

Rangpur-Sivasagar ensemble nominated for UNESCO world heritage status

Guwahati, Sep 6: The Rangpur-Sivasagar Ensemble, the historic capital of the Ahom dynasty that ruled large parts of present-day Assam for nearly six centuries, has been formally nominated by India for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the development in a social media post on Friday night, stating that India had formally submitted the Rangpur-Sivasagar Ensemble for World Heritage status under criteria three and four of the UNESCO framework.Under criterion three, a site must provide unique or exceptional evidence of a cultural tradition or civilisation, whether living or extinct. Criterion four recognises outstanding examples of buildings, architectural or technological

ensembles, or landscapes that illustrate an important stage in human history.

The nominated ensemble contains some of Assam's finest surviving examples of Ahom-era architecture, including temples, palaces, large water tanks and remarkable engineering structures. Among its most prominent monuments is the Rang Ghar, widely regarded as one of Asia's oldest surviving amphitheatres.Sarma said the nomination builds on UNESCO's recognition of the Charaideo Moidams in 2024. He described the two sites as complementary elements of Ahom heritage, with Charaideo representing the resting place of the dynasty and Rangpur-Sivasagar representing the centre from which it ruled.

The Chief Minister also thanked Prime Minister Na-

rendra Modi for supporting efforts to secure international recognition for Assam's historical and cultural heritage. The nomination follows the UNESCO World Heritage recognition granted to the Charaideo Moidams, another major legacy of the Ahom period.The Ahom dynasty was founded by Swargadeo Chaolung Sukapha in 1228 and remained in power until 1826. During its nearly six-century rule, the dynasty established a distinctive political, cultural and architectural tradition across the Brahmaputra Valley.

The latest nomination also comes amid growing concerns over the vulnerability of Assam's heritage sites to extreme weather events. Severe floods in Upper Assam in July highlighted the risks faced by several historic monuments.

Multi-stakeholder consultation on juvenile justice act held in Guwahati

Guwahati, Sep 6: Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota on Saturday addressed a multi-stakeholder consultation on "10 Years of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: Reflections on Progress, Challenges, Opportunities and the Way Forward", organised by the Juvenile Justice Committee of the Hon'ble Gauhati High Court, with the support of the State Child Protection Society (SCPS), Assam, Department of Women & Child Development, Government of Assam, and UNICEF.

The consultation, held in Guwahati, brought together Justice Kalyan Rai Surana, Chairperson, Juvenile Justice Committee; Dr. Madhulika Jonathan, Chief,

UNICEF Office for Assam and North-Eastern States; Mukesh Chandra Sahu, Additional Chief Secretary; along with judicial officers, senior Government officials, members of CWCs and JJBs, and representatives from legal services, academia and civil society.In his address, the Chief Secretary said a child must never be reduced to a case or a file. "The true measure of the system lies in its ability to protect dignity, provide timely support, enable rehabilitation and create pathways towards a safe, stable and productive future," he said.

"The next phase must mark a decisive shift from systems to outcomes, from protection to empowerment, and from intervention to lasting



rehabilitation, with greater focus on family based care, restoration and reintegration wherever appropriate," he said."This requires stronger convergence across the judiciary, police, child protection institutions, district administration and other stakeholders, supported by

robust data driven monitoring and accountability. What happens to a child after leaving institutional care must matter as much as what happens while in care," he added.

"The voices of children and young people who have experienced the system

must remain central to this process. Their experiences should help shape the way institutions function, services are delivered and policies evolve," he said. The Chief Secretary further said the deliberations need to translate into measurable commitments, clear timelines and regular review, with a focus on tangible improvements in the lives of children.

He expressed confidence that a united effort could help build a juvenile justice and child protection system in Assam and across the North Eastern States where every child is treated not merely as a beneficiary of the law, but as a person whose dignity, potential and future matter.

Assam farmers to be taken to Bihar for first-hand exposure to makhana cultivation: minister

Guwahati, Sep 6: Assam Agriculture Minister Pijush Hazarika on Saturday visited Assam Makhana Udyog, a makhana processing unit at Topatoli in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district, along with Dimoria MLA Tapan Das, and took firsthand knowledge of the processing and value-addition of makhana.

During the visit, the Minister also explored the Durung area to witness makhana cultivation and interacted with local farmers to understand their experiences, opportunities and challenges associated with the crop.Speaking to mediapersons during the visit, Minister Hazarika said makhana is a valuable and profitable crop with immense potential in Assam.

He said the State has a large number of wetlands, including beels and low-lying areas, which can be utilised for expanding makhana cultivation and creating an additional source of income for farmers.The Minister said the government is giving serious attention to the potential of makhana cultivation in



Assam.

He said farmers would be provided opportunities to visit Bihar, one of the leading makhana- producing regions in the world, so that they can gain firsthand knowledge and practical experience of makhana cultivation, processing and marketing. Highlighting the economic potential of the crop, Hazarika said that with appropriate cultivation practices and market support, farmers can earn significant returns from makhana cultivation. He emphasised that the ultimate objective of the Government is to substantially increase

farmers' incomes and create new and sustainable avenues of livelihood in the agricultural sector.

The Minister also highlighted the government's focus on horticulture and high-value crops, stating that fruit seedlings and saplings are being provided to farmers so that they can take up economically viable crops and derive maximum benefits from their land.Referring to the potential of agarwood (agar) cultivation, Hazarika said that agar can also become a valuable source of long-term income for farmers. He encouraged farmers to seriously

consider agar plantation as an additional avenue for enhancing their economic prospects.Hazarika said that increasing farmers' income remains a key priority of the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government.

He stressed the need to diversify agriculture, promote high-value crops, strengthen processing and value addition, and establish better market linkages so that farmers can obtain a larger share of the value generated from their produce."Our objective is not merely to increase agricultural production, but to substantially increase the income of our farmers. We must create opportunities through which farmers can double, triple and even multiply their income several times. Only then can we take Assam's economy forward," the Minister said.The visit was also attended by senior officials of the Agriculture Department, local representatives, farmers and other stakeholders associated with makhana cultivation and processing.

Meghalaya realignment: Ex-UDP leader Jemino Mawthoh set to join BJP

Shillong, Sep 6: Former Meghalaya MLA Jemino Mawthoh, on Sunday, announced that he and his supporters would join the BJP on September 12.

Mawthoh, who resigned from the UDP in May after serving the party as its vice president and general secretary for several years, said the decision was taken following a meeting with his supporters on Saturday. "I was approached by the BJP earlier as well. In fact, feelers were coming since 2020-21, but I did not want to rush, as a political decision should be very conscious," Mawthoh said. He said he would formally join the BJP at the party's state office in Shillong on September 12.

His announcement comes amid speculation in Meghalaya's political circles that as many as nine of the UDP's 12 MLAs could shift allegiance to the BJP ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections. The speculation gained further momentum after Chief Minister Conrad Sangma met Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday. While Sangma did not disclose details of the meeting on social media, sources said discussions touched upon the evolving political situation in Meghalaya and the possibility of a realignment within the ruling coalition.

Sangma, who is also the national president of the National People's Party



(NPP), briefed Shah on reports suggesting that several UDP legislators could move to the BJP, sources said. The political buzz began on August 10, when Shah met eight UDP MLAs in New Delhi in the presence of BJP's Northeast in-charge Sambit Patra. The meeting triggered speculation about a possible realignment within the ruling Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA-II), of which the UDP is a key constituent.

However, UDP president Metbah Lyngdoh denied any move towards a defection or merger, maintaining that the legislators had met Shah to discuss Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act

clearances and other pending issues concerning the state. The UDP currently has 12 MLAs in the 60-member Meghalaya Assembly, making it the second-largest partner in the NPP-led MDA government. The Trinamool Congress has four MLAs. Sources, however, claimed that the possibility of a merger with the BJP was among the key issues discussed during the meeting with Shah. Under the anti-defection law, at least two-thirds of a legislature party would have to support a merger to avoid disqualification. In the case of the UDP, eight of its 12 MLAs would need to cross over as part of a merger.

Shillong tensions escalate amid KSU ultimatum and calls for dialogue

Shillong, Sep 6: Shillong witnessed a sharp escalation in tension early Saturday after unidentified miscreants set a tyre on fire and hurled a petrol bomb at a government-regulated facility, following the Khasi Students' Union's three-day ultimatum to the state government over the violence surrounding the Shree Cement public hearing.

A burning tyre was discovered at Mawblei and was extinguished by personnel from Madanring police station at around 1:30 am. A handwritten message in Khasi was found near the site, warning against indiscriminate arrests. The message was seen as a direct challenge to the state authorities following the recent arrests of several KSU members.Around the same time, a petrol bomb was thrown at the Meghalaya Cooperative Marketing and Consumers' Federation wholesale regulated market at Mawiong Umjapung. East Khasi Hills Superintendent of Police Vivek Syiem said the incident caused no major damage, apart from minor scorching to the main entrance.

The incidents came a day after a meeting of the KSU Central Executive Commit-



tee, where the organisation gave the state government three days to arrest those allegedly involved in the violence at Lum Syрман. The KSU has accused the administration of pursuing selective justice. The or-

ganisation claims that its members are being arrested without adequate evidence, while no meaningful action has been taken against those accused of attacking anti-mining protesters during the public hearing

for the Shree Cement limestone project.The union is also reviewing the government's response to its five-point charter of demands following a meeting at the Secretariat on August 26. The latest incidents indicate

that the organisation's deadline is being accompanied by visible pressure on the ground, prompting heightened security concerns across the state capital.

Amid the growing confrontation, Cabinet Minister and former KSU president Paul Lyngdoh has urged the state government to avoid a show of strength and instead pursue sustained dialogue with the student organisation.His comments come against the backdrop of police action against KSU members in connection with the violence of August 19. The clashes broke out during a KSU rally opposing the proposed railway project and the Uniform Civil Code. With the organisation warning of intensified agitation if the arrests continue, Lyngdoh cautioned that an overly aggressive response could worsen the situation.Drawing on his own experience during Meghalaya's long history of public agitations, Lyngdoh called for a careful assessment of the government's current approach. He questioned whether the possible consequences of continued arrests—including shutdowns, social unrest and economic disruption—could outweigh the intended benefits of the crackdown.

He stressed that political leaders must conduct a clear cost-benefit assessment before taking action. According to him, every decision should be judged by its expected outcome as well as its potential impact on the state.

Lyngdoh also called for uninterrupted communication between senior government officials and KSU leaders. He argued that keeping a senior representative of the government in regular contact with the union's leadership could prevent the dispute from turning into a confrontation driven by ego or a contest over who can demonstrate greater strength.The former KSU president said there was little to be gained from allowing tensions to escalate while investigations into the August 19 violence remain underway.He further warned that a complete breakdown of law and order could have serious economic and reputational consequences for Meghalaya. His central message was that the government should keep channels of communication open and resolve the dispute through dialogue rather than allow the situation to develop into a wider confrontation.

Assam's anundoram borooah academy launches Zubeen Garg student award

Guwahati, Sep 6: Anundoram Borooah Academy in Assam's Pathsala introduced the 'Zubeen Garg Award' on Teacher's Day in memory of Assamese singer and musician Zubeen Garg.

The academy conferred the 'Zubeen Garg Award' for the first time on two students who secured top positions in their respective examinations. Jyotirmoy Das, who secured the first position in the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examination, and Arhi Rajkhowa, who secured the first position in the CBSE examination, received the awards.

Each recipient was presented with a gamosa, memento, certificate and a cash award of Rs 50,000. Garima Saikia Garg, wife of the late Zubeen Garg, presented the awards at a programme presided over by Ranjit Deka, Rector, Principal and Managing Director of Anundoram Borooah Academy.

Addressing the gathering, Garima Saikia Garg urged the younger generation to carry forward Zubeen Garg's creative legacy and work collectively for society. She appreciated the academy's decision to institute the award in

his memory and encouraged Generation Z to draw inspiration from his ideals. Speaking to journalists later, Garima Saikia Garg also spoke about the need for justice in connection with Zubeen Garg's death.She said that if Zubeen did not receive justice, it would be difficult for people to retain faith in the justice system.

"If Zubeen does not get justice, I think there will be no meaning to justice in Assam," she said, adding that Zubeen was not merely an emotion of the people of Assam but that everyone wanted him to receive justice. She expressed hope that despite delays, those responsible would eventually be punished and called for a fair investigation and appropriate action against them. She also expressed hope that the construction of 'Zubeen Khetra', a project associated with the memory of the late artist, would progress rapidly and be completed at the earliest while maintaining quality standards. In the afternoon, Assam Education Minister Ranoj Pegu visited the institution and extended Teacher's Day greetings to the teaching community.

Tawang DC Honours 62 best-performing teachers

Tawang, Sep 06: Tawang Deputy Commissioner Namgyal Angmo on Saturday felicitated 62 best-performing teachers from across Tawang district whose students secured 100 per cent results in their respective subjects in the recently declared CBSE Class X and XII examinations.

The felicitation programme was held on the occasion of Teachers' Day at the auditorium of Government Higher Secondary School, Tawang, as a mark of recognition and appreciation for the dedication, sincerity and contribution of teachers towards improving the academic performance of students in the district.Addressing the gathering, DC Angmo emphasised that teaching should not be viewed merely as employment involving classroom instruction and imparting knowledge, but as a profound responsibility of shaping an entire generation.

She urged the teachers to carry this sense of responsibility with them not only on Teachers' Day but throughout their profession-



al careers. She observed that while administrators and officers implement various schemes, provide technical support and facilitate the creation of educational infrastructure, such efforts cannot achieve their intended purpose without the crucial role played by teachers.

Acknowledging the sincerity and dedication of teachers serving in far-flung and remote areas of Tawang district despite numerous challenges, the DC expressed her appreciation for their commitment towards the education of children.She urged teachers never to underestimate the importance of their profession, pointing out that the knowledge, values and

guidance imparted by them today would bear fruit in the years and decades to come.

Highlighting the long-term nature of investment in education, she said the results of efforts made in the education sector may not always be immediately visible, but their impact is lasting and transformative.Speaking on sustainable development and the role of education, the DC called upon teachers to work with a long-term vision, keeping future generations in mind. She stressed that development should be approached from the perspective of its lasting benefits to society rather than merely focusing on short-term gains.Education,

she said, remains one of the most important foundations for creating a responsible, informed and sustainable society.

On behalf of the district administration and the people of Tawang district, the DC conveyed heartfelt gratitude to all sincere and dedicated teachers for their invaluable service and their contribution towards nation-building and shaping future generations in a positive direction. Earlier, In-charge Principal, Government Higher Secondary School, Tawang, T. Sumnyam, in her welcome address, expressed gratitude to DC Tawang for recognising and felicitating the teachers. She also thanked the participating teachers for attending the programme despite their prior engagements with Teachers' Day celebrations in their respective schools. The programme concluded with the felicitation of 62 best-performing teachers from across Tawang district, recognising their outstanding contributions towards the academic achievements of their students.

Security forces dismantle UKNA camp in Manipur's Churachandpur; 2 militants killed, arms recovered

Imphal, Sep 06: Two militants of the United Kuki National Army (UKNA) were killed and two others injured in a gunfight with a joint team of the Indian Army and Assam Rifles in Manipur's Churachandpur district.

The operation was launched at Phaibong village in the Henglep subdivision following specific intelligence inputs about the presence of a UKNA camp in the area. According to the Assam Rifles, security forces began the operation on the night of August 29 and established surveillance over the suspected camp. Troops began a tactical closing-in operation at around 5 am on September 2.

The UKNA cadres opened indiscriminate fire at around 5.30 am, prompting the security forces to retaliate with controlled fire. "Intel confirms 2 UKNA cadres neutralised and 2 injured," the Assam Rifles said in a social media post on Saturday night.



Security forces also recovered seven Lathode grenades, 15 AK magazines, 371 AK-56 rounds, 601 MA rifle rounds and 172 SLR rounds, the Assam Rifles said.

Other items seized from the camp included 15 combat uniforms, seven ammunition pouches, five backpacks, three combat bags and five pairs of jungle shoes. The camp was destroyed following the search operation, while security forces continued

combing the surrounding jungle areas, officials said. The UKNA is not a signatory to the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement involving the Centre, the Manipur government and several Kuki and Zomi armed groups. The operation is part of continuing counter-insurgency efforts in parts of Manipur, where security forces have intensified operations against armed groups operating outside the ambit of the SoO arrangement.

BJP, TIPRA motha seal alliance for Tripura village polls



Agartala, Sep 06: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday said the BJP would contest the upcoming Village Committee polls under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) in alliance

with its two partners – the TIPRA Motha Party and Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT).

The announcement came a day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a meeting with Saha and Tipra Motha founder Pradyot Kishore Debbarma amid differences between the two allies over an electoral understanding for the polls and the regional party's demand for land rights for indigenous people. Elections to 587 Village Committees of the TTAADC will be held

on September 28. The elections, originally scheduled for 2016, could not be held for various reasons. The TTAADC covers around two-third of Tripura's geographical area and a large part of the State's indigenous population, making control over tribal politics crucial for both parties.

