tourist area filled with bars, theatres and restaurants, at about 12.25pm by one of the injured victims. He and a second man reported being stabbed, before the suspect was chased and Tasered. The court heard police took statements from four men who were treated in hospital for stab wounds to their backs, while a fifth person said at the scene that they had also been stabbed but did not want to give a statement to police. It is alleged Gollovena had a pair of scissors – also described as a “pair of shears” – on her when she was arrested.

The deputy chief magistrate, Tan Ikram, remanded Gollovena in custody until the next hearing at Snaresbrook crown court on 3 September. Gollovena spoke to confirm her identity but did not enter any pleas to the charges. An air ambulance helicopter landed in a packed Trafalgar Square on Wednesday afternoon after the stabbings and London ambulance service said it had “treated four patients at the scene and took them all to a major trauma centre as a priority by road”. The Met said the four men – aged 34, 39, 42 and 56 – had stab wounds but had since been discharged from hospital as their injuries were not deemed life-threatening or life-changing.

Discover 6 Lesser-Known Waterfalls in Karnataka Worth Visiting This Year



Located inside Kudremukh National Park, Hanuman Gundi Falls is a stunning 100-foot cascade surrounded by dense forests. A short walk down stone steps leads visitors to this peaceful waterfall, making it a perfect monsoon getaway. Hidden in the lush forests near Agumbe, Barkana Falls is among India's tallest waterfalls. The spectacular drop, misty surroundings and panoramic viewpoints make it a dream destination for photographers and nature lovers. Situated along the famous Kodachadri trekking route, Hidlumane Falls flows through multiple rocky tiers surrounded by evergreen forests. During the monsoon, the waterfall becomes even more spectacular with its powerful cascading streams. Located near Madikeri in Kodagu, Ermayi Falls is a hidden gem surrounded by coffee plantations and thick greenery. Its calm atmosphere and refreshing waters make it an ideal escape from crowded tourist spots. Arbi Falls is one of Coorg's lesser-known natural attractions. Nestled amid dense forests, this seasonal waterfall offers scenic beauty, cool weather and a peaceful environment for travellers looking to explore offbeat destinations. Accessible through a scenic trek near Agumbe, Onake Abbi Falls plunges dramatically from rocky cliffs into a natural pool below. The adventurous trail and untouched surroundings make it a rewarding monsoon experience. Karnataka is home to some of India's most spectacular waterfalls, with Jog Falls often stealing the spotlight. However, beyond the famous cascades lies

a collection of lesser-known waterfalls tucked away in dense forests, coffee plantations, and the rolling hills of the Western Ghats. These hidden gems offer breathtaking scenery, peaceful surroundings, and a chance to experience nature away from crowded tourist hotspots. If you're planning an offbeat getaway, here are six underrated waterfalls in Karnataka that deserve a place on your travel bucket list. Nestled amidst the lush forests of Uttara Kannada district, Sathodi Falls is one of Karnataka's best-kept secrets. Formed by several streams converging before plunging nearly 50 feet into a tranquil pool, the waterfall is surrounded by thick greenery that creates a postcard-perfect setting. The destination is especially popular among bird-watchers and photographers thanks to its rich biodiversity and serene atmosphere. Visitors can also enjoy a coracle ride on the nearby backwaters, adding another layer of adventure to the trip. The waterfall is at its most spectacular during and just after the monsoon season when the water flow is at its peak. Hidden deep inside the forests of the Western Ghats in Shivamogga district, Barkana Falls is among the tallest waterfalls in India, cascading from a height of nearly 850 feet. Despite its impressive stature, it remains relatively unknown because reaching the viewpoint requires a trek through dense forest trails. Located within the Kudremukh National Park region, Barkana offers visitors panoramic views of untouched wilderness and mist-covered hills. Adventure enthusiasts often con-

sider the trek itself as rewarding as the destination, with opportunities to spot wildlife and exotic birds along the way. Monsoon and post-monsoon months transform the landscape into a vibrant green paradise. Situated inside the scenic Kudremukh National Park, Hanuman Gundi Falls is a refreshing retreat surrounded by thick forests and rolling hills. Water tumbles down rocky cliffs from a height of around 100 feet, creating a picturesque setting that attracts nature lovers seeking peace and solitude.

A flight of steps leads visitors to the base of the waterfall, where the cool mist and crystal-clear water provide welcome relief from the tropical heat. The surrounding forests are home to diverse flora and fauna, making the journey equally enjoyable for wildlife enthusiasts.

The best time to visit is between July and October when the waterfall is in full flow. Located near the pilgrimage town of Sringeri, Sirimane Falls is an ideal destination for families and weekend travellers. Unlike many remote waterfalls, Sirimane is relatively easy to access while still offering a calm and uncrowded atmosphere. The water descends in multiple rocky tiers before collecting in a shallow natural pool. The forested surroundings and soothing sound of flowing water make it a perfect spot for picnics and relaxation. Local authorities have also developed basic visitor facilities, making the location comfortable for tourists without disturbing its natural charm. Magod Falls is another hidden marvel tucked away in Uttara Kannada district.

Here, the Bedti River plunges dramatically over rugged cliffs in two distinct stages, creating a breathtaking spectacle, especially during the monsoon season. The waterfall is surrounded by dense forests and offers spectacular viewpoints that overlook the valley below. Unlike many commercial tourist destinations, Magod retains its raw natural appeal, making it ideal for travellers looking to escape city life. Early morning visits often reward tourists with mist-covered landscapes and stunning sunrise views. While Abbey Falls is gradually gaining popularity, it still remains overshadowed by many of Karnataka's larger attractions. Located amidst sprawling coffee plantations near

Madikeri in Kodagu district, the waterfall offers a perfect blend of natural beauty and easy accessibility. Visitors reach the viewpoint by walking through aromatic coffee estates lined with pepper vines and spice plants. The waterfall crashes down from about 70 feet into a rocky gorge, creating a mesmerising sight during the rainy season. A hanging bridge provides an excellent vantage point for photography while allowing visitors to safely admire the powerful cascade. The ideal time to explore Karnataka's waterfalls is during the monsoon and post-monsoon months, typically from July to November.

Heavy rainfall replenishes rivers and streams, making the waterfalls more dramatic and visually stunning. However, travellers should exercise caution during periods of intense rain, as slippery trails and rising water levels can pose safety risks. Winter months from November to February also offer pleasant weather for sightseeing, trekking, and photography, although the water flow may be less intense compared to the peak monsoon season.