Earlier, TIPRA Motha Party founder Pradyot Kishore had declared that there would be no alliance without a written assurance from the Centre on the implementation of the accord.

DRI, forest teams nab 2 persons for illegal possession of tokay geckos in Assam

Kaziranga, Sep 06: Two persons were apprehended for illegal possession and transportation of 12 Tokay Geckos (Gekko gekko), locally known as "Keko xap," official sources informed on Saturday.

The sources said the arrests were made during a joint operation conducted by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and the Crime Investigation Range, Biswanath Wildlife Division, Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, near Jia Bharali



Bridge in Sonitpur district around 4pm. The operation was conducted on the basis of intelligence inputs re-

ceived by the DRI and forest teams.

The apprehended persons were identified as Santush

Basfore (37), resident of Rangapara, Sonitpur district; and Ranjit Sahani (39) of Dolongbasti in Sonitpur district.The sources said that the apprehended persons and the seized wild animals were brought to the Office of the Range Forest Officer, Crime Investigation Range, Biswanath Chauriali, for further investigation.

Necessary legal action has been initiated as per the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended upto date.

Mizoram organises interaction with former Chief Secretaries

Aizawl, Sep 06: The Mizoram Government on Saturday organised an interaction with former Chief Secretaries of the State at Aijal Club under the theme "Learning from the Past for a Resilient Future."

Chief Minister Lalduhoma graced the programme as Chief Guest. Four former Chief Secretaries — Pu M. Lalmanzuala, Pu Vanhela Pachuau, Pu Lalnunmawia Chuauango and Dr Renu Sharma — attended the programme and were felicitated. Messages from former Chief Secretaries Lalkhama, F. Pahnuna, Lalfak Zuala, Haukhum Hau-

zel and L. Toichhong, who were unable to attend, were also read out by Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister Lalduhoma said the programme was not only an occasion to honour the contributions and dedicated service of former Chief Secretaries, but also an opportunity for serving officers to draw wisdom, inspiration and valuable lessons from their experiences. He observed that while the challenges faced by the State may have changed over the years, the fundamental purpose of government service — serv-



ing the people — remains unchanged.

He called upon government officials to be guided by wisdom, integrity, self-discipline and hard work, emphasising

ing that good governance requires not only effective planning and commitment but also dedication to public service. The Chief Minister said Mizoram still had

a long journey ahead in its development, adding that the State's strengths in literacy, social cohesion, unity and cooperation among its people would help it realise its potential. He also highlighted key initiatives of the present government, including the Handholding Scheme, Project Monitoring Committee, Resource Mobilisation Committee, e-Office, grievance redressal and digital land administration, and urged officers to work with renewed commitment towards development and improving the quality of life of the people.

Chief Secretary Meena

expressed gratitude to the former Chief Secretaries for their service, the challenges they had navigated and the valuable experiences they had accumulated over the years. He said the interaction was intended to provide serving officers, particularly younger officers, with an opportunity to gain fresh perspectives and inspiration from their predecessors. The Chief Secretary urged participants to engage with open minds, listen carefully and draw practical lessons from the experiences shared during the workshop to strengthen governance and

institutions in Mizoram.

The former Chief Secretaries shared experiences from their respective tenures and interacted with serving officers through discussions and a question-and-answer session. The programme also featured presentations by Home Secretary Vanlalmai and Planning Secretary David Lalthantluanga on various government initiatives and governance at the State and district levels. The workshop concluded with remarks by Principal Secretary Sudhir Kumar, followed by a vote of thanks by DM&R Secretary Sushil Singh.

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan arrives in Guwahati on 4-day NE tour, attends golden jubilee celebrations of Geetanagar College

Guwahati, Sep 06: Vice President CP Radhakrishnan arrived in Assam on Sunday on a four-day visit to the Northeast, and attended the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Geetanagar College in Guwahati.

Apart from Assam, he will also visit Meghalaya, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. During his visit from September 6-9, the Vice President will participate in a series of academic, cultural and public engagements, besides visiting institutions of historical, social and national significance. Upon his arrival at the LGBI Airport in Guwahati, he was accorded a warm welcome by Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and other.

At the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Geetanagar College, formerly known as Kanya Mahavidyalaya, in Guwahati, he congratulated the institution on completing five decades of



dedicated service to higher education. Radhakrishnan said that Geetanagar College has made a significant contribution to the educational and social development of Assam, particularly in empowering generations of young women through education, knowledge and confidence. He also inaugurated the college's new academic building.

Addressing the gathering, the Vice President described Assam as a land of rich cultural heritage and traditions. He highlighted the State's distinctive con-

tribution to India's cultural landscape through its languages, literature, music, dance, theatre and indigenous traditions. He also recalled the valour and patriotism of Lachit Barphukan, who remains an enduring source of inspiration for the nation. The Vice President highlighted the emphasis placed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the growth and development of the Northeast.

He noted that Assam, with its rich natural resources, forests and globally renowned tea, has immense

potential and is witnessing a remarkable phase of development. Emphasising the transformative role of education, Radhakrishnan said that institutions of higher learning must not merely prepare students for careers but also nurture responsible citizens committed to democracy, constitutional values, social responsibility and nation-building.

The VicePresident led the students and those present in taking a 'No to Drugs' pledge, urging young people to stay away from drugs and to encourage their friends to do the same. He emphasised that students must make responsible choices and safeguard their time, health and future. During the Assam leg of his visit, the Vice President he will also attend the Convocation Ceremony of Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences (SSUHS), Guwahati and programmes at Gauhati University.

Manipur police fire tear gas as Imphal protest over Naga killings escalates



Imphal, Sep 06: Manipur Police fired tear gas shells on Sunday afternoon to disperse hundreds of protesters who attempted to march towards the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Imphal during a rally demanding justice for six slain Liangmai Naga civilians and other indigenous people killed since the outbreak of the ethnic conflict in 2023.

The confrontation took place in the Khoyathong area of the state's capital. The demonstration was organised under the banner, "Justice for the Six Liangmai Nagas, Justice for Every Indigenous

Life Stolen Since May 3, 2023", by the Khwairamband Keithel Imasings, the Coordination Committee Imphal Area (Joint Tribe Council) and the Save Indigenous People of Manipur (SIPOM).The protest followed recent remarks by Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam in the state Assembly. SIPOM convener Mayanglangbam Bobby said the minister's remarks, which cleared a police constable and the chief of Leilon Vaiphei of involvement in the killings, had caused confusion and anger among the protesters. Amandai Thaimai, co-convener of the

Naga Humanitarian Aid Committee, warned the state and Central governments that indigenous Meitei and Naga communities would no longer remain silent. With the current Assembly session scheduled to conclude on Monday, Thaimai said communities would consider taking matters into their own hands if justice was not delivered immediately."We will not expect justice from the government again," Thaimai said. "We will take up arms; we will take up everything to defend our land and to get justice by ourselves. We will fight tooth and nail," he added.

Mandaviya promises BJP leaders that Mizoram athletes will receive help from the Center

Aizwal, Sep 06: According to a statement released by the state BJP unit on Wednesday, September 2, Union Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has promised help for developing athletic talent in Mizoram and resolving infrastructure-related problems encountered by athletes, especially boxers.

During a meeting with vice president H Malsawmtluanga and president Robinson Malsawmtluanga Hmar of the Mizoram BJP youth wing on Tuesday in New Delhi, Mandaviya made the assurance.

During the meeting, Hmar asked the Center to assist in enhancing the state's sports facilities so that more athletes could compete at the national and international levels and asked for more opportunities and assistance for Mizo youngsters in sports. He emphasized the need for contemporary sports facilities and underlined Mizoram's athletic potential, especially in light of India's planned bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games. In order to improve boxing facilities in Mizoram, including the building of a sizable, contemporary boxing hall, Hmar also



requested central help. He informed the Union minister about the Mizoram Boxing Association's many problems.

According to the statement, Mandaviya gave the BJP leaders his word that the Center will do everything in its power to support young athletes from the state and encourage sports in Mizoram.

The Union minister added that he will request that the Boxing Federation of India act quickly to resolve the

Mizoram Boxing Association's problems. Mandaviya said he was aware of the sporting talent among Mizo youth and maintained that the Centre was committed to supporting young people in the Northeast, particularly in Mizoram. He also urged Hmar to approach the Centre whenever sportspersons from the state faced difficulties or required assistance, assuring that opportunities would remain open for the state's youth in sports.

Landslide blocks Zemithang-Tawang road near Shakti village in Arunachal Pradesh

Itanagar, Sep 06: A landslide has blocked the Zemithang-Tawang road near Shakti village in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district, disrupting road connectivity in the remote border area. The blockage occurred on the road connecting Zemithang with Tawang, close to the India-China border. The extent of the landslide and its impact on vehicular movement were not immediately available. Details regarding the restoration of the road and the deployment of clearance teams are also awaited. Authorities are expected to assess the condition of the affected stretch and take necessary steps to restore connectivity.



Shakti is a remote border village in the Zemithang circle of Tawang district. The area is home to local communities as well as yak-grazing communities and lies in a strategically important frontier region. The Indian Army has fre-

quently conducted medical and civic action camps in Shakti and nearby areas, providing healthcare and other assistance to residents and pastoral communities. Road connectivity in Tawang and other frontier areas remains important for both civilian

movement and logistical access. Landslides during periods of heavy rainfall have previously affected important road links in the region, with the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) carrying out clearance and restoration work.

Meghachandra, a Manipur Congress MLA, following a blast close to her home

Shillong, Sep 06: Following an explosion close to his home in Yairipok Bishnunaha, Manipur Congress MLA Keisham Meghachandra Singh stated he will keep calling for justice and the return of normalcy to the state. Speaking about the event, Meghachandra stated that police arrived at the scene right away following the explosion. He reaffirmed that he would keep bringing up state-related problems, such as the need to update the National Register of Citizens (NRC) using 1951 as the base year. "The police arrived right away following the explosion. Meghachandra declared, "I will fight for justice and keep demanding it in this state." The Congress leader said the demand for restoration of normalcy

and resolution of the issues facing Manipur had also been raised strongly in the state Assembly over the past two days. He said Congress MLAs had raised several "core issues" concerning the state, including the demand for updating the NRC and retaining 1951 as its base year. "Regarding NRC's base year of 1951, this was also denied by the BJP government. This is the demand of the entire people of Manipur," he said, alleging that the issue had contributed to conflict in the state. Meghachandra also criticised the government over what he described as the absence of a clear roadmap to address the prevailing situation in Manipur. "There is no roadmap from the government till now," he said.

Assembly is reassured by Nagaland Dy CM following a flare-up at the Assam border

Kohima, Sep 06: On September 3, Nagaland Deputy Chief Minister Y Patton informed the state Assembly that the government was taking action to safeguard the people residing in the disputed areas and stop a repeat of the previous conflict along the Nagaland-Assam border. In response to MLA and advisor Achumbemo Kikon's overview of the issue, Patton described the events that were reported in the Mekirang/Neghrebil area of Sector D of the Disputed Area Belt (DAB) on August 25 and 26. Patton claims that at a protest on August 26, two village chairmen and a representative of the Lotha Lower Range Public Organization were allegedly beaten. On August 27, a formal complaint was filed at the Bhandari Police Station. A key step taken after the incidents was the activation of the Border Level Peace Committee by the Wokha and Golaghat district administrations.

The committee is intended to strengthen coordination between the two states, maintain peace along the boundary and prevent further confrontations. Patton also referred to the eviction dispute in the area. He said 205 households



were served eviction notices during a joint eviction drive in August 2025, of which 146 were subsequently evicted. The eviction of the remaining 59 households was stayed by the court. The Gauhati High Court, through an order issued on August 18, 2026, has since given the 59 families an additional 60 days to vacate the area, Patton said.

The deputy chief minister assured the Assembly that the state government was closely monitoring developments in the DAB and pursuing the matter at both the state and Central levels. He said the Wokha district administration, led by the deputy commissioner and border magistrates, was coordinating with their Assam counterparts to protect Naga villages, settlements and residents in the disputed areas. Patton also said the two states would work to ensure that any future eviction or plantation drives were not carried out unilaterally. "Proper mechanism" would be put in place so that such operations are conducted jointly by officials from Nagaland and Assam, he said, stressing the need to prevent a repeat of the August 25 and 26 confrontations.

Congress seeking AIUDF support for Nagaon bypoll after ending Rajjor Dal alliance, alleges Assam BJP

Guwahati, Sep 06: The Assam unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has accused the Congress of ending its alliance with Rajjor Dal with an eye on securing electoral support from All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief Badruddin Ajmal ahead of the Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election. The BJP described the Congress' decision as part of a "veiled conspiracy" aimed at securing electoral advantage in the bypoll. The BJP said Congress had joined hands with Rajjor Dal during the previous Assam Assembly election with the stated objective of preventing a division of indigenous votes, particularly in Upper Assam. The party, however, claimed that voters rejected the alliance and instead backed the BJP-led coalition, which returned to power for a third consecutive term.

According to the BJP, the ruling alliance won 102 Assembly seats, while Congress

secured 19 seats. It further claimed that the BJP-led alliance won 33 of 35 seats in Upper Assam, 14 of 15 seats in North Assam and 14 of 19 seats in Middle Assam. The BJP alleged that Congress was now looking towards AIUDF for electoral gains in Nagaon.

It claimed that Congress and AIUDF had maintained a "covert political understanding" over the years despite not always being in a formal alliance.

The party referred to the March 2020 Rajya Sabha election, when Ajit Kumar Bhuyan was elected with the combined support of Congress and AIUDF.

It also cited the 2021 Assam Assembly election, when the relationship between the two parties developed into a formal political arrangement. The BJP further alleged that Congress and AIUDF had indirectly benefited each other during the 2019 Lok Sabha election by fielding candidates strategically



in constituencies including Dhubri, Kaliabor and Nagaon. The BJP alleged that the political arrangement was based on the "politics of the minority Muslim vote bank". It claimed that Congress now considered AIUDF more

Agartala would receive two bypasses and a new flyover as the state plans a significant push to ease traffic: CM Saha

Agartala, Sep 06: The State Government intends to build two bypass highways and an additional flyover in and around Agartala as part of a significant effort to reduce traffic.

The preparation of comprehensive project reports for each of the three projects is now underway, according to Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha. In response to inquiries from MLAs Tafazzal Hossain and Sudip Roy Barman, he informed the State Assembly that the State Government intended to build a flyover that would begin at Fire Brigade Chowmuhan and travel to Ker Chowmuhan, Sankar Chowmuhan, and Durga Chowmuhan before arriving at the Radhanagar bus stop. For this 3.985-km flyover project, the PWD (Road & Bridge) has already prepared a preliminary project report following a feasibility study and is working on a detailed layout plan, typical cross-section, tentative



expenditure, request for proposal for the appointment of an agency in EPC mode and land acquisition. In reply to another question raised by Swapna

Majumder, he said the two proposed bypass roads are the Agartala Bypass (Western Branch) and the Agartala Eastern Bypass.

Keyi Panyor's development goal is presented by Arunachal MLA at the Global Food Summit in Bhutan

Itanagar, Sep 06: On Tuesday, September 1, at the first plenary of the Global Conscious Food Systems Summit 2026 in Paro, Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh MLA Toko Tatung gave a presentation on the development vision for Keyi Panyor district. According to an official release, Tatung, who represents the Yachuli Assembly constituency, was the first lawmaker from Arunachal Pradesh to attend the worldwide meeting. Leaders, Indigenous representatives, and scientists from 65 nations are attending the summit, which is jointly hosted by the Royal Government of Bhutan, the Conscious Food Systems Alliance (CoFSA), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Tatung discussed the Keyi Panyor Mission Plan 2040 (KPMP 2040), a long-term development framework, at a panel discussion titled "Rising to the Moment: Igniting Consciousness to Address the Polycrisis" on August 15, 2026. He said the plan seeks to move beyond conventional five-year electoral cycles and establish a long-term vision for the district's development. Tatung emphasised the need to integrate traditional ecological knowledge with modern science, saying sustainable development would require collaboration among farmers, scientists and local communities. He said Keyi Panyor is being developed as India's first "Bio-Happy District" in collaboration with the MS Swami-



nathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), with the initiative seeking to link biodiversity conservation with human well-being and rural livelihoods. Highlighting grassroots initiatives under the mission, the MLA referred to the Comprehensive Action Plan for Education (CAPE) and ongoing partnerships with the Participatory Action Research Coalition of India (PARCI) for promoting agroecology and natural farming. "I do not want Keyi Panyor to become a smaller copy of Delhi or Singapore. I want Keyi Panyor to become the best possible Keyi Panyor," Tatung told the gathering. The summit brought together policymakers, scientists, Indigenous representatives and other stakeholders to discuss sustainable and conscious food systems and approaches to addressing interconnected global challenges.