Before setting out, check local weather conditions and road accessibility, as some waterfalls are located in remote forest areas where routes may temporarily close due to heavy rainfall. Wear sturdy trekking shoes with good grip, carry rain protection during the monsoon, and pack sufficient drinking water and snacks, especially for destinations requiring longer hikes. Visitors should also avoid venturing into restricted zones or swimming in deep pools where currents can be unpredictable. Respecting local guidelines, avoiding littering, and preserving the natural surroundings help ensure these beautiful destinations remain pristine for future travellers. Unlike heavily commercialised attractions, these lesser-known waterfalls offer a more intimate connection with nature. The absence of large crowds allows visitors to enjoy peaceful surroundings, hear the soothing sounds of cascading water, and immerse themselves in Karnataka's remarkable biodiversity. Many of these waterfalls are located within or near the Western Ghats, a UNESCO-recognised biodiversity hotspot known for its dense evergreen forests, endemic wildlife, and scenic landscapes. Exploring these destinations often means discovering charming villages, coffee estates, winding mountain roads, and local cuisine along the way, making the journey just as memorable as the destination itself.



How this travel loophole opens up Scotland's hidden highlands

The majestic wooden-hulled cruise ship glides through the cobalt waters of Scotland's Sound of Mull, accompanied only by a sea eagle and a breaching minke whale. Now approaching the brooding Highland massifs, it shows no signs of slowing. But this is no typical cruise ship. Thanks to its tiny size, it squeezes through a razor-narrow inlet, where all 10 passengers are greeted by an otter lounging on the craggy shore. There is an appreciative murmur and a clink of Champagne glasses. Moments later, a four-course Scottish farm-to-table dinner is served.

Scotland's coastline was traditionally explored by hardy sailors or aboard giant cruise ships. But an obscure maritime rule has helped create a very different kind of cruising here: tiny luxury vessels carrying no more than 12 passengers into lochs, inlets and anchorages beyond the reach of mega liners. In the 1990s, as ever-larger vessels became increasingly impractical for accessing smaller isles and lochs, skipper Rob Barlow set out to create small-scale, authentic Scottish seafaring experiences from Oban. He and his family made canny use of a legal quirk: under Scottish maritime law, vessels carrying up to 12 passengers are not classified as cruise ships, meaning they're not subject to the same regulations – and, crucially, costs – as the massive vessels. This opened up some of Scotland's wildest and least accessible coastal landscapes to a new kind of traveller.

In 1996, the family launched Hebrides Cruises with the 12-passenger Elizabeth G, a converted Norwegian rescue vessel with compact private cabins, a saloon, bar and restaurant. The ship's maiden voyage was more cosy than luxurious, featuring tasteful

tartan décor and traditional Scottish music playing in the background. But the vessel's "open bridge" policy meant that passengers could chat with the captain, creating a social but intimate feel, and its petite size allowed it to squeeze into the narrow entrance of Loch Spelve on Mull, get close enough to the white sands of Gallanach on Muck for a wet-footed beach landing and spend the night anchored off the uninhabited Monach Isles. Hebrides Cruises eventually acquired two more vessels, including the hot tub-sporting 10-passenger Emma Jane and the yacht-style, eight-passenger Lucy Mary. "We grew from a family belief that Scotland is best experienced slowly and at close quarters, not simply viewed from afar," says Barlow's daughter Emma Fairbairns, Hebrides Cruises' shore manager. More operators followed, including the family-run Argyll Cruising, Skarv Lines and The Majestic Line. But the Scottish tourism industry was initially sceptical, say Majestic Line founders Ken Grant and Andy Thoms, who faced doubters in the early 2000s when converting their two old, wooden hulled fishing boats. "[The market] didn't exist at the time," says Grant.

The pair persevered, turning their vessels into bespoke 11-passenger cruise ships with ensuite cabins, a saloon, dining areas and panoramic windows. And the new Scottish cruise formula was set: small ships that could thread through sea lochs beneath Highland mountains, anchor off remote beaches and slip into tiny harbours. They also swapped casinos and buffet restaurants for expedition-style excursions, communal dining on fresh Scottish produce and even the opportunity to catch mackerel with the crew for that day's lunch off a deck low enough to the water to make it possible. On small ships, the skipper can react quickly to track wildlife and easily switch overnight anchoring plans, bringing visitors even closer to Scotland's swathes



of marine mammals, from pods of dolphins and porpoises to humpback whales and orcas, as well as splashing otters, red deer and bushy-tailed red squirrels.

Scotland's small ship cruises also stop at postcard-pretty villages like Tobermory and Plockton, known for their traditional pubs and shops. "The wildlife thrills when you're on the water, but the wee communities and the historical legacies are an essential part of the pull," says Norton. "On these small ships, you experience

them without the crowds you get on the mega ones." And standards for Scottish travel experiences are nudging ever higher, adds Fairbairns. "More people are seeking comfort, quality and depth of experience and Scotland's islands and coastline offer that." With guests increasingly expecting local produce, the Oban-based ships snare their fresh seafood from the fishmonger on the pier and often stop in Loch Spelve to send the chef across on the tender to pick up a bag of just-landed mussels. Today, the industry contin-

ues to grow. From pontoons in Oban that were custom-built in 2017 to accommodate demand, Scotland's small-ship fleet navigates along the entirety of the 200-year-old Caledonian Canal, even stopping in Loch Ness where no mega liner could ever dare go. It drops anchor at Britain's most remote pub, the legendary Old Forge in community-run Knoydart. It even ventures far north across the Pentland Firth to tiny isles in Orkney where communities are delighted to meet them, as large vessels never call.



ENTERTAINMENT

Diljit Finds
Spotless Japan
Without Bins



Mumbai : Punjabi superstar singer and actor Diljit Dosanjh seems to have been awestruck by the cleanliness in Japan. The actor who is currently in the country, was seen trying hard to find a place to throw a piece of garbage on the roadside dustbin. Diljit stated that the country is extremely clean and not a piece of litter will ever be seen on the streets. In the video shared by the superstar singer, he was seen lauding the beauty and cleanliness of Japan followed by some more fun exploration of the country. From its local food to its shipping, Diljit was seen exploring it all. He wrote, "“BEFORE EUROPE TOUR JATT EXPLORING BEAUTIFUL JAPAN Jaldi Milde An Europe AURA WORLD TOUR 2026 (sic) ." Earlier too, Diljit was seen giving a sneak peek into his travel diaries from Tokyo in Japan. In the pictures and videos, Diljit was seen exploring the vibrant streets of Tokyo while enjoying Japanese delicacies. He had also treated himself to a delicious ice cream, followed by exploring local shops, capturing moments from his fun-filled outing. Meanwhile, Diljit Dosanjh had recently made headlines after extending his support to students following the Delhi Police’s alleged use of violence to disperse thousands of students and youth activists during a CJP-led protest march to Parliament on July 20.

Batwara 1947: Sunny Deol leads with Rs 60 Crore salary while Preity Zinta secures Rs 10 Crore

Mumbai : Sunny Deol and Preity Zinta are gearing up to reunite on the big screen with Batwara 1947, Rajkumar Santoshi’s Partition drama that was previously titled Lahore 1947. Ahead of its theatrical release, reports about the film’s budget and the remuneration of its actors have emerged.

Sunny is reportedly the highest-paid member of the cast, commanding a fee significantly higher than his co-stars. The film also marks Preity’s return in a substantial leading role after a long absence from the big screen. According to reports, Batwara 1947 has been mounted on an estimated budget of Rs 150 crore. Of that, Sunny is said to have taken home Rs 60 crore for playing the lead role.

Preity, meanwhile, has reportedly been paid Rs 10



crore. The film brings the two actors together years after their previous collaborations, which include The Hero: Love Story of a Spy, Farz and Bhaiji Superhit. Veteran actress Shabana Azmi also plays an important part in the Partition drama, though details about her reported remuneration have not surfaced.

Ali Fazal is said to make a special appearance in the film and has reportedly charged Rs 7 crore for his role. Bat-

wara 1947 takes inspiration from playwright Asghar Wajahat’s acclaimed Urdu work Jis Lahore Nai Vekhya O Jamiyai Nai. The story is set in Lahore in the immediate aftermath of the 1947 Partition and examines its consequences through the lives of ordinary people.

Batwara 1947 takes inspiration from playwright Asghar Wajahat’s acclaimed Urdu work Jis Lahore Nai Vekhya O Jamiyai Nai. The story is set in Lahore in the immedi-

ate aftermath of the 1947 Partition and examines its consequences through the lives of ordinary people. Her presence initially creates friction, but the equation between her and the new occupants begins to change with time. The story uses their relationship to examine displacement, communal divisions and the human bonds that survive political upheaval.

Apart from Sunny, Preity and Shabana, the cast includes Karan Deol, Kanika Kapur and Abhimanyu Singh. Aamir Khan Productions has backed the project, with Aamir Khan and Aparna Purohit serving as producers. The film also reunites director Rajkumar Santoshi with Sunny after their earlier collaborations. AR Rahman has composed the music, while Javed Akhtar has penned the lyrics.

Deepika Padukone Shares A Hilarious Reel About Her Toddler Daughter Dua



Mumbai : Deepika Padukone may be away from the silver screen for now, but she continues to keep fans engaged through candid glimpses of her life as a mother. The actor, who is expecting her second child with husband Ranveer Singh, recently shared a humorous Instagram reel that struck a chord with parents, especially those juggling pregnancy while raising a toddler. The light-hearted post reflects the everyday realities of motherhood, something Deepika has increasingly embraced on social media since welcoming daughter Dua. On Instagram, Deepika reposted a funny reel featuring a pregnant mother trying to follow medical advice about avoiding heavy lifting. The catch? Her toddler insists on being carried. The video shows the expectant

mother repeatedly giving in to her child’s requests, despite being advised not to lift anything heavy during pregnancy. Its caption read, “Don’t lift anything over 20 pounds during pregnancy.

Me this entire pregnancy." The relatable clip quickly resonated with mothers online, with many sharing similar experiences of balancing pregnancy and parenting.

Tom Holland’s Spider-Man Review: Big Smiles, Bigger Hopes

Washington : Singer Nick Jonas has given While Spider-Man has the entire New York to cheer for him, Peter Parker (Tom Holland) is all alone. The biggest battle he fights in Spider-Man: Brand New Day isn’t against a supervillain but the darkness he has brought upon himself. Spider-Man: Brand New Day is like a rebirth of Peter Parker in the lives of those he has grown up with. At the same time, Marvel gives Spider-Man a villain who mirrors him, equally lonely, equally frustrated, and driven by a singular mission. But does Spider-Man: Brand New Day live up to the enormous expectations? The answer is yes. Spider-Man:

Brand New Day starts with a world unaware of Peter Parker’s existence, thanks to Doctor Strange. While he is a superhero with a mask on, nobody knows him beyond that. He has just one goal: to save New York from every danger that sets its sights on the city. He works closely with Captain DeWolff and makes sure that the people of the city live a happy and fearless life.

One day, an unknown danger beyond the confines of the human brain enters New York, and now it’s Spider-Man against the threat. While keeping Peter Parker’s identity hidden, everyone’s very own friendly neighbourhood Spider-Man

must end this danger and not only save New York but also save his lady love, MJ (Zendaya). Your cute superhero is challenging his dark side in this film, and while he nearly loses the battle against the darkness, he comes back and makes sure that he doesn’t let either side of himself slip away. When the villain forces him to choose between Peter Parker and Spider-Man, the film reminds us why the two can never truly exist without each other. The film explores Peter’s loneliness, his longing to belong, his fear of having no one to rely on, and the emotional burden of carrying the weight of the city on his shoulders. Tom Holland isn’t playing



Spider-Man anymore; he has become the character. One can see in his eyes the longing, the pain, and the urge to be recognised by one of his own. This film shows a mature side of the character. This time, he is not

the nerdy, funny guy, but a grown-up man, and through him, you feel the pain. Without sharing too much, it will be safe to say that your favourite superhero can make you cry yet again, but this time, happy tears. Zendaya

as MJ feels more personal and close to the heart this time, and definitely, their off-screen chemistry works its magic on screen. Zendaya and Tom are effortlessly beautiful together.

Sadie Sink is one of the best things about the film, and her character is the biggest surprise you are going in for. Without revealing much about her character, one can safely say that while you will enter the theatre for your love for Tom Holland, you will exit as a Sadie Sink fan. While Tom Holland, Zendaya, and Sadie Sink are undoubtedly the film’s biggest strengths, Hulk’s return to his original form adds another layer

of excitement, especially with Avengers: Doomsday on the horizon. Though the green giant has limited screen time, his appearance leaves a lasting impact and becomes one of the film’s biggest talking points. The beautiful part is that Brand New Day doesn’t pitch Spider-Man against the backdrop of a world crisis or multiversal danger. Rather, it tells the story of a young man who has lost everything in the process of saving the same world. A perfect follow-up to an event film like Spider-Man: No Way Home, but also a nod to the current MCU timeline and the new Avengers.

Ramanand Sagar’s Grandson Backs South Actors Sai Pallavi And Yash For Ramayana



Mumbai : The Shri Ramlila Mahasangh has requested a preview screening of the upcoming film ‘Ramayana’ which stars Ranbir Kapoor, before its worldwide theatrical release to avoid alleged inaccurate depictions of this mythological epic similar to Prabhas-starrer Adipurush, which was released in 2023.

According to the press note by the Ramlila Mahasangh, Arjun Kumar, President of Shri Ramlila Mahasangh, has written a formal letter to the ‘Ramayana’ filmmakers demanding that the film be screened for a delegation of the Mahasangh before its theatrical release this Diwali, both in India and overseas. In his letter addressed

to director Nitesh Tiwari and the film’s production company, Arjun Kumar recalled the controversy surrounding the earlier mega-budget film Adipurush, which involved several objections from members of the Sanatan community and those associated with traditional Ramlila performances after the release of the movie.

Among the concerns raised were “the depiction of Lanka in black instead of gold, and the portrayal of Ravana and his army in a manner that did not align with traditional beliefs,” as per the press note, which also impacted the film’s box office performance. “According to information

received by the Mahasangh, Ramayana may also contain certain scenes that could hurt the sentiments of Hindus living in India and abroad. In light of this, the organisation has requested a special preview screening to ensure that any potentially objectionable scenes or dialogues are identified and removed prior to release,” said Arjun Kumar as quoted in a press note. The President of Shri Ramlila Mahasangh also warned that if the makers fail to comply with this request, Shri Ramlila Mahasangh, along with various Hindu organisations, will stage protests and demonstrations outside cinema halls in Delhi and other states.