Goods Truck Collides with Scooter at ISBT

Guwahati, Sep 06: Ascooter rider was killed in an accident involving a goods truck at the Inter-State Bus Terminus (ISBT) in Guwahati. The truck, with registration number AS 01 NC 5345, allegedly made a sudden U-turn and collided with the scooter, registered as KR 02 LB 4750, resulting in the rider's immediate death.

Eyewitnesses claim the truck driver was under the influence of alcohol, though this allegation remains unverified by police. The identity of the deceased has not yet been confirmed. The Guwahati Police have initiated an investigation into the circumstances of the collision and the driver's condition. This incident raises concerns over road safety in Guwahati, where residents of Khetri in Sonapur have recently voiced outrage regarding another accident that killed seven people.

SC maintains the authority of the regulator to request yearly evaluations



New Delhi, Sep 06: The National Council for Teacher Education and its executive body's statutory authority to request an annual performance review report from teacher training institutions nationwide has been maintained by the Supreme Court.

"The position of an elementary school teacher is intrinsically linked to a child's growth and, for that matter, their life. In a ruling, a bench of Justices Pamidighantam Sri Narasimha and Alok Aradhe stated, "We fail to understand how a regulatory measure of a statutory body, empowered to achieve planned and coordinated development of the teacher education system in the country, could be restrained from calling upon TEIs (teacher education institutions) to file PAR." The court declared, "We believe that such a regulatory measure can always be incidental and ancillary to the duties and functions of a regulator, even in the absence of a specific empowerment under the statute." The NCTE filed an appeal contesting a Delhi High Court ruling that invalidated a "public notice" dated September 22, 2019, issued

by the member secretary of the NCTE executive committee, requesting TTIs to submit performance appraisal reports.

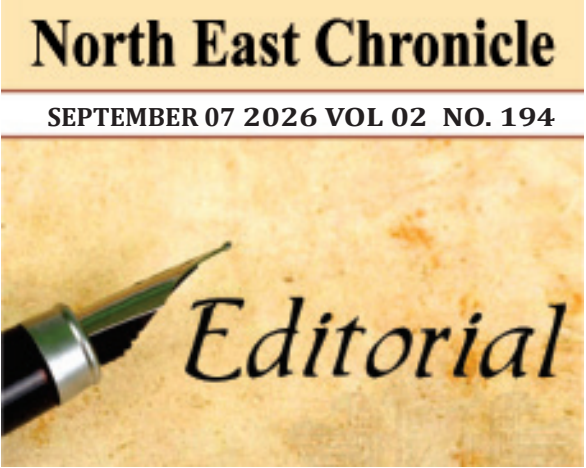
The top court granted the appeal.

The NCTE executive committee did not have such authority, according to the supreme court.

Allowing the appeal, Justice Narasimha observed that the NCTE Act was enacted in 1993 with a view to "achieving planned and co-ordinated development of the teacher education system throughout the country, the regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards in the teacher education system". "The executive committee is the body which actually discharges the functions of the council.

It is an important institution created by the statute, and has the obligation to ensure that the purpose and object of the Act... is implemented in its letter and spirit," the bench said.

"We are of the opinion that there is ample empowerment of the council as well as the executive committee to call for annual PAR from institutions imparting teacher education," it added.



India signals uncompromising geopolitical stance at SCO summit

The twenty-sixth summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, held in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek from August thirty-first to September first, 2026, marks a pivotal juncture in the geopolitical evolution of the Eurasian landmass. Celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the bloc, the summit convened under the banner of Together Towards Sustainable Peace, Development and Prosperity. As global power dynamics undergo profound transformations, this gathering reinforced the organization as a formidable institutional mechanism. For India, navigating the complex cross-currents of contemporary global political diplomacy, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation represents a truly indispensable platform for deep Eurasian regional engagement.

By dispatching Prime Minister Narendra Modi to this diplomatic theatre, New Delhi unequivocally signaled its enduring commitment to the region while simultaneously delineating firm boundaries regarding sovereignty, cross-border terrorism, and the dangers of unilateral expansionist agendas. Observers often point out the inherent paradox of India's active participation in this grouping, which is heavily influenced by Beijing and Moscow, even as it deepens its strategic partnership with Western nations. Yet, from the vantage point of Indian diplomatic strategy, there is absolutely no contradiction. New Delhi views its global engagements through a geographical matrix rather than a zero-sum ideological structural lens. The Bishkek summit provided a crucial arena for India to assert its strategic autonomy, championing a multipolar world order while refusing to let the consortium devolve into a singular vehicle for anti-Western posturing or authoritarian hegemony. By remaining actively engaged at the high table, India ensures that the organization operates as an inclusive cooperative framework. At the heart of India's agenda within the organization lies a steadfast framework emphasizing security, economic cooperation, connectivity, unity, respect for territorial sovereignty, and environmental protection. Among these foundational pillars, the issues of connectivity and border integrity have emerged as primary battlegrounds for Indian diplomacy. As Eurasian integration accelerates, competing visions of regional infrastructure have clashed repeatedly. India has consistently and uniquely stood as the sole member state to refuse endorsement of China's Belt and Road Initiative. New Delhi's opposition is fundamentally rooted in the fact that opaque infrastructure projects frequently violate sovereign borders, leading to severe debt entrapment for vulnerable nations. At the recent summit in Kyrgyzstan, Indian representatives were unequivocal in asserting that regional cooperation must be built on genuine partnerships and mutual respect, rather than

unilateral agendas that deliberately cherry-pick global practices of trade and transit to suit their strategic geopolitical motives. Instead of endorsing debt-inducing mega-projects, India champions transparent and sustainable connectivity alternatives. While the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project dominated bilateral discussions at the summit, India reaffirmed its commitment to forging viable trade routes that respect the sovereignty of all participating nations. Such endeavours unlock the economic potential of landlocked Central Asian republics without entrapping them in strategic vulnerability. Beyond economics and infrastructure, security remains a foundational pillar of the organization, originally conceived to combat the three evils of terrorism, separatism, and extremism. For India, this mandate is not a mere rhetorical flourish but an absolute, undeniable existential imperative political reality. India utilized the summit platform to strongly condemn double standards in combating global terrorism, ensuring the Bishkek Declaration explicitly called on the international community to counter cross-border terrorist movements. Indian diplomats continuously highlighted the hypocrisy of member states that provide state sponsorship to terrorist networks while simultaneously preaching regional stability. Prime Minister Modi stressed the vital need to move away from prolonged armed conflicts toward peaceful resolutions, invoking the timeless messages shared by the historic traditions associated with Gandhi and Buddha. He clearly articulated that meaningful development and lasting economic growth inherently require an absolute environment of peace. Trade, energy flows, and people-to-people exchanges simply cannot flourish in parallel with cross-border extremism. By directly addressing the trust deficit fueled by regional terror infrastructure and unilateral border transgressions, India effectively challenged the grouping to look inward. The underlying message was undeniable: multilateral mechanisms cannot succeed if fundamental principles of good neighborliness are blatantly disregarded. India resolutely refuses to normalize terrorism as a legitimate tool of statecraft, maintaining that any genuine Eurasian integration must be prefaced by an uncompromising and universal crackdown on militant sanctuaries. Furthermore, India has leveraged its unique position to represent the broader Global South interests perfectly.

Bridging the gap between developing nations and the shifting Eurasian power structures remains a core objective. India consistently argues that global institutions remain anachronistic and fail to reflect the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century. Within this framework, India pushes for reformed multilateralism, urging member states to collectively demand a more equitable international order.

The 7.8% GDP paradox: why India's growth number divides economists

On 31 August, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation reported that India's economy expanded by 7.8 per cent in real terms during the April-June quarter of FY 2026-27, surpassing the Reserve Bank of India's forecast of 7 per cent. The Gross Value Added increased at an even higher rate of 8.2 per cent. This figure, ostensibly positive, coincided with the release of a new GDP series by MoSPI, rebased from 2011-12 to 2022-23. Five days after the announcement, the figure remains a subject of debate, reflecting the complexities of India's statistical politics as much as the economic conditions.

The first reactions were triumphant. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, posting on X, called the growth a "herculean feat" achieved despite oil shocks and global supply-chain disruption, and took a dig at critics in the same breath, writing that, "Doomsayers were doomed

and India bloomed...yet again!". Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman credited the number to sustained reform and "agile management of the economy". HDFC Bank's principal economist, Sakshi Gupta, attributed the economic strength to robust consumption, government expenditure, investment, and exports. Additionally, PM-EAC member Sanjeev Sanyal highlighted car sales and corporate profitability as non-governmental indicators supporting this narrative, asserting that "no serious economist" would contest such a strong economic performance. Subsequently, a critical assessment emerged. Former Finance Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg told NDTV that, after considering the new methodology, the actual growth at current prices was approximately 2.6 per cent, rather than the reported 7.8 per cent. According to Business Today, Garg's calculations indicated that MoSPI's new series estimated the

nominal GDP for the first quarter of the previous year at approximately Rs 80 lakh crore, compared to an earlier estimate of about Rs 86 lakh crore. In a separate interview with The Federal, Garg suggested that India's real underlying growth was closer to 4-5 per cent, referencing the adage about "white lies, black lies, and statistics." He refrained from directly accusing the government of fraud. The Congress party quickly amplified these claims: Pawan Khera stated that Garg had "punctured" the government's figures, Jairam Ramesh described the 7.8 per cent figure as a "Greatly Distorted Picture", and Supriya Shrinate accused the government of altering base-year data specifically to exaggerate the headline growth rate.

The government's response was prompt and precise. MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg expressed distress over allegations of data manipulation, calling it "painful" and emphasising

ing the effort involved in compiling the figures. The technical critique of Garg's calculation highlighted his comparison of a nominal GDP figure from the outdated 2011-12 base series with one from the updated 2022-23 base series. Officials described this as an "apples and oranges" comparison due to differences in weights, data sources, and estimation methods between the two series. BJP's Amit Malviya criticised Subhash Chandra Garg's 2.6 per cent calculation as erroneous, accusing him of misinterpreting the official data. The debate intensified when former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan contributed, not by addressing the arithmetic, but by questioning the implications of the reported growth figures. Rajan inquired why, if the economy is indeed expanding rapidly, there is a lack of job creation, sluggish private investment, industrialists' reluctance to invest capital, and insufficient large-scale FDI inflows. He

contextualised this within India's demographic dividend, suggesting that robust headline growth failing to generate jobs and investment could squander the opportunities presented by the country's youthful workforce. Additionally, Reuters reported that some private economists have raised concerns about whether the GDP deflator understates inflation compared to other price indicators, potentially leading to an overstatement of real growth, irrespective of the series employed. When political distractions are set aside, the outcome reveals a truly divided opinion. Regarding the specific statistical issue, the government's stance appears more robust: the standard practice involves comparing GDP within a single, consistent series, and Garg's widely circulated 2.6 per cent figure indeed combines two different series.

However, this technical advantage does not address the broader concerns raised

by Rajan and others. An analysis by The Wire of the same data indicated that while manufacturing's real Gross Value Added (GVA) increased by 9.2 per cent, its nominal share of GVA declined to a multi-decade low of 12.9 per cent. Additionally, exports (25.8 per cent) were surpassed by imports (30.9 per cent), thereby widening the net export deficit, and net indirect tax collections shifted from a growth of 7.6 per cent to a decline of 0.4 per cent, despite substantial monetary and fiscal support. Whether the 7.8 per cent figure represents a genuine turning point or will be reconsidered once employment and investment data are updated will be determined in the next two or three quarters. Until then, it remains an uncommon instance where a straightforward economic statistic becomes a significant site of political and technical debate. This debate, rather than the statistic itself, constitutes the real story of the week.

The national bird India almost chose is now fighting for survival

The grassy desert landscape of the Jaisalmer region is otherworldly. Big skies encase lazily outstretched sands. From these rise pale, creamy-yellow grasses, whose thick blades taunt urban lawns. In between these are gnarled Khejri trees.

You can sit for hours with binoculars, as your eyes adapt to the camouflaged movements in this deceptively gaunt landscape. With some luck, an excellent guide, and friends who know the landscape like the back of their hand, you might see the Great Indian Bustard (GIB), *Ardeotis nigriceps*. The bird sports a thick line of black on its head, giving it the 'nigriceps' moniker. With a pale white head and neck, and an indescribable tawny brown body, it could blend with the background but for its size. The male can weigh 15 kg, almost as much as a golden jackal. Despite its weight, the bird can still fly. I recall the hours spent watching this bird over the years as melancholically tender. I was not just observing one of the most critically endangered birds in India; I was also witnessing the fate of a step-bird. A widely held belief is that the GIB faced this condemnatory rejection not only because the peafowl is more colourful and dramatic-looking, and more widely found, but also because of the name bustard—similar to a pejorative term for a child born outside wedlock. The bird was also known to fly across the border to Paki-

stan. "They should have just used Godawan and made it the national bird," signed an eminent scientist to me. He was referring to its local name. His deep exhalation was rooted in horrifying numbers. In the 1960s, naturalist Raol Shree Dharmakumarsinhji estimated about 1,260 GIBs across 11 states. By the beginning of this century, that number was halved. Today, under 150 GIBs exist, suggesting the bird is very close to extinction.

The exercise of identifying India's national bird was high on glamour but low on conservation. The idea of a national bird, anachronistic as it seems today, was a proposal from the 1960 International Council for Bird Preservation conference in Tokyo. India's iconic birdman, Salim Ali, prophetically campaigned for the GIB as the top pick—a grand title like that could have improved its numbers and ecosystem. The Ministry of Agriculture, under which the India Board of Wildlife was housed, didn't agree. Under the leadership of the former Maharaja of Mysore, it rejected both the GIB and the Sarus Crane. The peafowl was already flourishing when it won the crown. What if it hadn't been anointed? Would it be threatened by the trade in its feathers? Would its numbers be in decline? I can't be sure; it's too theoretical. Yet, it is an adaptable bird that is found almost everywhere across the plains today. The GIB

needs a highly specific ecosystem, one that is in steady decline. Besides, the Western Indian grasslands are perfect habitat for an important route to India's decarbonised growth: renewable energy. Ironically, this has become one of the most high-voltage clashes between conservationists and environmentalists, if such a dichotomy must be made. I've travelled to the Jaisalmer region four times in the last seven years to watch the birds of the desert. I have been lucky enough to see more than one GIB every time. The largest group I have ever seen is one of seven. When they leave, it is a low, heavy flight that doesn't take them much higher than about a hundred meters. Scientists say they can fly slightly higher too. The solar-energised wires are at the same height as the bird when it flies. This clash electrocutes this rare creature. In 2022, seven GIBs were killed in this manner. This took place against a much-debated 2019 Supreme Court case, *M.K. Ranjitsinh & Others v. Union of India*. It resulted in an initial order to shift the wires underground at the cost of the companies, in approximately 99,000 sq km of the GIB habitat. This expense would have increased solar power costs by about 10 per cent or more. In 2024, the court reduced its order to apply to about 13,663 sq km.

On a warm afternoon a few Septembers ago, my friends and I saw a strangely poi-

gnant memorial with the statue of a GIB on top. We stopped and tracked down Sumer Singh Bhati, who had raised funds from the villagers to build this monument of protest. In an outfit that was a blend of military structure and Rajasthani colour, he pointed out how local residents themselves experienced a form of erasure with the loss of the species. The memorial was for the first bird that died from the power lines. Solar energy isn't the only aspect of GIB annihilation. A walk around its habitat shows the presence of feral dogs, some of whom snatch its lone egg and attack the birds. In 2018, in a village close to the GIB range, I heard bullets. Minutes later, a rust-jeep full of villagers with a gun went by. I called out after them to ask what they had shot. "A dog," one of them said. The jeep stopped, and I learned about the intense menace feral dogs had become. This is compounded by the GIB reproduction pace itself—the bird lays a single egg every couple of years. Government investment in saving the species is ongoing. Young scientists, living in sparse rooms in the GIB habitat, artificially incubate eggs, breed insects to feed the sub-adults, and spend hours in rash-causing white hazmat outfits, so the birds get accustomed to an anonymised presence that documents their progress. A young woman at the site said, quite simply, "We just want to fight its extinction. Let's see."

These former auto workers offer a lesson for our times as capitalism is dying in Luton

After everything, why would anyone still back Nigel Farage? In some of the comments below my piece last week about Reform UK, I spot the usual answers: Farage's supporters are dim, racist, deplorable. Yet away from Westminster and the news cycle, Reform voters are being manufactured — not with headlines or crypto funds but through the failure of institutions they once trusted to protect them. To see what I mean, leave SW1 and go 40 miles up the road, to Luton. In a deserted hotel bar, five men are reminiscing about how their world ended. Their minds are on a Friday afternoon in March last year, as the place where they had worked for two or three decades apiece, making friends and even meeting future wives, is about to shut for good. Vauxhall came to Luton not long after the death of Queen Victoria; it helped build the town and gave it an economy and an identity. At its peak in 1971, the company directly employed 37,000 staff in Britain, mostly in Luton. Now it is leaving. On this afternoon, these men and so many of their soon-to-be ex-workmates are crowded around the assembly line.