Ramayana’s trailer was released during the auspicious Brahma Muhurat and opened with the introduction of Yash as Ravana. He is seen emerging from the shadows before entering his grand palace and declaring his rule over the three worlds. As darkness spreads, Lord Vishnu is reborn on Earth as Prince Rama. Ranbir Kapoor appears as Lord Rama, while Arun Govil plays King Dasharatha, introducing Rama to the people of Ayodhya.

The trailer also gives a glimpse of Rama and Sita’s wedding, with Sai Pallavi playing Sita. The emotional moments continue as Rama accepts Kaikeyi’s wish brother Lakshmana, played by Ravie Dubey.

Sunny Deol Recalls Dharmendra’s ‘Pakistan Meri Mausi’ Comment, Sidestepping Political Debate

Mumbai : Sunny Deol cautiously avoided political remarks during the promotional event of his upcoming film Batwara 1947. When asked about his views on the neighbouring country, he recalled his father and legendary actor Dharmendra’s famous line, where he referred to Pakistan as his “mausi” (maternal aunt). During the event on Sunday, when Sunny Deol was asked about his views on Pakistan, he first clarified that the movie had been shot in India and not in Pakistan. He said, “Ye vahan par nahi shoot kiya hai, ye Hindustan me shoot kiya hai.” Then, while sharing why he was avoiding commenting on political matters, he spoke about the two countries’ shared history and added, “Hum feel ki baatein nahi karte because pura mulk ek hi tha. Jaise papa ne kaha ki ye meri maa hai aur vo meri mausi hai – ye toh aap log sab achi tarah se jante hain. Hum sab ek tarah se hain toh jude hue kahn na kahin se.” (We don’t dwell on those differences because the whole



country was once one. Like my father said, ‘She is my mother, and she is my aunt’, you all know that very well. In one way or another, we’re all connected to each other from somewhere.) Further stressing why he keeps avoiding political discussions, he added, “Main us sab me zyada jana nahi chahta lekin hum actors

hain, we are makers. Hum kahaaniyaan chunte hain aur kahaaniyan banate hain. Usko phir hum yahan vahan, usko politically nahi le ke jate hain aur na jana chahte hain. Isiliye main us sabki baat hi nahi karuga.” (I don’t want to get into all of that too much. We are actors; we are storytellers. We choose stories and bring

them to life. We don’t take them here or there or turn them into political issues, nor do we want to. That’s why I don’t want to comment on any of it.) The film stars Karan Deol, Ali Fazal, and Abhimanyu Singh and marks the much-awaited reunion of Rajkumar Santoshi and Sunny Deol after nearly three decades.

Huma Qureshi Backs Kiara Advani, Saying Women Get The Last Laugh

Mumbai : The conversation around Toxic has intensified ever since its first song, Tabaahi, dropped online. While the track generated buzz for its chemistry between Yash and Kiara Advani, it also sparked criticism directed at Kiara over her intimate scenes. Now, actor Huma Qureshi has weighed in on the debate, calling out the double standards that often surround female actors and expressing confidence that the film itself will answer its critics. Speaking during an appearance on Be A Man, Yaar! by Yuva, Huma said the team is choosing to let their work speak louder than the online chatter. During the conversation, host Nikhil Taneja pointed out that Kiara received significantly more criticism than Yash for the romantic scenes in Tabaahi, despite



both actors being married. Reacting to the observation, Huma didn’t mince words. “It’s sick. It’s disgusting, absolutely. But I think women in this film, the actresses and the directors will have the last laugh. There’s no point in trying to defend something at all because you can’t change people’s mindset with words. I would just let the film do the talking,” she said. Her brother, actor Saqib Saleem, who was also part of the discussion, echoed a similar sentiment.

“Kaun hai yeh log? I think the world is a very kind place, but the internet is not,” he remarked. Following the release of Tabaahi, Kiara Advani found herself facing criticism from a section of social media users over her intimate scenes with Yash. The discussion gradually moved beyond the song itself, with some users dragging Kiara’s personal life into the conversation. Trolls also began leaving comments on husband Sidharth Malhotra’s social media posts, linking the film to their marriage. Meanwhile, Yash, who is also married, drew comparatively less criticism, prompting conversations online about whether female actors continue to be judged more harshly than their male counterparts for similar on-screen performances.

Karan Johar Explains How His First Friends Changed Life Into Family



Mumbai : Karan Johar marked Friendship Day with a deeply personal note about the people who helped him move past childhood loneliness, self-doubt and some of the most difficult phases of his life.

In a five-part Instagram post, the filmmaker looked back at growing up as an only child, struggling to fit in and eventually finding friendships that have endured for decades. Blending humour with vulnera-

bility, Karan wrote about his first friend, Farzana Muncherjee, his school bond with Dharma Productions CEO Apoorva Mehta and the support he received while his mother, Hiroo Johar, spent 15 days in the ICU. Karan began the post with a memory of watching other children play cricket from the window of his building. Describing himself as a “plus-size seven-year-old,” he joked that he was far more interested in hopscotch becoming a national sport than joining the boys outside. “I used to look outside of my building

window as a PLUS size 7 year old,” he wrote, adding that he felt incapable of either “making a run or making a run for it”. The humour, however, masked a deeper sense of isolation. His next thought, he recalled, was, “Why don’t I have any friends?” Karan said being an only child gave him what he jokingly called “the greatest gift of all time... self pity”. At that stage, his world largely revolved around his bedroom and his own insecurities. That changed when Farzana Muncherjee entered his life.

Messi targeted in chilling bomb threat linked to FIFA World Cup terror plot

New Delhi: Argentine football icon Lionel Messi was reportedly the target of the most serious threats against footballers during the 2026 FIFA World Cup, with a police dossier detailing alleged plans to attack him with explosives. The security reports also recorded threats against other players, officials and referees during the tournament. According to a report by Spanish outlet Informacion.es, security agencies from the United States and participating countries worked through an FBI-coordinated network to monitor terrorism alerts, violent threats and suspicious activity throughout the tournament. The dossier reportedly identified Messi as the footballer who attracted the highest



number of threats. One of the most serious incidents emerged in Dallas, where Argentina played Jordan. A man reportedly contacted Dallas airport and claimed that he and two others were travelling towards the stadium carrying "homemade bombs and an AR-15". The threat was directed at police officers and players from both teams, with

Messi specifically mentioned. The dossier also recorded another alarming threat ahead of Argentina's match against Egypt in Atlanta. An X user allegedly threatened to enter the stadium and attack Messi with explosives strapped to his body. The threats against Messi went beyond online abuse, according to the police reports. In the Dallas

incident, the caller reportedly claimed that he and two others were heading towards the stadium with homemade explosives and an AR-15, while specifically naming Messi among the targets. Another threat emerged before Argentina's match against Egypt in Atlanta, when an X user allegedly wrote that they were about to enter the stadium and attack Messi with four bombs attached to their body. The security response was subsequently heightened. During the Atlanta match, police also received another call claiming that three bombs had been placed in separate bins inside the stadium. Explosives specialists, canine handlers and K-9 teams were deployed to search the venue.

PM Modi urges students to keep curiosity, learning instinct alive

New Delhi, Aug 09: Addressing the 57th convocation ceremony of IIT Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged students to question things that are accepted without a thought. He insisted that they should not only question but also show courage to find solutions, adding that challenges will turn into opportunities for those who dare to find new solutions to challenges. PM Modi also advised the students to keep their curiosity alive in life and keep their learning instinct alive. He said the more empowered the youth of the country are, the more empowered the entire country will be. Modi said India is now working towards becoming self-reliant in every sector; whether it is economic self-reliance, technological self-reliance, or industrial



self-reliance; this forms the strong foundation of 'Viksit Bharat'. Highlighting the profound emotional resonance of the ceremony, he reflected on the vibrant, dream-filled atmosphere of the campus. Congratulating the students and their families on their academic achievements, Modi emphasised that their degrees represent much more than academic success, serving as a

mandate to contribute to the nation. He extended special praise to the medal recipients and celebrated the launch of new AI initiatives at the institute. "You are stepping out from here with a dream of doing a lot for the country," he said. Reflecting on the whirlwind journey of the students, Modi vividly recalled their transition from orientation day to convocation, acknowl-

edging the diverse aspirations, from landing first salaries and building startups to pursuing further competitive exams, that fill their minds. "You must absolutely have a lot of satisfaction from this remarkable journey and the enthusiasm of starting a completely new chapter in life," he said. Referring to the rapidly shifting geopolitical and strategic global landscape, the prime minister identified the relentless speed of technological advancement as the primary catalyst for these massive global transformations. He framed this era of rapid change as a dual landscape of unprecedented challenges and vast new opportunities. "Amidst all this rapid change, remember my words: the one who continuously learns is the one who will win," he said.

NCP, Shiv Sena MPs attend Modi event amid political gathering

New Delhi, Aug 09: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a piece of advice for parliamentarians who have crossed 40 years. "Practise yoga regularly and get a health check-up done every year," Modi told a group of MPs who met him at breakfast on Friday. Modi had a breakfast meeting with around 45 Lok Sabha MPs at his residence. The lawmakers, who recently joined the ruling NDA from TMC and UBT-Shiv Sena to the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) and Shiv Sena, respectively, attended the meeting. The three Muslim MPs of the NCPI—Khalilur Rahaman, Yusuf Pathan and Abu Taher Khan—who earlier skipped the NDA parliamentary party meeting 'Mangal Milan' twice were also present. The MPs described the breakfast meeting as a "great interaction", noting that the PM emphasised the collective identity of the NDA as a "family". Modi advised those who crossed the age of



40 to practise yoga regularly and get a health check-up done every year, NCPI MP Satabdi Roy said. "PM Modi asked who amongst us does yoga. He spoke about the development of eastern and northeastern regions," another leader, NCPI's Sudip Bandyopadhyay, said. "We had a conversation regarding the development of the North-East region of the nation.

We will work to fulfil PM Modi's vision," she said. Invitees included RPI (Athawale) chief and union minister Ramdas Athawale, Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) president and Rajya Sabha member Upendra Kushwaha, AIADMK leader M Thambi Durai, who is a Rajya Sabha member, and UPPL chief and Rajya Sabha member Pramod Boro.

Ten years after Chopra's gold, Ashish Yadav wins U20 silver

New Delhi: Ashish Yadav has given Indian javelin another reason to look forward, winning silver in the men's event at the 2026 World U20 Championships in Oregon, exactly a decade after Neeraj Chopra became the first Indian man to win a javelin medal at the competition. The 19-year-old produced a best throw of 74.09m to finish second behind South Africa's Jan-Hendrik Heymans, who won gold with 80.50m.

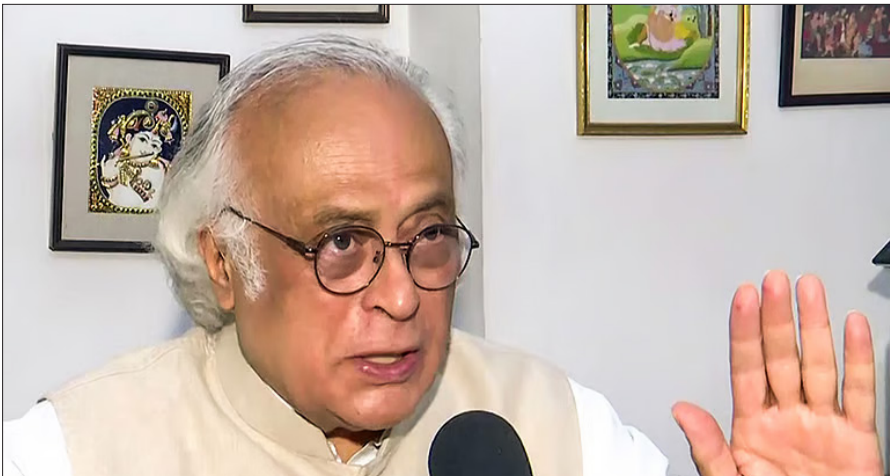


Dominica's Addison James took bronze with 73.89m. Yadav's silver makes him only the second Indian man to stand on the World U20 Championships podium in javelin, follow-

ing Chopra's gold in Bydgoszcz in 2016. Yadav's medal came after a final that demanded a response from him. He opened with 69.96m and then fouled his second attempt, putting himself under pressure early in the competition. He responded with his third throw, sending the javelin 74.09m to move into sec-

ond place. He followed that with 72.31m, 70.62m and 67.98m, but none of the athletes behind him could produce a throw good enough to knock him off the podium. The performance was just short of Yadav's personal and season's best of 74.49m, but it was enough to deliver a major international medal at the biggest competition of his junior career. The silver was not entirely unexpected after Yadav's performance in qualification. He topped Group A with 69.87m and finished second overall, behind Heymans, who won Group B with 76.02m. Heymans was the only athlete in qualifying to clear the automatic qualification mark of 72.50m. The South African also established himself as the clear favourite in the final. He opened with 76.92m and followed it with 76.40m, giving himself a sizeable cushion over the field. After a foul in the third round, Heymans remained in control before producing his decisive effort in the final round.