As the last white van comes off, they clap and cheer with pride for what they had been part of. Some cry. "It's as if you had lost someone in your family," remembers Paul Geary, whose ties with this place are four generations deep. It's such a chunk of your life," says Gerald Shalvey, who gave the company 34 years of his. Later, he walks back out on to the line and surveys the site where until this afternoon 1,600 people had worked. For the first time ever, the machinery is still and he hears nothing but silence: "an industrial graveyard". Then he wonders what comes next, for him, his mates and his town. For the hard right and far right alike, Luton is a contemporary hell. The star of countless memes and YouTube films, it spells migrants, Muslims and growing poverty. For some key players, the connection is personal. Luton boy Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, also known as Tommy Robinson, has talked of how his stepfather worked at Vauxhall. Andrew Tate grew up in what he calls "the worst area of the worst town" (actually, the same estate as Geary). They lived through Luton's long decline; then they monetised it. The ex-Vauxhall workers talking to me are nothing to do with the rightward exploitation. But since their factory's closure, they have seen fellow union members switch in

droves from voting for Keir Starmer in 2024 to backing Farage. It's not just Labour; their disgust is at a society they feel has let them and their families go under.

A similar process is at work in other "industrial graveyards" from Grangemouth to Port Talbot and across the west. Vauxhall came to Luton not long after the death of Queen Victoria; it helped build the town and gave it an economy and an identity. At its peak in 1971, the company directly employed 37,000 staff in Britain, mostly in Luton. Now it is leaving. On this afternoon, these men and so many of their soon-to-be ex-workmates are crowded around the assembly line. As the last white van comes off, they clap and cheer with pride for what they had been part of. Some cry. "It's as if you had lost someone in your family," remembers Paul Geary, whose ties with this place are four generations deep. "It's such a chunk of your life," says Gerald Shalvey, who gave the company 34 years of his. Later, he walks back out on to the line and surveys the site where until this afternoon 1,600 people had worked. For the first time ever, the machinery is still and he hears nothing but silence: "an industrial graveyard". Then he wonders what comes next, for him, his mates and his town. For the hard right and far right alike, Luton is a contemporary hell.

JSW Energy's operational capacity crosses 15 GW, renewables at 60%



Mumbai: On Friday, JSW Energy announced that its overall operational capacity has surpassed 15 gigawatt, with 60% of that capacity coming from renewable sources. According to JSW Energy's exchange report, out of 15,025 megawatts (MW), 9,067 MW are renewable energy—3,125 MW wind, 2,426 MW solar, 1,735 MW hybrid, and 1,781 MW hydro power capacity. There are 5,958 MW in the thermal portfolio. The company stated that, having reached about 42% of the target thus far, it is still on track to accomplish its greenfield capacity increase target of 3 GW for FY2027.

ONGC and Oil India gain 2% as crude oil prices rise



New Delhi: In Tuesday's intraday trading on the BSE, shares of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India increased by 2% apiece due to rising oil prices as the region's supply fears were rekindled by the US-Iranian confrontation. In an otherwise lackluster market, Oil India's share price increased 2.3% to ₹492.95, while ONGC's share price increased 2% to ₹235.95 on the BSE. By contrast, the BSE Sensex was down 0.16 percent at 76,834 at 1:58 PM. Tensions increased as a result of US assaults on Iranian sites and Tehran's counterattacks, and President Trump vowed to take more action against Kharg Island. After US forces hit Iranian rocket launchers close to the Strait of Hormuz, WTI Crude Oil prices increased by more than 3%. According to Axis Securities' commodities research, Iran replied with missile attacks on US bases in Jordan, rekindling concerns that fresh hostilities would impede the flow of crude across the vital canal. According to a Reuters article, oil prices increased on Tuesday as concerns about supply interruptions from the world's major crude-producing region were rekindled by the US and Iran's renewed conflict in the Middle East. During the previous session, WTI closed up 2.8%, hitting its best since August 21, while Brent closed up 2.7%, at one time reaching its highest since August 25. On Monday, US President Donald Trump threatened further strikes against Iran following the first exchange of direct attacks between the countries in a month on Sunday, raising tensions in a conflict that recently shifted into an economic standoff, Reuters reported. As per reports, ONGC plans to make a major push into deepwater and ultra-deep-water exploration, with an investment of around ₹1 trillion over the next five years and plans to drill 87 wells by FY31. The company aims to make new discoveries to arrest the decline in India's domestic crude oil and natural gas production, with the government's ₹84,084 crore Samudra Manthan programme also supporting offshore exploration. ONGC plans to drill 8 wells in FY27, 10 in FY28, 20 in FY29, 22 in FY30 and 27 in FY31. Meanwhile, production from ONGC's KG 98/2 field declined to around 20,000 barrels per day from its targeted peak of 35,000 bpd, highlighting the need for new discoveries and enhanced exploration efforts, ICICI Securities said in a note. Further, ONGC Chairman Arun Kumar Singh said the company is well positioned to handle crude oil price fluctuations in the \$60–90 per barrel range, as its integrated upstream and downstream businesses help offset the impact of changing oil prices.

Samudra Manthan would definitely help both ONGC and Oil India in the long run. However, it may be noted that 67 per cent of ONGC's total production comes from fields that are witnessing structural decline in production. Thus, only time will tell whether the scheme will result in any growth, analysts at PL Capital said in an oil & gas sector report. Analysts highlight both ONGC and Oil India as potential long-term investment bets, should the scheme result in overall growth in production. ONGC is also a solid dividend play (4–5 per cent).

Indian Bank approves Dubai office setup to tap middle east market



Chennai: Indian Bank has received board approval to open a representative office in Dubai, as it seeks to expand its overseas operations, leveraging the large Indian diaspora across West Asia.

Currently, the bank has a full-service international branch in Singapore and branches in Colombo and Jaffna (Sri Lanka). Besides, it has an IFSC Banking Unit (IBU) functioning as an off-shore/foreign branch from GIFT City, Gandhinagar. “We are getting good

business from our GIFT City branch, including participation in various syndicated loans...my aim now is to open a rep office in Dubai...We have a good number of non-resident Indians settled in Dubai and about 33 per cent of the working population is Indian,” Indian Bank MD and CEO Binod Kumar told PTI in an interaction.

For the representative office in Dubai, the bank's board has given its approval and the bank is in the process of seeking other regulatory

approvals. Besides, Kumar said, the bank is exploring the possibility of having a presence in Malaysia and Indonesia. On the domestic side, he said, Indian Bank plans to add 100 branches this year with a primary focus on increasing the bank's presence in the central and western parts of the country.

To manage growing business needs and replace retiring employees, the bank would increase its headcount by about 2,500 personnel, including specialist officers. “Last year, we opened 100 branches. This year too, we have similar plans. Just on August 15, which was our foundation day, the bank inaugurated 15 branches across the country,” he said.

The bank had 6,003 domestic branches as of June 30, 2026. The seventh-biggest public sector bank enhanced its presence in the eastern region and Uttar Pradesh with the amalgamation of Allahabad Bank in 2020.

RPG Life Sciences scouts for larger API assets

Mumbai: RPG Life Sciences is scouting for larger active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) assets after spending ₹215 crore on two acquisitions in five weeks, as the drug-maker looks to rapidly scale its API business and expand its presence in overseas markets. The company has more than ₹500 crore of capital available and is actively evaluating opportunities, particularly businesses that can add differentiated chemistry, regulatory access and US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA)-approved capabilities, Managing Director Ashok Nair told Business Standard. “We have capital of ₹500 crore-plus with us and are actively evaluating opportunities to strengthen our API business,” Nair said. The timing of further deals would depend on strategic fit, valuation, integration readiness and returns rather than a predetermined acquisition count, he added. RPG Active Pharma (RPGAP), a wholly owned subsidiary of RPG Life Sciences, last week agreed to acquire the API and intermediates business of Raghava Life Sciences for up to ₹135 crore.

This followed its July 29 acquisition of Actis Generics for ₹80 crore, taking the combined consideration for the two transactions to ₹215 crore. RPG has described the Raghava transaction as part of a “buy-and-build” strategy to create a scaled, integrated API business. The acquisitions have substantially changed the scale of the business. RPGAP's manufacturing capacity has increased from 110 kilolitres (KL) to 505 KL, its product portfolio from 14 to 45, and its customer base from 123 to more than 250. Employee strength has risen from 217 to over 500, while its research and development pipeline has expanded from 12 products to 28, according to Nair. The expansion comes as global drugmakers seek to diversify pharmaceutical supply chains and reduce excessive dependence on China. RPG's strategy goes beyond adding capacity and includes acquiring products, complex chemistry capabilities, customers and regulatory approvals that can support exports. Raghava adds about 300 KL of installed capacity at its facility near Hyderabad.

RBI clears LIC plan to acquire up to 9.99% stake in ICICI Bank

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved state-owned insurer Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) to acquire an aggregate holding of up to 9.99 per cent of the paid-up share capital or voting rights in ICICI Bank, the private lender said in a regulatory filing on Saturday.

ICICI Bank said it received a copy of the RBI's approval letter — dated September 4 — at 9:09 pm on the same day. The approval allows LIC to acquire the stake within one year from the date of the RBI approval letter, failing which the approval will stand cancelled. However, the approval is subject to certain

conditions, including compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory provisions, the bank said. Moreover, the central bank's nod does not mean LIC has immediately increased its holding in ICICI Bank to 9.99 per cent. Any acquisition will have to be undertaken in accordance with the conditions laid down by the central bank and other applicable regulatory norms, according to the private bank. In a separate development last month, RBI had approved LIC's application to acquire up to 9.99 per cent of HDFC Bank's paid-up share capital or voting rights. HDFC Bank had said LIC held 4.11 per cent of its

total share capital as of August 14.

The approval for ICICI Bank gives LIC flexibility to increase its holding in the private sector lender, subject to applicable regulatory and statutory requirements. Shares of LIC on Friday ended at Rs 415.25, a decrease of more than one per cent on the BSE. The stock has touched a 52-week high of Rs 468.30 and a 52-week low of Rs 361, according to the exchange. While ICICI Bank shares closed at Rs 1,423, down 0.14 per cent on the aforesaid exchange. The stock recorded a 52-week high of Rs 1,479.90 and a 52-week low of Rs 1,187.55.

SBI outlines growth push: 12,000 new jobs, 250 branches planned in FY27

New Delhi: State Bank of India (SBI) intends to hire about 12,000 personnel and add around 250 new branches to its network in the ongoing financial year, said C S Setty, Chairman of the country's biggest lender.

“In terms of recruitment, I think we would be looking at around 11,000 to 12,000 appointments across both clerical and officer cadres this year. This number may vary depending on retirements and emerging requirements, but I expect we should close the year with around 12,000 recruitments,” he told PTI in an interaction. “Last year, we have done fairly large recruitment because we took 1,500 specialist IT officers. This year, we do not need such a



large number on the IT (information technology) side,” he said. With a workforce of over 2.45 lakh employees as of March 2026, SBI is among India's largest employers.

SBI had hired 4,640 officers, 19,340 associates, and 1,653 contractual staff in 202526, taking the total number of hires to 25,633, as per

the bank's annual report for FY26. On the branch expansion side, Setty said that, despite having a large network, there is still some white space in many areas; whether new colonies are coming up or even in commercially active districts, the bank's presence can be improved. “We also are looking at rationalisation

of some of the branches, which means that our number broadly will be growing by maybe 200 to 250 per year on the net side,” he said.

About stake dilution in the National Stock Exchange (NSE), Setty said, SBI and its subsidiary SBI Capital Markets Ltd together plan to dilute up to 1 per cent stake through the exchange's proposed Rs 30,000-crore initial public offering (IPO). “We are participating in that divestment. We propose to divest 0.65 per cent and 0.35 per cent by SBI Capital Markets because both of us hold the stake. So together, about 1 per cent as an SBI group... it could be less depending on any other shareholders joining,” he said.

Ola electric board approves ₹1,500 crore capital raise



New Delhi: Ola Electric said its board has approved a fundraising of up to ₹1,500 crore through the issuance of equity shares or other eligible securities, as the electric two-wheeler maker looks to shore up capital amid weak sales and a declining market share.

The proposed fundraising could be undertaken through multiple routes, including the issuance of equity shares and/or securities convertible into or exchangeable for equity shares. The fundraising will be subject

to shareholders' and other regulatory approvals. The latest fundraising effort comes just three months after Ola Electric raised ₹780 crore through a qualified institutional placement (QIP). Ola Electric reported a 29% year-on-year decline in sales to 13,849 units in August, even as rivals including TVS Motor, Bajaj Auto and Ather Energy continued to post growth.

The fundraising is also crucial as Ola Electric scales up its cell manufacturing capacity and expands into the

battery energy storage business under its Ola Shakti and Mahashakti brands. In May, the company's board approved a ₹2,000-crore investment in two wholly owned subsidiaries — ₹1,500 crore in Ola Electric Technologies for EV manufacturing and ₹500 crore in Ola Cell Technologies for battery-cell production. Ola Electric is ramping up production at its Gigafactory, with capacity expected to reach 6 GWh by September from 2.5 GWh.

Meanwhile, Ola Electric's leadership churn also continued, with chief operations officer Hyun Shik Park resigning from the company with effect from the close of business on Saturday, citing personal reasons. The company also announced the reappointment of Manoj Kumar Kohli and Shradha Sharma as non-executive independent directors for a second term of five years commencing December 6, 2026.

IndusInd Bank targets Q2 growth as microfinance headwinds ease, says MD

New Delhi: The difficult phase for the microfinance business is now behind us, with risks playing out favourably, and growth in the segment is expected to return from the second quarter onwards, IndusInd Bank MD and CEO Rajiv Anand has said.

IndusInd Bank faced a severe governance and accounting crisis in 2025 centred around its microfinance subsidiary, Bharat Financial Inclusion Ltd (BFIL). The bank reversed Rs 674 crore of cumulative interest income recognised incorrectly across FY25. A further Rs 172 crore was disclosed as fraud, where employees falsely reported the sum as fee income in the microfinance business. “We have had a fairly difficult time on our microfinance business. But it is all now behind us. Risk is playing out quite well at this point in time and Q2 onwards we should see growth come back in our microfinance businesses,” Anand told PTI in an interview. The microfinance arm has a very successful business called Bharat Superstore, where it lends to kirana stores, small restaurants and other such businesses, he said.

“That business is also doing well and continues to perform strongly. So, the entire microfinance and rural banking business that we have should show strong growth as we



move into the second quarter and beyond,” he added. “We needed to scale up our disbursements, which has now happened, and we are very confident that we should see growth from here,” he said. Asked about growth in microfinance portfolio in FY27, Anand said, “We think that this year, our microfinance business should grow somewhere between 15-20 per cent”.

On the overall asset side, he said the growth will be broadly in line with the market for the current financial year. “Whatever the market is, I think currently the market is around 17-18 per cent. We believe we will be in that vicinity,” he said. About the impact of Expected Credit Loss (ECL) guidelines coming into force from April 1, 2027, Anand said, “We would require around 1-1.5 per cent of assets. At least, that's our first estimate. Our net worth is more than adequate to absorb the impact”. It would have an impact of about 1 per cent on Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1), which is about 16.1 per cent at the end of June 2026, he added.

US denies Iranian claims of strike on unmanned ship near strait of Hormuz

Iran said Sunday it struck an unmanned US vessel trying to enter the Strait of Hormuz, the latest salvo in a new flare-up of fighting between the two countries. The US did not immediately confirm the purported attack, which came a day after the US military said forces struck three Iranian oil tankers in response to a missile attack on Navy warships. The war began with US and Israeli attacks on Iran on Feb 28. But since a ceasefire agreement was announced in June, on-and-off fighting has persisted with both sides trying to inflict military and economic pain as negotiations have collapsed.

The US and Iran resumed attacks last week, following a month of relative calm, with the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian communities



along it again being targeted. At least five people were killed earlier in the week during a US bombardment of southern Iran. The Trump administration appears to

have adopted a dual-prong approach to the conflict, responding militarily to attacks on the strait while going after foreign financial institutions that handle Iran's money.

But Tehran's hard-line new senior leaders have signalled the willingness to dig in after weathering decades of sanctions.Iran has found ways over the years to circumvent

sanctions, and now the US blockade, and get its oil to buyers to help ease growing economic pressures. That relies in part on a shadow fleet transporting its oil.

Meanwhile, Iran's nuclear programme, the issue that contributed to the outbreak of the war, was meant to be addressed in negotiations that fell apart soon after the US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding in mid-June. Diplomats say the US, Britain, France and Germany seek to refer Iran to the UN Security Council for failure to comply with its nuclear nonproliferation obligations. Instead, Tehran's new leverage focuses on the Strait of Hormuz that is crucial to global oil and natural gas shipments and was seen as an international waterway before the war began.