Congress demands Home Minister address police excesses, PM respond to 'chanda chori' allegations



New Delhi, Aug 09: The Congress on Saturday said Parliament has not functioned for 15 consecutive days because Home Minister Amit Shah lacks the courage to face MPs and answer queries on police

'brutality' against students and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not spoken on the 'chanda chori' issue. In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that the "boastful duo full of bluff and bluster" has

now been exposed as "cowardly". "Parliament has not functioned normally for 15 consecutive days for one and only one reason: The Union Home Minister has refused to come to both Houses and give a statement on police

brutalities on protesting youth and students, especially on July 20," Ramesh said in his post. On July 20, the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) 'Sansad Chalo' march to Parliament had turned violent with clashes erupting between police and students. The Congress leader said Shah comes to his chamber and sits for long hours but lacks the courage to face MPs in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha to answer questions about the Delhi Police's actions against students protesting the NEET paper leak in the national capital last month. These actions are directly under his charge and control, he said. "His continued absence is unprecedented," the he not-

ed. "Parliament has another four days in this session. The Union Home Minister must first speak on police excesses. The Prime Minister must speak on the 'Chanda Chori Aastha Dhoka' by the very Trust whose creation he had so grandly announced on the floor of the Lok Sabha on February 5, 2020. His hand-picked Trust has betrayed the trust and faith of all Indians, and he cannot remain silent on it," the Congress leader said. Since the Monsoon Session began on July 20, Congress and other opposition parties have stalled proceedings in both Houses of Parliament over the issues of police action against protesting students and the alleged Ram temple donation theft.

Anahat Singh eyes Olympic glory after clinching World Junior squash championship title



New Delhi: Anahat Singh has already created history by becoming the first Indian to win the World Junior Squash Championship. But for the 18-year-old, the landmark triumph is not the destination. It is another step towards a much bigger dream — representing India at the Olympics. Squash will make its Olympic debut at the Los Angeles 2028 Games, and Anahat is already looking at the road that could take her there. The 2026 Asian Games will be her first major opportunity, with the Continental Games offering one of the routes to Olympic qualification. "I mean, of course, I think ever since squash has been part of the Olympics, and even before that, it has been every squash player's dream. The Olympics is every athlete's dream. Right now, the next two years are really important for me to make sure that I can qualify for the Olympics," Anahat told India Today in an exclusive interview. Her immediate focus is on the Asian Games, but Anahat is aware that there are multiple routes to Los Angeles. The Indian teenager, who is currently ranked World No.20, is determined to take the qualification process one step at

a time rather than allowing the enormity of the Olympic dream to overwhelm her. "My first shot is, of course, the Asian Games, but just in case I'm not able to make it through there, there are still other ways to qualify for the Olympics. I think the next two years are about taking it step by step and making sure I'm able to reach the Olympics. If I do, I'm going to put in everything to make sure I can somehow win a medal at the Olympics. That would be a great achievement," Anahat added. The confidence comes after a breakthrough junior campaign in Canada. At the World Junior Championships in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Anahat entered the tournament as the top seed and lived up to her billing, winning five of her six matches in straight games. She defeated Australia's Lilly Wilson in the opening round before getting past Hong Kong China's Pui Yin Chloe Lo and Malaysia's Doyce Ye San Lee. In the quarter-finals, she overcame Egypt's Habiba Rizk 11-7, 11-5, 6-11, 11-9 before beating Barb Sameh 11-3, 8-11, 11-4, 11-6 in the semi-finals. The final saw Anahat face another Egyptian opponent in second seed

Ruqayya Salem. She made a commanding start, winning the opening game 11-3 before taking the second 11-7. Anahat then held her nerve in the third game to close out an 11-9 win and seal the title in straight games. The 11-3, 11-7, 11-9 victory made Anahat the first Indian to win the World Junior women's singles title. It also ended Egypt's 13-year dominance of the event. For Anahat, the title was another major milestone in a rapid rise through the international rankings. Earlier in 2026, she won the Squash On Fire Open after defeating then-World No. 10 Georgina Kennedy in the final. That victory helped her become the youngest Asian player to break into the world's top 20. Now, however, the challenge is to translate her junior success into sustained success on the senior circuit. And while expectations around her have naturally grown, Anahat is keen to ensure they do not become a burden. I mean, of course, there would be more expectations from others and from myself, but I think specifically at this Asian Games, there are still so many top players who are a lot better than me.

Rijiju criticises Opposition demand for Amit Shah's presence in Parliament

New Delhi, Aug 09: Even as the deadlock in Parliament entered the fourth week of the Monsoon Session over the Opposition's sustained protests on Union Home Minister Amit Shah's absence in the two Houses, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday launched a counterattack, saying that Shah's name "sends shivers down the spine of terrorists" and that the Opposition "will not be able to digest" when the Home Minister speaks in Parliament. Rijiju's remarks came after Opposition members stepped up the protests in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, targeting the government over Shah's absence and their demand that he make a statement on the alleged police crackdown on protesting students. "When Amit Shah responds in the House, the Opposition won't be able to digest," Rijiju told the protesting members. It was expected



that Shah would reply to the debate on the proposed amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) next week. As per procedure, the minister who has listed business has to come to the House. "You cannot dictate which minister will come to the House and who will respond. That is decided

by the government and the Chair," said Rijiju. In the Rajya Sabha, Congress president and LoP Mallikarjun Kharge asserted that the Chairman, CP Radhakrishnan, had issued a direction to Amit Shah. However, Rijiju dismissed the claim. On Thursday, Radhakrishnan had asked Rijiju to "echo the

sentiments" of the Opposition to the home minister as the Opposition members continued with their demand for a response from Shah. "The LoP is misleading the House. There has been no direction by the Chair. I am saying this on the record: from the time Parliament begins in the morning till it ends at night, the HM is in Parliament. There has been no direction issued for any minister to come to the House. You leave after 11 am, but the HM stays," said Rijiju. Responding to Rijiju, Congress MP K C Venugopal said, "The biggest joke in Parliament was Rijiju's statement. There was a discussion on the examination bill, he could have come." Kharge said the Opposition was raising genuine questions concerning the country and its 140 crore people. "We are asking the Home Minister and the Prime Minister to come to the House.

Korea Masters: Rakshitha Ramraj shocks Tanvi Sharma to storm into semi-finals

New Delhi: In a battle of teenagers, Rakshitha Sree Ramraj defeated the in-form Tanvi Sharma in the women’s singles quarter-final of the Korea Masters Super 300 in South Chungcheong Province on Friday, August 7. The 19-year-old fought back from a game down in a thrilling contest to beat the third seed and progress to the semi-finals. Rakshitha Sree will take on compatriot Ashmita Chaliha, who defeated top seed Hina Akechi of Japan in another quarter-final on Friday. All three Indian shuttlers who have impressed in Korea will not be part of the BWF World Championships, which begin on August 17 in New Delhi. Rakshitha, 19, who won the Vietnam International Challenge in