Cambridge University examines conduct of academic suspended by Reform UK

Cambridge University has said it is examining the conduct of James Orr, its associate professor and a top Reform UK aide, after he was filmed appearing to try to circumvent electoral laws on foreign political donations.Orr, the suspended head of policy for Reform, is one of two senior officials to step aside after claims that he orchestrated a plot to have polling paid for by a foreign firm – something that is impermissible under British electoral law.The academic was filmed by a group of investigative journalists called Verbatim, founded by the Centre for Climate Reporting, seemingly attempting to sidestep election laws.In a statement shared with the Guardian, a spokesperson for the University of Cambridge said: “The university is looking into these matters.”

Orr is an associate professor of religion at Cambridge's divinity faculty and teaches students at the university.Little known outside UK and US political circles, Orr has been a highly influential intellectual force within Reform. He was labelled the party's “philosopher king” by the news organisation Politico.A key attraction for senior figures in Reform when appointing Orr was his high-level US political contacts within the Maga movement. JD Vance, the US vice-president, has called him his “intellectual mentor” and his “British Sherpa”.Footage broadcast by Channel 4 News on Thursday night showed an undercover reporter posing as a UK-based supporter in conversation with Orr.Orr discussed commissioning polling that was secretly organised by Reform, but suggested it be paid for by a US company belonging to the fake supporter's supposed father.In a separate clip, Orr can be heard saying of the poll funding arrangement that Nigel Farage “doesn't know, won't know” and it is the kind of thing he would “rather not know”.

Reform UK initially described the Channel 4 News and Verbatim investigation as a “hoax”.On Thursday evening, Orr posted a video on his X account in which he said: “There is absolutely no way this could amount to a benefit or donation in kind at all.”He dismissed Verbatim as “politically motivated actors trying to discredit a political opponent through dubious legal means”. Still, on Friday morning he and Dan Jukes, a senior aide to Farage who has also denied wrongdoing, stood down pending an internal party investigation into the claims raised by the broadcast.Farage, who was also featured in the investigation meeting with the fake supporters, distanced himself from Orr and Jukes on Friday.

Singapore cracks down on ‘shameful’ xenophobic social media posts



Singapore police are investigating “shameful” and “totally unacceptable” racist and xenophobic comments posted online about the Nepal-Tibet flood disaster and Singapore Airlines' investment in Air India, Senior Minister K Shanmugam said on Saturday. Shanmugam, who is also Home Affairs Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security, said the Ministry of Digital Development and Information would also ask social media platforms to remove comments that breach their guidelines.

Calling the comments “shameful, nasty, totally unacceptable”, Shanmugam said some media outlets had removed comments because they were particularly offensive. “These people should be unmasked and dealt with, rather than be allowed to hide behind online anonymity,” he said.

He cited several racist remarks targeting Indians and Singaporeans missing in the Nepal flash floods, including “I only see Indian faces here. Skip. Rescue cut.” He said “ABNN”, a derogatory term for Indians, was also used in one of the comments. Shanmugam said the comments had surfaced even as more than 1,000 people had died in Nepal and many Singaporeans remained unaccounted for. The flash floods, triggered by an ice-rock avalanche near the Nepal-Tibet border on August 26, devastated towns and villages in northern and central Nepal. At least 589 foreign nationals, remain missing as of Saturday.

Shanmugam stressed that such derogatory online comments did not represent the majority of Singaporeans, pointing to more than SGD 3 million (USD 2.4 million) raised by

the Singapore Red Cross for relief efforts in Nepal. “Singaporeans are generous, across all races. And it is important that we don't allow a minority to poison the entire well,” he said. The minister also linked the online abuse to renewed criticism of Air India after reports that the airline was seeking additional capital from its shareholders, including Singapore Airlines (SIA). He said the debate had triggered “anti-Indian, racist ranting” online. An online group had also targeted Temasek CEO Dilhan Pillay Sandrasegara, who is of Indian origin, over the company's links with SIA and Air India. SIA is majority-owned by Temasek Holdings -- a Singapore government-owned investment firm. Critics and opposition leaders have questioned whether Singaporean taxpayer funds should indirectly shoulder the protracted, costly turnaround of Air India, which is currently suffering heavy financial losses.

Shanmugam warned against allowing racism to become normalised in Singapore, saying authorities would take a tough line to protect the country's multiracial and multi-religious social fabric. “I've decided to call out these people because you see what is happening in other countries. First, a minority says these nasty things; slowly it becomes normalised; then it becomes mainstream,” he said. “Public discourse is then debased. Social harmony is affected. Violence against people of a different skin colour and different religion becomes acceptable.” The city-state of Singapore has a population of more than six million, with ethnic Chinese making up about 75 per cent, Malays about 15 per cent and Indians about 9 per cent.

Investigations launched into polling firm at centre of Reform UK allegations

A polling firm at the centre of allegations that Reform UK breached electoral law is being investigated by two industry bodies.JL Partners, which is run by former Conservative aides, has been accused of breaking transparency rules by failing to declare that three separate polls had been commissioned by the party.

The company is a member of the British Polling Council and the Market Research Society, who say the identity of a client commissioning a poll should be disclosed when the results enter the public domain.Both organisations confirmed on Friday that they had launched inquiries into JL Partners. The reviews have come after Channel 4 News broadcast footage gathered by undercover reporters during a year-long investigation into Reform's finances on Thursday night. Investigative journalists from Verbatim, founded by the Centre for Climate Reporting, posed as a Reform donor and his American father, who paid for more than £30,000 of polling from JL Partners that generated positive headlines for the party.

Nigel Farage, the party leader, was filmed saying the polling was “amazing” and provided “bang for buck”.In the footage, Farage appeared to welcome the suggestion of a larger do-



nation to the party. He was told the UK-based son could be registered as the official donor, despite the money originating from his father. Farage said: “Both of you, thank you.”In the UK, only those registered on the electoral roll are permitted to donate to political parties, meaning the polls and the proposed larger donation could both be classed as illegal.On Friday, as its annual conference got under way in Birmingham, Reform said it had suspended two senior officials who were filmed as part of the Channel 4 News investigation.James Orr, the party's head of policy, and Dan Jukes, a senior adviser to Farage, were both recorded apparently plotting to bypass electoral laws.

The first poll, conducted in January, related to the Labour government's aborted plans to cancel some local elections, which Reform

strongly opposed. The poll indicated Labour would face heavy defeats if these went ahead.The second, published in April, suggested that two-thirds of voters wanted the then prime minister, Keir Starmer, to resign. The third, released in June, appeared to show that support for Reform among trade union members was drawing level with Labour.JL Partners' co-founder James Johnson was covertly filmed discussing the Reform polling, telling one of the reporters that his company had done “a little bit of informal rule-bending” in relation to one survey. He admitted that it “should have disclosed who the client was” when publishing the data. The results of the polling appeared on the front pages of the Times and the Daily Telegraph. Both newspapers said they had not been aware that the polling had been

commissioned by Reform. The British Polling Council said on Friday that “all data and research findings made on the basis of social or political polls conducted in the United Kingdom ... must include reference to the client commissioning the survey”. It added that it was clear its rules had been breached in relation to the polls paid for by Reform.

“According to the programme, this may have been deliberate,” a spokesperson added. “We are seeking further information from the BPC member concerned and expect them to make information available after further consideration.”The Market Research Society said: “MRS is aware of the Channel 4 reporting involving an MRS Company Partner. The matter is being referred to the Market Research Standards Board (MRSB) for review in line with its established complaint procedures.”JL Partners told Channel 4 News: “Despite there being no concern about the accuracy of our work, the report did reveal weaknesses in our procedures. For that reason JL Partners is reviewing those procedures in order to eliminate possible grey areas and ambiguities and strengthen our safeguards for the future.”The company did not respond to follow-up queries from the Guardian.

Farage seeks to shore up damaged leadership as scandal engulfs Reform conference

Nigel Farage sought to shore up his damaged leadership on Friday as he attempted to distance himself from two of his most senior officials reported to the police for apparently plotting to evade the law on foreign donations.As the scandal engulfed Reform UK's party conference in Birmingham, Farage was forced to suspend close aides Dan Jukes and head of policy James Orr after an undercover investigation by reporters from a group called Verbatim.

He later acknowledged Jukes and Orr had made “human error” and were “not authorised” to act in the way they did when trying to orchestrate donations to benefit the party from a fake US businessman, who was not permitted to give money. The Met police are now assessing the evidence after a complaint that Farage, Orr and Jukes may have broken political funding laws, with sources suggesting a full investigation is highly likely to be launched. They all deny wrongdoing.One possibil-

ity would be for the police to extend an existing Met investigation into whether Reform took donations channelled through an intermediary from potentially impermissible sources, which the party and donors deny. Orr is an associate professor of divinity at the University of Cambridge who had been working for Reform, reporting directly to Farage, since February. In relation to the undercover footage of Orr, a spokesperson for the university said Cambridge was “looking into these matters”. Jukes is Farage's closest aide, and has been at his side for more than a decade working on communications and strategy.

Farage had been introduced by Jukes to the would-be donor from the US promising to give £500,000 despite not being eligible, who was really an undercover reporter. The Reform leader then appeared to endorse the scheme for the impermissible US donor to give money through his son, a UK intermediary, by saying “thank you, both”

and “all above board”.After dismissing the sting as a “hoax”, Reform began an organised campaign to limit the damage to Farage personally before his main conference speech, after a summer of scandals over his finances, including an undeclared gift of £5m.Addressing the allegations, the Reform leader responded by reading out a legal statement in which he dismissed the allegations as “a little local difficulty” and described the reports as “an exercise in entrapment”.Farage claimed Orr and Jukes had merely been “contractors” who engaged in “loose pub talk, including a couple of boasts that simply were not true”. One party figure, Nadine Dorries, claimed Jukes had merely booked transport and carried bags, despite being a senior adviser integral to Reform's operations and success for many years.When it was put to Farage that he had thanked the bogus donors and understood what was going on, he said: “It was the middle of the byelection. I was told



I had to go and meet these people. I didn't have to, but I did. I was told they had a global family trust headquartered in London. I asked the question: is this all above board?”The Reform leader also insisted that the party's internal processes would have stopped any impermissible donors and said neither Jukes nor Orr should have been carrying out fundraising. He said a suggestion by Jukes in the footage that other foreign donations had been channelled through UK intermediaries was not true and the donors did not exist.

The pair were caught out after being filmed by undercover reporters from the group Verbatim, founded by the Centre for Climate Reporting, and broadcast by Channel 4 News on the eve of Reform's party conference.In the footage, Orr and Jukes appeared to help orchestrate an impermissible donation of £30,000 from the fake US donor, which was used to pay for polling that would benefit Reform and made front pages of national newspapers. The money from an American company was transferred to the polling

company JL Partners after being organised at the behest of Reform to boost its policies and political narrative. It was not declared to the Electoral Commission.Jukes went on to discuss whether the US businessman could give £500,000 through a UK intermediary, who was an undercover reporter, and introduced the would-be donors to Farage at a lunch in Clacton over oysters and champagne.Jukes issued a statement: “This was entrapment over a prolonged period of time by individuals using selective editing who had their own agenda to discredit Reform UK.”Orr said: “I have agreed to step down from my current role at Reform UK pending the outcome of the party's internal investigation into the conduct of the program, with which I will cooperate fully.”

The Lib Dems have asked the standards commissioner to investigate Farage's conduct.The row comprehensively overshadowed the first full day of the party's conference with every Re-

form politician repeatedly questioned over the scandal. It also exposed splits at the top of the party, with Zia Yusuf, the party's home affairs spokesperson, strongly distancing himself from Jukes and Orr. He told reporters “anyone who supports Reform is disappointed”, and added of the investigation: “It's just not something I am personally involved in.”He also launched a personal video about his backstory, leading to speculation he could attempt to run for the leadership as a rival to Robert Jenrick or Richard Tice if Farage were to be forced out over his financial scandals. However, some Reform insiders are convinced Farage will part company with Yusuf before long, partly over his ambition and combative style on social media, including one post on X that saw him accused of racism towards a Somalia-born Labour councillor. Farage is understood to have used a rude term about Yusuf recently in relation to his troublemaking on social media.

One senior Reform figure said they believed Yusuf would have to go as a precondition for some sort of reconciliation with Rupert Lowe, whose party, Restore Britain, has eaten into the party's voters on the hard right. Farage has recently condemned Lowe as vindictive, but some of their friends believe a rapprochement could be possible if Yusuf were no longer in the party. Reform had wanted the main event to be Farage announcing a deal with the hard-right French National Rally president, Jordan Bardella, to return small boats crossing the Channel if both parties achieve power. However, a press conference was dominated by questions about the foreign donations scandal. Farage's main speech was later delayed by security concerns after climate protesters disrupted Tice's stage appearance. More activists later repeatedly interrupted his address. While waiting to go on stage, the Reform leader danced and sung with the crowd.

A walking tour of Andalucía’s historic white villages: ‘Nightingales serenade us as we wind along lush river valleys’

‘The wind is in from Africa / Last night I couldn’t sleep.” Joni Mitchell has ear-wormed her way into my head as my wife and I step out from Zahara de la Sierra into the mountains of Sierra de Grazalema natural park. The Africa bit probably comes from yesterday’s visit to Zahara’s castle museum. Here, high above the tiled terracotta mosaic of village rooftops, we learned how the recapture of this picturesque hill town was a turning point in the Reconquista – the military campaign of the 1400s that saw the Catholics retake southern Spain after seven centuries of Moorish control. As for sleep deprivation, I may just have overdone it on last night’s tapas.

Either way, Africa feels present as we tramp through the countryside of Andalucía, if only in the wildlife. The painted lady butterflies drifting over the flower-spangled verges, the turtle doves purring from the olive groves and the booted eagle drifting overhead: all are summer visitors recently blown in from the great continent to our south. It’s day two of our White Villages of the Ronda Mountains walking tour, a self-guided seven-day route from On Foot Holidays that explores this alluring corner of southern Spain. We arrived yesterday by bus from Málaga, winding up through the mountains until the whitewashed dwellings of Zahara appeared like teeth in the hillside ahead. This was the first of the week’s four pueblos blancos, all tucked picturesquely into the natural park’s rugged 51,695 hectares (127,740 acres) of limestone peaks and serpentine river valleys.

I’ve walked with On Foot before, so the routine is familiar: water bottles and packed lunches stashed in day-packs, laminated map around neck on lanyard and route app open on phone (belt-and-braces navigation). Best of all, our luggage is already wending its way by taxi to the next destination.

The conditions couldn’t be more perfect. The hillsides burst with blossom and birdsong, the May temperature is a pleasant mid-20s (midsummer out here would be punishing), and the peaks stand proud against the clear blue sky. It’s hard to believe February brought such heavy rains that much of our route was then impassable – and some areas of the park were affected by wildfires later in the summer.

But each month here has its own character. September/October – also prime walking season – sees the chestnuts and cork oak forests turn russet and gold, and the spring irises and orchids replaced by the post-summer bloom of wild asparagus and autumn crocus. Overhead, those booted eagles will be massing for their return journey – along with bee-eaters, honey buzzards and other winged voyagers – back to Africa. Today’s hike takes us south towards Grazalema: pueblo blanco number two. We skirt a reservoir then wind along a lush river valley, nightingales serenading us from the oleander thickets, and by late morning are rising into the mountains, the vista gaining grandeur as we gain height.

Lunch is in a high meadow, where we unwrap our bocadillos while bees buzz and butterflies busy themselves among the blooms. Afternoon brings a long uphill slog, then finally a cool descent through shady pines to sleepy Grazalema. Another 11 miles (18km) under our belts.

We stay two nights in Grazalema at the Hotel la Mejorana, meeting wild ibex on a mountain circuit high above town, and eating at the cosy Cádiz el Chico restaurant, where a menu featuring partridge and wild boar (though, thankfully, not ibex) reflects the region’s hunting traditions. At night, the cobbled streets are quiet beneath a canopy of stars.

Benaolán, the third of our pueblos blancos, lies about 16 miles to the south-east. We exit Grazalema early in the morning, beneath the Los Peñascos mirador. Roosting griffon vultures line the cliffs like pterodactyls,



warming up in the morning sun before, one at a time, flapping off on table-top wings for another day combing the plains. Our route leads down through the oak woods before rising again into the hills. Here we enter a limestone wonderland, the karst formations sculpted by wind and rain into Henry Moore-like statues. Bee-eaters dart overhead, their liquid chirrups audible long before we lay eyes on them. A passing walker greets us with a cheery “Buen camino!” He’s returning with his father to see the farmhouse where they grew up. We find Dad sitting on a nearby rock, devouring an empanada. They’re the only other walkers we meet all day.

Our hideaway at Benaolán is the Molino del Santo hotel, where we dine beside a chuckling stream on a terrace crowded with potted geraniums. From here, it takes us two hours to hike to the Cueva de la Pileta, an immense cave system discovered in 1905 when a local farmer spotted bats streaming from a fissure in the hillside.