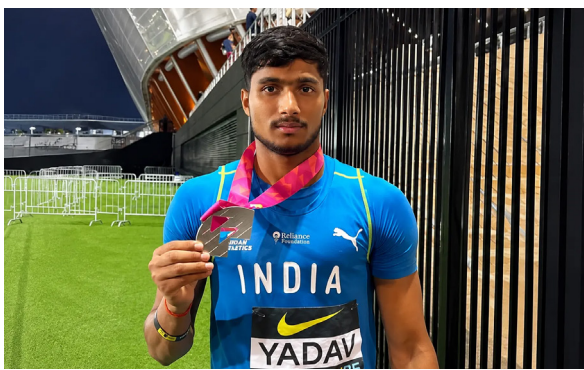
March, produced one of the biggest wins of her season by defeating World No. 30 Tanvi, who arrived in fine form after winning her maiden Super 300 title in Taipei last week. Incidentally, Rakshitha extended her head-to-head record

against Tanvi to 4-0. Despite losing the opening game, Rakshitha bounced back after making a few tactical adjustments to win the quarter-final 18-21, 21-18, 21-19 in one hour and one minute. Rakshitha raced to a 13-8 lead in the

opening game before Tanvi mounted a remarkable comeback, reeling off eight of the next nine points to turn an 8-13 deficit into a 16-14 lead before closing out the game. The second game was another closely fought affair. Rakshitha held a narrow two-point advantage at the mid-game interval and eventually earned two game points after Tanvi found the net. She squandered the first but converted the second when Tanvi sent her return wide. The decider followed a similar pattern, with Rakshitha taking a slender two-point lead into the interval. The scores were locked at 14-14 before Tanvi faltered at the crucial stage, committing three unforced errors to hand Rakshitha a 19-16 lead.

Ashish Yadav wins javelin silver, opens India’s medal account at U20 Worlds

Eugene: Ashish Yadav won a silver in the men’s javelin throw event to open India’s medal account on the third day of the World Athletics U20 Championships here. Yadav’s third round throw of 74.09m fetched him the silver medal while T Dharanidharan, the other Indian in the fray in the men’s javelin throw finals, finished sixth with 72.35m. The 19-year-old Yadav became the second Indian, after two-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra, to win a silver in the event. Chopra had won gold and set the still-standing world junior record of 86.48m in the 2016 edition in Poland. The gold medal went to South Africa’s Jan-Hendrik Heymans who sent his spear to 80.50m, the season’s U20 world



lead, in his sixth and final attempt. Congratulating Neeraj Chopra on winning the silver medal in the men’s javelin throw final, Rajnath Singh said the athlete’s “fantastic display of skill and determination” had made the achievement possible. “Congratulations to @Neeraj_chopra on securing the Silver Medal in the Men’s Javelin Throw Final at the Com-

monwealth Games 2026. His outstanding performance has brought immense pride to the nation. His fantastic display of skill and determination in the game made this possible. My best wishes for the endeavours ahead,” Rajnath Singh wrote on X. The Defence Minister also hailed Tejaswin Shankar for winning bronze in the men’s decathlon despite

battling an injury, calling his achievement historic as he became the first Indian athlete to win a Commonwealth Games medal in the event. “Despite battling an injury, Tejaswin Shankar displayed remarkable grit and determination to secure the Bronze Medal in the Men’s Decathlon event at the Commonwealth Games 2026. Congratulations on this well-earned podium finish. This is a historic achievement, as he has become the first Indian athlete ever to win a Commonwealth Games medal in the decathlon. His resilience and fighting spirit in the face of adversity are truly commendable. Wishing him a speedy recovery and many more milestones as he continues to bring glory to the nation,” he said.

Storms force the Washington Open finals, with Pegula leading Eala

Mumbai: World number three Jessica Pegula and promising talent Alexandra Eala are set to compete in the Washington Open finals on Monday, as severe thunderstorms hindered the completion of their match originally scheduled for Sunday. The delay has created anticipation for the clash between Pegula, a seasoned player on the WTA tour, and Eala, who has been making headlines with her impressive performances. After a prolonged delay caused by a three-hour thunderstorm, Pegula successfully secured the first set of the championship match with a score of 6-4. At the time the match was interrupted again due to returning rain, Eala was ahead in the second set with a score of 2-1. More than five hours of poor weather conditions forced organizers to suspend play at a hardcourt tournament in Washington, delaying the resumption until Monday. This affected both the women’s and men’s finals; the women’s final will resume at noon local time, while the men’s final is scheduled for 1 p.m. American top seed Jessica Pegula, aiming for her 12th WTA title and third of the year, will face 21-year-old Filipina tennis player Alex Eala, who is in pursuit of her first WTA title. Their paths to the final included Pegula defeating Eala in a semifinal match earlier this year. During the time played before the rain, Pegula demonstrated strong form by breaking Eala early in the first set and hitting 14 winners compared to Eala’s four, despite both players having 20 unforced errors.



Why are Gabby Williams and Marina Mabrey not participating? Tempo vs. Valkyries injury report

Chennai: Marina Mabrey and Gabby Williams will not be participating in the upcoming regular-season game, which significantly impacts both the Tempo and Valkyries teams. Their absence leaves these teams without two key players, potentially affecting their performance and strategy in this crucial match. Marina Mabrey and Gabby Williams, two prominent players, will not participate in the upcoming WNBA game between the Golden State Valkyries and the Toronto Tempo. Mabrey has been sidelined due to a neck injury, while Williams is absent as she continues her conditioning program following her recovery from a back injury.

Both teams are set to face a significant regular-season matchup, but they will be missing key contributors due to absences. The Valkyries bring a strong 19-9 record into the game, while the Tempo struggle with a 10-18 record, attempting to break



a challenging stretch amidst ongoing unavailability of several important players. Marina Mabrey has been sidelined due to a neck injury, marking her first absence from a game since June 27. This setback comes at a challenging moment for the Toronto team, as Mabrey has been pivotal to their performance this season, leading the team in scoring and ranking among the league’s top three-point shooters with an average of 21.2 points per game. Toronto’s offensive strategy will need to be revised due to the absence of key player Brittney Sykes, who is sidelined with a plantar fascia injury in her left foot. Additionally, the team is also coping without forward Aneesah Morrow, who is un-

dergoing reconditioning following her recent trade from the Connecticut Sun. These injuries will require adjustments to the team’s approach on offense as they navigate these challenges. Isabelle Harrison’s status for the game is uncertain due to a knee issue, which raises concerns for the Toronto team as they prepare for tip-off. This development adds to the team’s injury challenges and could impact their performance in the upcoming match. Gabby Williams is currently ruled out as she focuses on reconditioning and conditioning work in preparation for her return to play. She is recuperating from a significant back contusion sustained on July 8 against the Tempo.

Pitcher Freddy Peralta is traded by the Mets to the Rays for 3 minor leaguers

New Delhi: The New York Mets, currently in last place, made a significant trade by sending starting pitcher Freddy Peralta to the Tampa Bay Rays in exchange for three minor league players on Sunday. This move reflects the Mets’ strategy to rebuild their team by acquiring prospects for their future. Peralta, a notable two-time All-Star, has not met expectations since joining the Mets through a trade with Milwaukee in January.