Local guide Ainhoa Bullón leads us down cool, narrow passages into measureless caverns, her thin torch beam illuminating flowstone formations as enormous and elaborate as a Gaudi cathedral – formed, she explains, by the drip-drip of lime at the rate of 1cm every 400 years. The farthest recesses hold exquisite shamanic rock art, some more than 25,000 years old.

Ainhoa overflows with information, talking us through the cave’s successive ages of antiquity, from Neanderthal to Neolithic. Most important, she delivers us safely back to the blazing sunshine outside. Our week ends at Ronda, perched atop the precipitous El Tajo gorge. The celebrated cliff-top town seems to beckon us onward like some mythical sky citadel as we tramp our final kilometres towards it. Below the cliffs, we find ourselves back



in tourist land, sharing the steep climb to the top with a gaggle of selfie-snapping day trippers.

We make it, slumping at the first available café table to lever off boots, fold away the map and order a celebratory cold cerveza. Tomorrow, we catch our bus back

to Málaga. For now, a final night lies ahead, with a stirring panorama from our room at the Parador de Ronda and the promise of a slap-up meal down in the old town. Our beers arrive, and any lingering strains of Joni are soon lost to a busker’s volley of flamenco guitar.

Three Types Of Foot And Ankle Pain You Shouldn’t Ignore

Foot and ankle pain is often dismissed as a temporary problem caused by long hours of standing, uncomfortable footwear or overuse. While some episodes may settle with rest, persistent or recurring pain should not be ignored. The foot and ankle contain numerous bones, joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments and nerves, so pain in this area can have many different causes. Ignoring pain can also affect mobility. When walking becomes uncomfortable, people may reduce their physical activity, which can have wider effects on overall health.

Here are three types of foot and ankle pain that deserve medical attention.

1. Painful Bunions Should Not Be Ignored

A bunion, medically known as hallux valgus, is a deformity in which the big toe gradually moves towards the second toe, while a bony prominence develops on the inner side of the foot.

Bunions can be associated with genetics and may become worse with constrictive footwear, including narrow or high-heeled shoes.

Signs to watch for

Pain or tenderness around the big toe joint

Swelling and redness

Calluses or thickened skin

Difficulty wearing certain shoes

Increasing difficulty while standing or walking

The big toe beginning to overlap or push against another toe

As the deformity progresses, the altered distribution of weight across the foot can cause pain in other areas. Untreated bunions may also contribute to difficulty walking and increase the risk of other foot problems.

What can help?

Early management may include wearing wider, comfortable footwear/modifying activities, using appropriate insoles or orthotics and addressing pressure points. Surgery is generally considered when symptoms remain significant despite non-surgical treatment. The key point: A bunion does not necessarily require surgery, but a painful or progressively worsening bunion should be assessed rather than simply tolerated.

2. Pain on the Top or Sides of the Foot

Pain on the top or sides of the foot can have several causes. These may include tendon problems, stress fractures, joint inflammation, bone spurs, arthritis or an injury. This type of pain is particularly important to assess if it started after a sudden in-



crease in physical activity. Increasing running, walking, sports or other repetitive activities can place additional stress on the bones and soft tissues.

When should you be concerned?

Pay attention if the pain:

Gets worse when walking or standing

Is associated with swelling or bruising

Continues despite reducing activity

Makes it difficult to put weight on the foot

Keeps returning after exercise

Is accompanied by tenderness over a specific area of bone

A stress fracture, for example, can cause pain and swelling that become worse with walking or activity. Wearing shoes that are too tight or lack adequate support can also contribute to foot pain.

Don’t simply walk through persistent pain

Continuing high-impact activity despite persistent pain can potentially worsen an underlying problem. If the pain is severe, recurring or affecting your ability to walk normally, an orthopaedic or foot and ankle specialist can determine whether imaging or other investigations are needed.

3. Sharp Foot Pain with the First Steps in the Morning

One of the most recognisable patterns of foot pain is sharp pain under the heel or along the arch when taking the first few steps after waking up. This is commonly associated with plantar fasciitis or plantar heel pain.

The plantar fascia is a strong band of connective tissue running along the bottom of the foot. It helps support the arch and absorbs some of the stress placed on the foot while standing and walking.

Typical symptoms include:

Sharp pain under the heel

Pain along the arch

Pain that is worse with the first steps in the morning

Pain after getting up following prolonged sitting

Sudden increases in activity, prolonged standing, unsupportive footwear, tight calf muscles and excess body weight can increase the likelihood of developing plantar heel pain.

Does plantar fasciitis require surgery?

Usually, no. Most patients can be managed with non-surgical

measures. These may include activity modification, stretching exercises, supportive footwear, insoles or heel pads and appropriate pain management. However, persistent symptoms should be evaluated because heel pain can have causes other than plantar fasciitis, including tendon problems, arthritis or stress fractures.

When Should Foot and Ankle Pain Be Evaluated?

Not every episode of foot pain requires immediate medical attention. However, seek medical advice if:

Pain is severe or getting progressively worse You cannot walk or put weight on the foot

There is significant swelling or bruising

The foot looks deformed after an injury

You heard a snap or popping sound during an injury

There is persistent numbness or loss of sensation

Pain keeps returning

Pain does not improve with appropriate self-care

You have diabetes and develop new foot pain

Severe pain accompanied by an inability to walk, deformity or a snapping sound after an injury can indicate a fracture or significant tendon injury and requires prompt assessment.

Simple Ways to Protect Your Feet and Ankles

Prevention starts with everyday habits. Choose footwear that fits properly, provides adequate cushioning and supports the foot. Avoid regularly wearing shoes that squeeze the toes or provide inadequate support.

Other useful measures include:

Increase exercise intensity gradually rather than suddenly

Stretch the calves and feet regularly

Avoid prolonged standing or high-impact activity when pain is present

Maintain a healthy body weight to reduce excessive load on the feet

Replace worn-out sports shoes

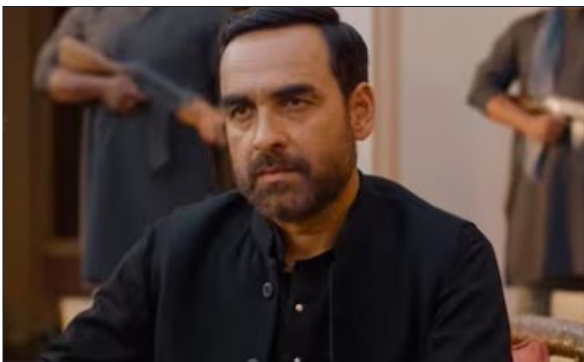
Do not ignore recurring pain simply because it temporarily improves with rest Foot and ankle pain should not always be dismissed as an inevitable part of getting older or being physically active. Painful bunions, persistent pain on the top or sides of the foot, and sharp heel pain that is worse with the first steps in the morning are three common patterns that deserve attention Early assessment can help identify the underlying cause and guide appropriate treatment before pain begins to interfere with walking, exercise and everyday activities.

ENTERTAINMENT

Mirzapur the movie day 2 collection: Pankaj Tripathi & Ali Fazal starrer crosses ₹56.75 Cr

Mumbai : For Mirzapur, subtlety was never really the vibe and the box office seems to have taken notes. After opening at a solid ₹24.75 crore, the gangster saga went full “Kaalin Bhaiya mode” on Saturday, adding another ₹31 crore to its kitty. In just two days, Pankaj Tripathi and Ali Fazal’s big-screen outing has stormed past the ₹56 crore mark.

Mirzapur The Movie clearly did not come to theatres to play nice. The Pankaj Tripathi and Ali Fazal starrer opened with a strong ₹24.75 crore on Friday. Riding on the massive popularity of the Mirzapur franchise, the film even managed to beat the opening-day collections of Saiyaara (₹22 crore) and Awarapan 2 (₹21.50 crore).



And Saturday only turned up the heat. According to Sacnilk, the film added another ₹31 crore on Day 2, with the Hindi version doing the heavy lifting at ₹30.75 crore. The Telugu-dubbed version, meanwhile, contributed just ₹0.25 crore. With two days in theatres, Mirzapur The Movie has now collected ₹68.20 crore gross

in India, while its net collection stands at ₹56.75 crore.

“Stay for the post-credit scene. There is a clear signal that this is not the end and that more is coming. The material still breathes better in the longer OTT format. As a theatrical outing, it delivers enough of the old bhaukaal to justify the ticket if you love this chaotic uni-

verse, even if it never fully rises above being a safe, familiar companion piece.” Mirzapur: The Movie is an action crime thriller film directed by Gurmeet Singh in his feature film debut. It has been written by Puneet Krishna and produced by Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar under Excel Entertainment. The film is based on the Amazon Prime Video television series Mirzapur.

The film features an ensemble cast, with Pankaj Tripathi as Akhandanand “Kaleen” Tripathi, Ali Fazal as Govind “Guddu” Pandit, Divyendu as Phoolchand “Munna” Tripathi and Jitendra Kumar as Vinay “Bablu” Pandit, replacing Vikrant Massey from the series. Ravi Kishan plays Babban Yadav,

while Abhishek Banerjee appears as Subodh alias “Compounder”. Rasika Dugal stars as Beena Tripathi, Kaleen’s wife and Munna’s stepmother, and Shweta Tripathi plays Gajgamani “Golu” Gupta. The cast also includes Shriya Pilgaonkar as Swaragini “Sweety” Gupta, Harshita Gaur as Dimpy Pandit, Sushant Singh as Bhairav Singh Karnawat, Mohit Malik as Birju Lohar, Sheeba Chaddha as Vasudha Pandit and Rajesh Tailang as Advocate Ramakant Pandit. Kulbhushan Kharbanda plays Satyanand “Bauji” Tripathi, while Shaji Choudhary portrays Maqbool Khan, Anjum Sharma plays Sharad Shukla, Sonal Chauhan appears as Mumtaz Bibi and Anangsha Biswas as Zarina.

Production progress: Rajinikanth’s ‘Dharman’ marks schedule 2 wrap

Chennai : Rajinikanth’s much-awaited Dharman has reached another milestone. The upcoming Tamil film, which marks a major collaboration between superstar Rajinikanth and filmmaker-producer Kamal Haasan, has completed its second schedule of filming. The makers shared the update as the project continues to take shape under the direction of Ashwath Marimuthu.

Produced by Kamal Haasan through Raaj Kamal Films International and R Mahendran under the Turmeric Media banner, Dharman has generated considerable interest since its announcement, particularly because of the reunion of two of Tamil cinema’s biggest stars in the same project. While Kamal Haasan is backing the film as produc-



er, Rajinikanth leads the cast. The second schedule began in early August, following the completion of the film’s initial phase of production. With another schedule now wrapped, the team is expected to move ahead with the remaining portions of the film in the coming weeks.

Ashwath Marimuthu, who previously directed the 2025 Tamil romantic comedy Dragon starring Pradeep Ranganathan, is at the helm of Dharman. His involvement came after a series of changes

surrounding the project’s directorial plans. The filmmaker was officially announced as the director in June, replacing earlier plans that had involved Sundar C and subsequently Cibi Chakravarthy.

While details about Dharman’s storyline and Rajinikanth’s character have largely been kept under wraps, the casting has already added to the anticipation surrounding the film. Simran is part of the principal cast, marking her reunion with Rajinikanth after their appearance together in Karthik Subbaraj’s Petta in 2019. Raashi Khanna is also set to feature in the film. There has been speculation around additional casting, with Rukmini Vasanth and Ram Pothineni reportedly being considered for prominent roles.

‘RRR 2’ off the table: fans misled by resurfaced clip



Mumbai : Magnum opus RRR 2 featuring NTR and Ram Charan is suddenly back in the headlines, but is the sequel really confirmed? A video of the Oscar winner MM Keeravaani discussing the possibility of the se-

quel is going viral across X and Instagram, with fans believing it is his latest statement. However, there is a twist to the viral buzz.

The video is actually old. Keeravani did speak about the possibility

of RRR 2, but the clip has now resurfaced and is being presented as a fresh update. In the same conversation, he mentioned that SS Rajamouli’s priority was his film with Mahesh Babu. So, there is no new confirmation of RRR 2. Rajamouli is currently focused on Varanasi, which is nearing completion and is scheduled to hit screens on April 7, 2027. Until the makers officially announce it, the much-awaited reunion of Ram Charan and Jr NTR remains a possibility, not a confirmed project.

So, there is no new confirmation of RRR 2. Rajamouli is currently focused on Varanasi, which is nearing completion and is scheduled to hit screens on April 7, 2027. Until the makers officially announce it, the much-awaited reunion of Ram Charan and Jr NTR remains a possibility, not a confirmed project.

Manoj Bajpayee starts filming as Mahatma Gandhi in Lucknow for Sudhir Mishra’s next

Mumbai : Manoj Bajpayee is all set for his next project now. He will be playing the role of Mahatma Gandhi for the first time in his career in national Award-winning filmmaker Sudhir Mishra’s upcoming feature film. The film, titled Gandhi and My Mother, will explore a crucial 21-day period around India’s Independence, focusing on Gandhi’s choices and actions as the country navigated a defining moment in its history.

According to the latest report by Hindustan Times, Sudhir Mishra’s film has officially gone on floors now. The cast has started shooting an outdoor sequence in Lucknow. The cast of the film also includes Divya Dutta and Saurabh Shukla. The film’s Lucknow schedule began in



the Narhi area near the Lucknow Zoo, where the team shot a sequence involving a young girl and one of Gandhi’s public movements. The makers have also paid close attention to the period details, recreating the 1940s through vintage cars, costumes and old-style signboards to give the setting an authentic feel.

The director had earlier told

HT City, “My mother (Durga Devendra Nath Mishra) had met Gandhi as a child and we have had long discussions with her about him. Before she passed away (in 2022), I made a promise to her that I will make a film on him. So, I wrote this script that deals with a chapter from the later stage of his life. Anubhav (Sinha, director-producer)

has backed me.” Anubhav Sinha, founder of Benaras Mediaworks, is backing Mishra once again after their collaboration on Afwaah in 2023. He also opened up about the film and its production. “Manoj has lost considerable weight for the film and is currently in the ‘Gandhi zone’ on a restricted diet and a particular lifestyle. The film’s shoot will continue till October in Lucknow. All we can share is that it’s about a 21-day chapter from Gandhi’s life. We just have a working title for now and we are working on a new title,” he said.

Further details about the supporting cast, filming schedule and theatrical release date are yet to be announced.

‘Just shoot me’: Sanjay Gupta remembers Shah Rukh Khan’s fearless stand against the underworld

Mumbai : Shah Rukh Khan’s ascent in Bollywood coincided with a period when the Mumbai underworld’s presence in the film business was a serious concern. Filmmakers and actors faced threats and demands, while alleged interference in financing and casting had also become a subject of scrutiny. Filmmaker Sanjay Gupta has now recalled how Shah Rukh responded when he was threatened, saying the actor categorically refused to work under pressure.

Speaking on the Hussain Zaidi Files podcast, Sanjay claimed Shah Rukh’s response was so firm that he eventually earned the respect of those threatening him. “The only guy in the film industry, Shah Rukh Khan, when he was threatened, he said, ‘I will never do the film or show, I am a Pathaan, just shoot me if you want’. I am not scared of you, but I will not work with you and not do shows for you. He actually earned their respect. They also must have felt that there’s at least one person...” Sanjay said.

While Shah Rukh refused to give in, the threats had se-



rious security implications. The actor remained under heavy security and police protection for three years following the incidents. Shah Rukh himself addressed the threats during an old interview with comedian and actor Ruby Wax. He spoke about how pressure could allegedly be exerted on actors to accept film projects.

“They would set up a system, and they would say you do it. I may not have succumbed to it, but then they shoot you. So, sometimes it’s nice to do a film,” he said. Wax then asked, “You’re seriously saying someone calls you and says be in my film or I’ll blow your head off?” Shah Rukh nodded before replying, “Not as nicely as you’re saying it.”

Asked whether he had personally received death threats, the actor confirmed that it had happened more than once. “Oh yes, on many occasions... I had a lot of security for three years,” he said. Film critic Anupama Chopra documented Shah Rukh’s encounters with the underworld in her book King of Bollywood: Shah Rukh Khan and the Seductive World of Indian Cinema. Her account mentioned gangsters Abu Salem, Chhota Rajan and Chhota Shakeel.

According to Chopra, concerns about Shah Rukh’s safety intensified in 1997 while he was working on Mahesh Bhatt’s Duplicate. Senior Maharashtra police officer Rakesh Maria, who had been involved in the

investigation into the 1993 Mumbai blasts, reportedly informed Bhatt about a possible threat to Shah Rukh. The actor was subsequently assigned a personal bodyguard. Chopra also wrote about an alleged phone conversation between Shah Rukh and Abu Salem. According to her account, Salem abused the actor after he declined to work in a film backed by a producer close to the gangster.