As he approaches free agency post-World Series, he presents potential for the pitching-heavy Rays. The Rays currently lead the American League with an impressive record of 65-45, holding a 3 1/2-game advantage over the New York Yankees in the AL East standings. Acquiring Peralta could significantly enhance their already strong rotation. The New York Mets acquired outfielder Aidan Smith, infielder Emilien Pitre, and right-handed pitcher Gary Gill Hill in a trade that sent Peralta to another team. This transaction occurred just one day prior to the Major League Baseball trade deadline, which is set for 6 p.m. EDT on Monday. New York traded prospects Brandon Sprout and Jett Williams to the Brewers in exchange for pitcher Peralta and right-hander Tobias Myers. This decision involved parting with two players ranked in the top 100 pros-



pects, as the team aimed to secure Peralta as a key starting pitcher to enhance their rotation. In the context of a struggling season, he posted a 5-9 record with a 4.99 ERA across 22 starts, highlighting his challenges on the mound. After achieving a 5-5 record with a more respectable 3.90 ERA following a win against Atlanta on June 14, his performance deteriorated significantly. In his subsequent seven starts, he failed to secure a victory, going 0-4 while suffering from a troubling 7.93 ERA. This decline reached a low point during a particularly poor outing on June 20, where he allowed a staggering 10 runs and 10 hits in just 2 2/3 innings against Philadelphia, failing to complete five innings in four of his last five games for the Mets.

Travis Head edges Alex Carey to claim his second straight Allan Border Medal



Sydney : Australian batter Travis Head has become the fifth cricketer to win back-to-back Allan Border Medals

after edging out wicketkeeper-batter Alex Carey in a tightly contested vote. Meanwhile, Mitchell Starc won the

Shane Warne Men’s Test Player of the Year award, while Mitchell Marsh and Tim David were named the top ODI and T20I players respectively, according to cricket.com.au. Travis Head received his second consecutive Allan Border Medal from former Australia captain Allan Border at an event in Brisbane on Friday. Last year, Head won the Allan Border Medal by a big margin and was close to winning several other awards too. This year, he secured the honour by a narrow margin after votes from players, umpires and media. Head edged South Australian teammate Alex Carey by one vote and Mitchell Starc by three votes. His match-winning 163 in the New Year’s Test at the SCG, his third century of the Ashes series after moving up to open the batting, played a key role in helping him secure the award.

India’s CWG boxing stars reveal inspiring stories behind their journey into the sport

New Delhi: Five Gold medal winners. Five Indian girls. Five historical wins. The country applauded Naari Shakti but few know about the struggles for them to reach the podium. India Today’s Pooja Shali met the Commonwealth Games 2026 gold medal winners in Delhi to find out their story from Hometown to Glasgow. Arundhati Chaudhary lived in Rajasthan’s Kota, known as the coaching capital for medical and engineering entrance examinations. Arundhati’s father expected the same route for her but she rebelled. “I like punching, I used to get into fights and even beat up boys in school. The principal called my parents and informed them



that I have been suspended.” “Papa wanted me to get into an IIT. But that was not my real nature. So, father suggested I choose solo sports, and I chose boxing.” Shifting from the obedient “Good Girl” narrative, Arundhati suggested a new name – “Goon Girls.” Four out of five girls hail

from Haryana’s Bhiwani, also known as ‘Mini Cuba’ for training maximum Boxers. For Priya Ghangas, she took to the sport in childhood. “I started boxing at 10 years of age. I was naughty and liked to fight, so boxing was fun. When Vijender Singh won Olympic bronze, I was also inspired to

win for India.” A decade later, she held the Gold medal in her hand. Sakshi Chaudhary’s risk-worthy decision to change her weight category paid rewards. “I went from 54 kg to 51 kg.. We did not eat the day before. No water allowed the night before. Plus, the pressure before the bout. The first time I arrived at the CWG event and saw the international crowd, I felt overwhelmed and wondered if I would succeed. I had additional pressure to win the Gold medal because I had changed the weight category and performed well during trials. As I started to win every bout at CWG and gained confidence, I maintained the pace.”

Fermin’s tiebreaking hit in 4-run 9th helps Cardinals beat Blue Jays 5-1, escape series sweep

Mumbai: The St. Louis Cardinals secured a 5-1 victory against the Toronto Blue Jays, preventing a three-game sweep. The pivotal moment came in the ninth inning when José Fermin recorded a tiebreaking single, contributing significantly to the Cardinals’ score and overall win. Matthew Liberatore delivered an impressive performance by pitching six shutout innings, showcasing his skill on the mound. Following him, George Soriano contributed one inning, securing the win for the team. The Cardinals managed to break an eight-game losing streak against the Toronto team thanks to a decisive four-run rally in the ninth inning, which ultimately determined the outcome of the match. St. Louis achieved a victory, marking their fifth win in 17 games



since the All-Star break. This win is notable as the team scored more than three runs in a game for the first time since their 7-0 triumph against Cincinnati on July 25. In the ninth inning of the game, Blue Jays closer Louis Varland faced off against Masyn Winn, who was walked to start the inning. Winn then progressed to third base following a base hit from Bryan Torres. Ultimately, he crossed home plate on Fermin’s

line drive single directed toward center field. Varland had a remarkable performance, maintaining a streak of not allowing any runs since July 10 during a game in San Diego. However, the inning progressed with two outs when Torres scored due to a throwing error made by second baseman Luis Urias. This misstep was followed by Jordan Walker, who came up to bat and delivered a significant two-run single, which resulted in Varland being taken out of the game. The recent matchup saw the four runs scored by Varland equal the number he allowed in 13 appearances in June. The St. Louis Cardinals opened the scoring in the third inning when Nathan Church, running from first base, crossed home on a two-out double hit by Lars Nootbar.

My PhD in constructive self-talk is improving my performance: Bronze medallist in CWG Discus Seema

Bengaluru: Seema Kalirama, a bronze medallist in discus throwing at the Commonwealth Games, attributes her recent success to her doctoral research on imagery and positive self-talk, which she is applying in her training regimen. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Chaudhary Bansi Lal University in Haryana, India, she focuses on the influence of mental strategies on athletic performance, actively incorporating these principles into her pre-competition preparation. Seema secured the bronze medal in Glasgow with a throw of 58.65 meters, mark-



ing a significant comeback after finishing just 16 centimeters shy of a medal at the 2025 Asian Championships. This prior experience motivated her to better prepare physically and mentally for the Commonwealth Games. She emphasized the importance of optimizing her mindset for competition and managing

her physical state—knowing when to intensify her effort, improve recovery, and understand the biomechanics of her performance. Competing under challenging weather conditions in Glasgow, which included cold and windy influences that complicated her grip on the discus, Seema acknowledged

the lessons learned for future competitions, particularly the upcoming Asian Games in Japan scheduled for September 19. Her husband and coach, Ravinder Kalirama, asserted that had the weather been more favorable, their performance might have garnered a different medal color. Despite receiving a warm homecoming with celebrations, Seema emphasized her commitment to preparing for the Asian Games and indicated that there would be no break before the next competition, focusing entirely on her training and strategy to ensure success.