Shah Rukh was reportedly “depressed and scared” by the situation but remained composed during the conversation. When Salem continued pushing him to accept a particular project, the actor reportedly replied, “I don’t tell you who to shoot so don’t tell me which film to do.” The murder of music baron Gulshan Kumar in 1997 brought further attention to the dangers confronting Bollywood figures at the time. The alleged nexus again came under scrutiny during the Chori Chori Chupke Chupke case in 2001. Financier Bharat Shah and producer Nazim Rizvi were arrested over alleged links to gangster Chhota Shakeel.

Kailash Kher slams offensive comedy, urges Samay Raina & Sharon Verma to show respect

Mumbai : Singer Kailash Kher has weighed in on the debate surrounding humour and its limits after jokes about Bihar and Kashmir on India’s Got Latent Season 2 drew criticism. The exchange between Samay Raina and comedian Sharon Verma has been widely discussed online, with Kher now stressing the importance of awareness and courtesy while making people laugh.

Speaking to ANI, the singer was asked about comedians using subjects connected to Biharis and Kashmiri Pandits for humour. Instead of addressing either comedian individually, Kher spoke about what he believes should guide people while expressing themselves publicly. Kher drew an analogy with his own field to explain why creative freedom, according to him, needs discipline. “Look, if I’ll tell you in terms of music, then music is not just a tune its something that can also make you laugh, its also a form of discipline. So, you should stay in music,” he said.

He added that getting the fundamentals wrong can change how an artistic expression is received. “If your



music tune is not correct, then you may end in making fun of someone,” Kher said. The singer then broadened his point beyond music, saying people should remain conscious of how they speak and behave with others.

“To islie manushye ko chaitanye me rehna chahie, tameez me rehna chahie... or apni apni tameez se sb baat krein, to sbko itna to pta hi hai kaise jeena hai, kese hasna hai or kese hasana hai, kese kisi ka dil jeetna hai...” he said. Kher’s remarks emphasised being mindful of one’s words and maintaining basic courtesy while communicating with others, including while trying to make them laugh. During the conversation, Kher also reflected on how he has conducted himself during his years in the public eye. The

singer said he has always tried to remain polite, even as criticism inevitably follows people who achieve greater visibility.

The controversy around the exchange also drew political attention as the clips travelled beyond the show’s audience online. Kher’s comments have now come amid the larger conversation over the jokes and the boundaries of comedy. While he did not directly attack Raina or Sharon, the singer maintained that people should know “kaise hasna hai or kese hasana hai,” while remaining conscious and courteous in the way they communicate. As of now, neither Samay Raina nor Sharon Verma has publicly responded to the criticism surrounding their exchange on India’s Got Latent Season 2.

Tanya Mittal recalls ‘brutal’ Bigg Boss media interrogation

Mumbai : With Bigg Boss 20 set to begin on Sunday, September 6, former contestant Tanya Mittal has found herself revisiting memories from her own stint on the reality show. The Bigg Boss 19 contestant shared a clip from the season’s Media Day and penned a lengthy note about an experience she says left her deeply upset at the time.

“As Bigg Boss shuru ho raha hai kal se, pata nahi kyun itni saari yaadein ek saath dimaag mein daud rahi hain,” Tanya wrote. Tanya described the media round as a day she could never forget. By then, she had spent more than 90 days inside the house and felt that the other contestants were against her. When she learnt that journalists would be entering the house, she was initially excited. “Aaj Mumbai ki media mujhse milne aa rahi hai,” she recalled thinking. That excitement, according to Tanya, disappeared once the questioning began. She particularly remembered the reaction she received after saying “Jai Shri Ram” and felt that the manner in which several questions were put to her was harsh. “Lekin jo hua, uske liye main bilkul tayyar nahi thi. Aaj bhi yaad hai... mere ‘Jai Shri Ram’ bolne par hansna, mere upar tanz karna. Sawal sahi ya galat nahi hote, unhe poochne ka tareeka hota hai. Aur us din har sawaal aisa lag raha tha jaise mujhe samajhne ke liye nahi, mujhe giraane ke liye poocha ja raha ho,” she wrote. Her post comes just before Bigg Boss 20 begins on September 6, bringing back memories of the scrutiny and emotional pressure she experienced during her own season.

B Praak lends voice to the only song in Meghna Gulzar’s next, ‘Daayra’

Mumbai : A few days ago, Meghna Gulzar revealed at a press conference that her upcoming crime thriller Daayra features just one song and that the lyrics have been penned by none other than legendary lyricist Gulzar. Amit Trivedi later revealed that he has composed the track. Now, we have learnt that B Praak has lent his voice to the song, bringing together three very distinct musical forces for what could be one of the film’s most intriguing surprises.

According to industry sources, known for his soulful renditions Mitti and Ranjha, B Praak along with Amit Trivedi and Gulzar have collaborated on the track, which marks an unexpected combination of voice, music and poetry. While the makers have remained tight-lipped about the song, its very existence is intriguing given the world of Daayra. Directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Meghna Gulzar, Daayra stars Kareena Kapoor Khan and

Prithviraj Sukumaran as two police officers whose understanding of justice puts them on opposing sides of the debate. Set against a complex investigation involving crime, law, policing and the larger question of justice, the film explores what happens when the pursuit of justice itself becomes a matter of debate.

The recently released trailer has been very well received by critics and audiences, and the film is already trending at #1 on IMDb’s list of the most

anticipated upcoming films. The event videos have also gone viral on social media, and audiences are now eagerly waiting to see Kareena and Prithviraj together for the first time, with both actors stepping into the world of policing. Known for grounding her stories in realism and layered human emotion, Meghna has previously used music sparingly but memorably as part of her storytelling. From Dilbaro in Raazi to the single-track musical landscape of Talvar,

her films have demonstrated how one song can carry considerable emotional weight within a narrative.

That makes the mystery around Daayra’s only song all the more interesting. With Gulzar’s poetry, Amit Trivedi’s composition and B Praak’s powerful voice coming together, the track could add yet another unexpected layer to Daayra. For now, the makers are keeping the details under wraps. But if the collaboration is indeed as special as



it sounds, Daayra may have one more surprise waiting beyond its investigation. Produced by Jungle Pictures and

Pen Studios, distributed by Pen Marudhar, Daayra releases in cinemas on September 18.

High Court Reinstates J&K Bank Officer Dismissed Due to “Anti-National” Charges



Srinagar, Sep 06: In the first of these rulings, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court overturned the dismissal of a senior bank employee who was accused of engaging in anti-national activities. Since Article 370 was repealed, dozens of government workers have been fired as part of a broader campaign against alleged separatist supporters and anti-national activities in Jammu and Kashmir. Saadut Hussain Pampori, the Deputy General Manager of Jammu and Kashmir Bank, was fired without conducting an investigation; the court has ordered his reinstatement. Dozens of government workers have been fired by the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir due to alleged ties to terrorist organizations or separatist ideology. The Lieutenant Governor

has used extraordinary provisions that allow an employee to be fired without conducting an investigation or providing the individual with an opportunity to defend their viewpoint. Justice Sanjay Dhar noted that while top constitutional officials, such as the President or the Governor, can be trusted to utilize severe powers, such as firing an employee without conducting an investigation, the managing director of the bank cannot be trusted to the same extent. “In the absence of any investigation with a finding about involvement of the petitioner in anti-national activities, etc., it was not open to the Managing Director and CEO of the respondent-Bank to issue the impugned order dismissing the petitioner from service,” the court said. The bank argued

that the Managing Director can dismiss an officer without a regular departmental inquiry in cases involving alleged terrorist/anti-national activities or threats to national security. Saadut Hussain was accused of running #TortureKashmir social media campaign “aimed at creating false narratives against the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the country and the same has resulted in unrest in Kashmir in the years 2008, 2010 and 2016.” The officer had also served as OSD (officer on special duty) to then Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti. After his dismissal, Saadat challenged the decision. He argued before the court that special clause could be used only if an investigation agency establishes his involvement. He

said there was no FIR registered against him and no such investigation or inquiry was conducted. The government and the bank defended the dismissal, saying police conducted a discreet investigation and submitted a report that contained material linking the deputy manager to anti-national activities, including allegedly running the #TortureKashmir campaign. The government argued that the clause 12.29 was similar to Article 311(2)(c), under which the Lieutenant Governor’s administration has dismissed dozens of employees without a departmental inquiry. The court examined the confidential report and found that it was based on information from sources, discreet enquiries, and social media posts, but “did not show any evidence that the witnesses had been examined or that material had been collected through an investigation as required by Clause”. The bank argued that it had acted on the advice of the competent authority and that a formal FIR was not necessary.

Over one-third of voters are left out of the Delhi SIR draft, which has the lowest enumeration at 67.22%

New Delhi, Sep 06: Out of all the states or Union Territories where the poll register exercise has been carried out thus far, just 67.22 percent of voters in New Delhi had their enumeration forms gathered during the SIR in the nation’s capital. The draft list released on Monday does not contain over one-third of the voters on the capital’s electoral rolls before to the SIR. Just 97.54 lakh were included in the draft registers. Nearly 94.95 lakh people voted in the Assembly elections last year. Former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal was disturbed by draft list numbers that hardly exceeded the most recent polling statistics, despite the fact that enumeration has traditionally been low in industrialized and metropolitan regions throughout India. “The Government of India is unnecessarily worried about the population,” the AAP national convener mocked the SIR on X. The Election Commission would lower the population of our nation from 140 crore to 50 crore through SIR. Before the SIR process began, Delhi had more over 1.45 crore voters. Of them, 1.95 percent were listed as deceased, 0.98



percent as enrolled somewhere else, and 29.86 percent as “absent/permanently shifted/others.” “Others” refers to people who either refused to list themselves or failed to turn in their forms on time. A number of voters stated that their age on the voter list was one year lower than their actual age, notwithstanding the vigilance to filter the electoral rolls. Despite the scrutiny to filter the electoral rolls, several voters

reported that their age on the voter list was a year less than their original age. Poll officials this paper spoke to couldn’t explain the anomaly. Maharashtra’s draft list was also released on Monday. The state saw 78.86 per cent enumeration. Among the places that have had the SIR so far, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu at 70.35 per cent have had the lowest enumeration after Delhi. Karnataka

chief minister D.K. Shivakumar and A. Revanth Reddy of Telangana, with 80.52 per cent and 78.3 per cent enumerations respectively, wrote to chief election commissioner Gyanesh Kumar last week to extend the SIR process. The Congress leaders demanded an extension of the month-long claims and objections period as no polls are due in the two states immediately. They also demanded the “full implementation of the prescribed procedure”, including the public reading of the rolls in ward committee meetings and gram sabhas and more than three weeks to respond to notices on the logical discrepancies in enumeration forms. Both states have been at loggerheads with election authorities over documents which will be accepted as proof for date and place of birth by electoral registration officers from people summoned for verification. Telangana’s Family Register Certificate has not been added to the list of documents, as the state had demanded. In Karnataka, poll authorities are yet to clarify whether they will accept Permanent Residential Certificates issued by the state.

Food safety is not a penalty, according to FSSAI chief roots for Tukaram Mundhe

Mumbai, Sep 06: Maharashtra FDA Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe has received strong support from FSSAI CEO Rajit Punhani for his rigorous enforcement of food safety regulations. Punhani praised Mundhe’s inspections and license suspensions across various establishments, noting the historical undervaluation of food



safety roles, which were often seen as punishment postings. He emphasized the need for every state to have a dedicated

food safety commissioner. Despite facing criticism from courts for his aggressive enforcement style, labeled by the Bombay High Court as “disproportionate,” Mundhe has successfully raised public awareness about food safety issues with existing resources, demonstrating that effective enforcement is possible without increasing manpower.

Tiger Woods Will Modify His Not Guilty Plea in DUI Case



New Delhi: According to court documents released on Tuesday, Tiger Woods, who entered a not guilty plea to driving under the influence following a car accident in Florida in March, is anticipated to formally modify his plea. According to online records, a Martin County judge added a “change of plea” hearing to the golf star’s case calendar early on Wednesday morning. A request for comment from AFP regarding the nature of the plea change was not immediately answered by Woods’ attorney. In March, the 15-time major winner collided his SUV with a trailer being towed by a pickup truck close to his Jupiter Island residence. Officers on the spot determined that he was intoxicated and that he was carrying narcotic medications. Woods pleaded not guilty to misdemeanor charges of DUI with property damage and

refusing to submit to a lawful test, telling authorities he was looking at his phone and changing radio channels when he crashed. Days later he said he was “stepping away” to seek treatment and focus on his health. He was cleared by a judge to travel overseas to an inpatient facility, reportedly in Switzerland. Woods made his first public appearance since his arrest at the PGA Tour’s Travelers Championship in June. The following month, a judge ruled that prosecutors could review Woods’ hospital treatment, as well as the golfer’s prescription drug records. In both cases the information can be reviewed only by prosecutors and designated law enforcement officers and experts and Woods’s defense team. Woods has undergone multiple back operations and surgeries on severe leg injuries suffered in a separate, 2021 California car crash.

Growing flood concerns throughout the Himalayas prompt Uttarakhand to continue surveying glacier lakes

Dehradun, Sep 06: In response to Nepal’s devastating flash floods, the Uttarakhand administration has resumed surveying the state’s hazardous glacier lakes and established early warning systems to notify residents in catchment areas before disaster strikes. However, the government’s slow progress indicates that groundwork won’t begin for years. According to Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, a team from the Geological Survey of India, the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, and a number of other organizations has identified 13 hazardous glacial lakes in the state and started a survey to determine their potential impact areas. Nine lakes are still unstudied for a variety of reasons, despite the state government having examined four of them. Vinod Kumar Suman, secretary of Uttarakhand Disaster Management, stated that the monitoring system will soon be improved. He stated, “We have finished surveying the four hazardous lakes and are currently surveying the remaining nine lakes.” In the event of a breach in these lakes, “we have



planned to install early warning systems at those places and start awareness programs in areas which could be most affected,” he continued. Uttarakhand’s high-altitude Himalayan range contains more than 1,200 glacier lakes. Government sources said there were 426 glacial lakes in the state

spanning 1,000 square metres, and 13 of them were found to be dangerous four years ago. “The survey report was tabled in the meeting of senior ministers and officers in 2022. It was again placed before the chief minister in 2024. In the last four years, experts have surveyed only four lakes. We

understand that it is not an easy task in the difficult Himalayan terrain, but that can’t be an excuse because the people of the state deserve safety,” a senior state government officer said on the condition of anonymity. “We tried to table the report at the meeting with the chief minister every month but got the opportunity only twice in four years. However, a decision is still awaited. Our glacial lakes are more dangerous than those that killed 700 people in Nepal. Many of these lakes have shifted around 1km from their original places. Rising temperatures are exacerbating the risk. A minor breach in these glaciers may lead to a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) of unimaginable proportion,” he added. The Centre has recently approved ₹30 crore for Uttarakhand to develop an early warning system. Heavy rain claimed at least seven lives and triggered landslides, house collapses and flash-flood-like situations across Uttarakhand on Tuesday, while falling boulders blocked the arterial Dehradun-Mussoorie highway and disrupted traffic.

For a joint British record fee, Enzo Fernandez completes his move to Manchester City

New Delhi: Enzo Fernandez has been signed by Manchester City from Chelsea for a joint British record 125 million pounds. The Argentina international is City’s most recent significant acquisition in a summer that has seen the team spend a lot of money reorganizing their roster. The British record set last summer when Liverpool acquired Alexander Isak for 125 million pounds is matched by Fernandez’s signing. Additionally, even though City has made about 300 million pounds from player sales, their current window spending has reached a Premier League record of 458 million pounds. The 25-year-old, who paid a British record 107 million pounds to join Chelsea from Benfica in 2023, has now left Stamford Bridge after pushing for a transfer. Fernandez had been keen on joining Real Madrid earlier this summer, although the Spanish giants eventually ruled out making an offer. The midfielder had been booed by Chelsea supporters during a friendly against Real Sociedad and again during the Premier League opener at Fulham. He was subsequently left out of wins over Luton and Brighton, while Fernandez admitted in an open letter



that his final days at the club had been difficult. “I want you to know that these have not been easy days for me,” Fernandez wrote on Instagram. “The truth is, I haven’t been in a good place.” Fernandez thanked Chelsea for his time at the club and said the decision to leave had been difficult, adding that the club would “always be in my heart”. He now reunites with Enzo Maresca, who worked with him during his spell as Chelsea manager. Fernandez becomes the second player City have signed for more than 100 million pounds this summer after Elliot Anderson joined from Nottingham Forest for 116 million pounds in July. Maresca was keen to work with Fernandez again after City lost several midfielders this summer, including Tijjani Reijnders, Rodri and Nico

Gonzalez. His arrival gives City another high-level option in the centre of the pitch as they look to challenge on multiple fronts. “I could not be happier to be here, and I am ready for the challenge of helping City continue winning trophies,” Fernandez told the club’s website. “This is a club built for success.” City have also signed 18-year-old midfielder Ayoub Bouaddi from Lille for 86 million pounds and Brazilian winger Allan Elias for 34 million pounds, alongside Jeremy Monga and goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli. Their spending could rise again with Everton winger Iliman Ndiaye set to arrive in a deal worth up to 65 million pounds. Fernandez’s departure adds to Chelsea’s extraordinary summer of player sales. Nicolas Jackson has joined Aston Villa for 65 million pounds, while Liam Delap moved to Nottingham Forest for 50 million pounds. Chelsea’s total income from transfers is expected to pass 400 million pounds, comfortably surpassing the previous Premier League record of around 300 million pounds set by the club last season. Fernandez’s move is Chelsea’s second-biggest sale, behind Eden Hazard’s 2019 transfer to Real Madrid.

NSUI accuses ABVP activists of destroying signature campaign posters, according to DUSU polls

New Delhi, Sep 06: In the run-up to the DUSU elections, the National Students’ Union of India (NSUI) has accused Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) activists of destroying its iconic campaign posters at Delhi University. This has sparked a new discussion between the two student organizations. Some students can be seen dismantling posters that NSUI claimed belonged to the organization in a video that went viral on

social media. The identities and political affiliations of those in the video could not be independently verified by PTI. NSUI said in a social media post that as ABVP’s hallmark campaign started to acquire popularity, it turned to taking down its posters. In response, ABVP released a video in which it refuted the accusations and questioned NSUI’s tactics. “NSUI... are you here to put accusations or to fight elections? It is easy to put false blame on the govern-

ment, administration and police, and make videos, but it is difficult to get votes from students,” Sarthak Sharma, state secretary of ABVP Delhi, said in the post. Sharma also questioned the NSUI’s position on poster defacement, saying the organisation must decide whether it is “with defacement or against it”. In the video, Sharma urged NSUI to clarify whether it intends to follow the guidelines laid down by the court for the election process. “You can get

views by making fake videos but you cannot win the trust of students. If printed campaign materials are to be allowed in the election, the rules should be the same for everyone,” he said. The allegations and counter-allegations come during the final phase of campaigning for the Delhi University Students’ Union elections. The DUSU election is scheduled for September 18, while counting of votes and declaration of results are expected on September 19.

100 more villages in Balasore are submerged as Subarnarekha rises above the danger level

Bhubaneswar, Sep 06: The flood situation in Odisha worsened as the Subarnarekha River inundated 100 additional villages in Balasore district due to heavy rainfall from low pressure in Jharkhand. A total of 146 villages were affected, with roads in Balasore cut off. The water level of Subarnarekha reached 11.54 meters, exceeding the danger mark. In

Mayurbhanj, conditions improved as water levels receded, allowing some displaced residents to return home. However, Jajpur’s situation remained static with 62 villages still flooded, prompting school closures. The Baitarani River was near flood stage, and the India Meteorological Department warned of continued rainfall across most of Odisha.



Kidambi Srikanth loses against Lee Cheuk Yiu, ending his China Masters run



New Delhi: Kidambi Srikanth’s remarkable run at the 2026 China Masters ended on Friday when Lee Cheuk Yiu upset the former world No. 1 21-16, 21-16 in the quarterfinals. At the BWF World Tour Super 750 tournament in Shenzhen, the Indian was unable to continue his campaign. Srikanth scored two quick points to start the first game, but Lee quickly gained control of the match. Srikanth launched a late challenge that was eventually too late to alter the result, but the Hong Kong shuttler kept his lead for the rest of the match. The second game offered Srikanth more opportunities to turn the contest around. He raced to a 4-0 lead but surrendered the advantage with four consecutive unforced errors, allowing Lee to move back in front. Srikanth continued to fight and produced a couple of sensational points to take a 15-14 lead, but Lee responded strongly and eventually closed out the match in straight games. The result also extended Lee’s advantage in their head-to-head record, with Srikanth now having lost their last four meetings in a row. His only victory against the Hong Kong player came in the opening round of the 2018 India Open. Despite the quarter-final exit, Srikanth’s campaign represented an important step forward. It was his first quarter-final appearance at a BWF World Tour Super 750 event or higher in three years, having entered the tournament without reaching that stage at this level during that period.

An Indian powerlifter won silver at the IPF Championships by lifting three times her body weight

New Delhi: Keyaa Kunal Banerji, a 21-year-old Indian powerlifter, has become a household celebrity thanks to a 140 kg deadlift, and her abilities have gone viral on the internet. At the 2026 IPF World Sub-Junior and Junior Classic Powerlifting Championships in Sun City, South Africa, she put up an incredible performance and won a silver medal in the Junior Women’s 47 kg individual deadlift competition.

The gap between her body weight and the metal on the bar was the most notable aspect of her accomplishment. She lifted more than three times her body weight while weighing barely 45.70 kg, an accomplishment that soon became the campaign’s high point and went viral on social media. Indian powerlifter Banerji competes in the 47 kg Junior Women’s



division. Her greatest lifts were a 90 kg squat, a 50 kg bench press, and a 140 kg deadlift. Her performance in South Africa was based on a 280 kg total. The deadlift turned out to be her best event, even though she placed fifth overall in the 47 kg junior tournament. She finished

second in the discipline with a 140 kg effort. Ines Herbaux of France led the deadlift competition with 165 kg, while Blathnaid O’Dwyer of Ireland also achieved 140 kg. Banerji won the silver medal after finishing ahead of O’Dwyer. Banerji achieved a total of 257.5 kg at the 2025 National Champi-

onship with an 82.5 kg squat, a 47.5 kg bench press, and a 127.5 kg deadlift. She then raised those numbers at the 2026 National Championship, lifting 95kg in the squat, 52.5kg in the bench press and 140kg in the deadlift, finishing with a 287.5kg total. Banerji was not the only Indian athlete to

make an impact in South Africa. Madhura Kar emerged as one of the country’s standout performers at the championships, producing a four-gold-medal performance in the Sub-Junior Women’s 52kg category. The powerlifter, who weighed 49.35kg, lifted 107.5kg in the squat, 60kg in the bench press and 125kg in the deadlift. Her combined total of 292.5kg helped her secure gold across all four disciplines. Kar’s latest success added to an impressive record despite her young age. A Class XII student from Jalpaiguri, she had already made her mark at the domestic level by winning the National Powerlifting Championship in 2024 and successfully defending the title in 2025. She also won the National Bench Press Championship in Faridabad earlier in 2026.

Elko exhorts attention.5-point lead over Missouri State

New Delhi: Texas A&M coach Mike Elko is eager to see how his eighth-ranked team plays Missouri State in its opening game on Saturday after a lengthy and demanding camp. Elko stated, “We want to go out there and see where we are... then figure out where the adjustments come and what we need to do to become the best team we’re capable of being.” Given that the Aggies are 40 1/2-point favorites over the Bears, who won seven games in their inaugural season at the FBS level, most people don’t think there will be much of a challenge. Regardless of the opponent, Elko is committed to the Aggies reaching their full potential. “We have a chance to be really good if we have the ability to go out and focus and play with the level of urgency that we need to,” Elko said. “I think we have a very high ceiling

but we’ve got to go out and do it.” He praised Missouri State’s hiring of coach Casey Woods, who is in his first season at the school after spending last year as SMU’s offensive coordinator. The Aggies lost 10 starters to the NFL draft but return plenty of veterans, led by quarterback Marcel Reed, who enters his third season as starter. Reed threw for 3,169 yards and 25 touchdowns while adding six rushing scores last season to help the Aggies to an 11-2 record and their first College Football Playoff appearance last season. Elko believes he can do even more this season. “He works really hard, he’s gotten better, he’s got a better command of the offense,” Elko said. “But he’s got to go out and we’ve got to play. The reality of this thing is that we’ve done what we’ve had to do to get to this point, now it’s time to go play.”

Leandro Paredes considers Argentina's prospects following Lionel Messi's retirement and a 10-match ban

New Delhi: Leandro Paredes, a midfielder, stated that it will be challenging to continue playing for Argentina after being suspended for ten games for his involvement in a brawl after Spain’s World Cup final loss. The 32-year-old added that he will need to consider his future with the national team due to Lionel Messi’s retirement from international competition. Weeks after an argument broke out at the final whistle when Paredes slammed Spain player Gavi to the ground while the champions’ replacements raced onto the field to celebrate, Paredes was

suspended in August. While teammate Nahuel Molina was charged with two assaults, Paredes was charged with three. Additionally, both athletes were fined \$90,000.” It will be challenging for me to remain with the national team,” Paredes said to Argentine media on Tuesday. It will be challenging for everything to continue as before due to the ban as well as Leo’s decision. I haven’t yet talked about it with Lionel Scaloni, the coach, but we’ll discuss it and I’ll make a decision.” Paredes said Messi’s absence from the national team



would be keenly felt. “Leo’s legacy will live on forever because of what he achieved, for never giving up and for showing that dreams are hard-won, pursued and, in the end, fulfilled...,” Paredes added.

BCCI Modifies Selection Policy Significantly in Response to Recent Backlash



New Delhi: The team for the three-match Twenty20 International series against Afghanistan was revealed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Tuesday, however there were certain restrictions on the selections. Asterisks were placed next to the names of individuals including Nitish Kumar Reddy, Jasprit Bumrah, Washington Sundar, and Harshit Rana, indicating that the board is unsure of their suitability. In response to previous criticism of the BCCI’s treatment of injured players, a report has now outlined the new strategy the organization has implemented for player selection. The BCCI Center of Excellence (CoE) has been under fire in recent months due to inadequate handling of injured players. The BCCI has now opted not to name a player in the team till the management is completely certain of the player’s fitness state, according to a report in Cricbuzz. Before releasing a player,

they want to be 200% certain about his availability, not simply 100%, according to a source acquainted with the procedure. In a recent explanation of the board’s position, CoE head VVS Laxman suggested that an effort is being made to have complete transparency in selecting matters. The players are aware that they are not yet prepared to compete in the national series. It is constantly focused on the individual and the team. In order for communication to flow smoothly. I believe that the BCCI has made all of the fitness reports and the selection process transparent. “At the end of the selection, whether it’s a release to the press, it’s clearly mentioned that these players are picked subject to fitness. Means if they don’t clear the fitness test, the selectors will know who the other players are who will go in their place if they don’t clear the fitness test. I mean, it’s basic common sense,” Laxman had said. BCCI sec-

retary Devajit Saikia also explained the asterisk around certain players’ names, saying since the selections are made 3-4 weeks before an international assignment, the board wants to ensure that conditions of selection are explicitly mentioned. “So if he gets picked within that period of 21 or 28 days, he will be taken into the team,” Saikia had said. “So that is precisely why we do not outrightly reject him because on the date of selection, we are rejecting him because on that day he is not fit. But, by the time it is effectively required for travel or to play the match, by that time he may be totally fit”. As far as the selections for the Afghanistan series are concerned, both Bumrah and Reddy are on track to be fully fit and available for selection for the series opener in Delhi on September 13. The cases of Rana and Sundar, however, are not clear yet. “The CoE will not take chances,” the report quoted the source as saying.

In a wild five-set, Alexander Zverev outlasts Lorenzo Sonego to advance to the US Open

New Delhi: On Tuesday, top-seeded Alexander Zverev defeated Lorenzo Sonego, ranked 89th, 6-4, 3-6, 6-7 (7/9), 7-5, 6-4, to advance to the second round of the US Open. In a tight all-court match that ended on Arthur Ashe Stadium at 1:55 in the morning after four hours and fifty-three minutes, Zverev defeated a tenacious challenge from Sonego. The match was marked by impossible retrievals, impossibly angled wins, and some incomprehensible blunders.

“I’m just happy I won, that’s it,” Zverev remarked. “I believe this was the longest opening round match I have ever played in my life. It was an amazing struggle with many ups and downs, lasting about five hours.

“Credit to him, he played an incredible match,” Zverev remarked, adding that the fight was exactly what he needed following disappointing results in two hard court competitions prior to the Open. Zverev defeated Sonego for his eighth straight victory after winning his first Grand Slam championship at Roland Garros and making it to



the Wimbledon final. By securing a second-round matchup with Quentin Halys of France, he avoided being the first men’s top seed to lose in the opening round of the Grand Slam in twenty-three years. With the help of two unforced errors and a double-fault from Sonego, Zverev broke for a 3-2 lead after fending off a break point early in the fifth set. It was all the opening Zverev needed. The German had pocketed the first set without facing a break point. Af-

ter surrendering a break in the seventh game Sonego made him work to close it out, saving four set points on his own serve in the ninth game before Zverev produced a love hold. The pressure built in the second set, Sonego earning his first break of the match for a 5-3 lead and serving it out to level the match. Zverev looked first frustrated and then dejected as his errors piled up in the third set. Sonego gave himself a break chance in the seventh

game with a defensive lob that left the German stranded, and Zverev dropped his serve meekly with his second double fault of the game. Sonego was serving for the set at 5-4 when Zverev stepped it up, breaking the Italian at love in a game that opened with Zverev’s pinpoint passing winner off an acrobatic volley from Sonego. Level again they went to the tiebreaker, where Zverev surrendered the set with a double fault on Sonego’s second set point. Sonego saved a pair of break points to open the fourth set and had saved three more in the fifth game before Zverev broke for 3-2, seizing the advantage with a lunging cross-court backhand that Sonego couldn’t reach. The momentum was short-lived as Sonego broke back in the next game, taking advantage of Zverev’s botched overhead and closing out the game with a stunning passing shot and a forehand volley. A love hold then put Sonego up 4-3, but he couldn’t hang on, he fought off four more break points in the ninth game but Zverev broke him for 6-5 lead on the way to forcing the fifth set.

Kidambi Srikanth is eliminated as Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty advance to the semifinals

New Delhi: While veteran Kidambi Srikanth’s campaign ended in the men’s singles quarterfinals on Friday, India’s top men’s doubles team of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty fought through a taxing three-game match against Denmark’s Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen to advance to the semifinals of the China Masters Super 750. In a 70-minute match, the fourth-seeded Indians won 21-13, 16-21, and 21-18 to maintain their remarkable run following a silver medal at the Thailand Open Super 500 and a top-podium position at the Singapore Open Super 750 in May. With a rush of victories, Satwik and Chirag dominated the rallies and jumped out to a 5-1 lead. They kept up their offensive pace to gain a seven-point lead at 16-9 before easily pocketing. The Danes, however, upped the intensity in the second game, matching



pair willing to surrender an inch. At 17-17, the contest hung in the balance, but Satwik and Chirag dug deep when it mattered most, stringing together three crucial points to move to 20-17. After conceding one, the Indians held their nerve to seal the match and book their place in the last four. Srikanth’s run came to an end in the quarterfinals as the former world No.1 was outplayed in straight games by Hong Kong’s Lee Cheuk Yiu. The 33-year-old Indian, who had shown flashes of his vintage best while finishing runner-up at the US Open Super 300 earlier this year, went down 16-21, 16-21 to the 25th-ranked Lee Cheuk in a 39-minute contest.

the Indian duo shot for shot. Locked at 15-15, Astrup and Rasmussen produced a decisive burst of six points across two runs to force a decider. The third game lived up to its billing, with neither

The CEO of Japan Cricket says teams are allowed to reserve lodging

New Delhi: According to Japan Cricket Association CEO Naoki Alex Miyaji on Wednesday, cricket teams competing in the 2018 Asian Games have been granted lodging by the organizers, but they will also have the option to book their own lodgings. Miyaji’s remarks coincided with worries expressed by some of the top cricketing nations in Asia regarding the tournament’s logistics setup, including the location of the lodging offered to participating teams. “The Asian Games is being organized by the organizing committee Aichi-Nagoya Games Organizing Committee (AINAGOC)

in collaboration with the ACC under the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA),” Miyaji told PTI during an interview. “The JCA has provided support in some areas but is not directly involved so I am not able to directly answer all of your questions. What I can say is that all parties are working hard to ensure the success of Cricket in the Asian Games. “I can also assure you that the ACC have been discussing accommodation options with AINAGOC for a long time. The participating teams in cricket are being offered hotel accommodation,” Miyaji said. At a recent Asian Cricket Council (ACC) meeting,

several major cricket-playing countries reportedly raised questions about the facilities and travel arrangements. India and Pakistan were among the full-member cricket boards want their officials to travel to Japan at the earliest opportunity and inspect the arrangements for players ahead of the Asian Games. In particular, boards have questioned whether the rooms assigned to teams are spacious enough. The designated accommodation is around 20 kilometres away from the Korogi Sports Park in Nisshin City, Aichi Prefecture, where the cricket matches will be played.

Prannoy progresses to Indonesia Masters Super 100 round of 16; Kharb, Chaliha post wins

New Delhi: In the men’s singles Round of 32 on Wednesday, top seed H. S. Prannoy overcame a game deficit to defeat Liao Jhuo-Fu of Chinese Taipei. In an hour and four minutes, the World No. 39 defeated Liao 18-21, 21-15, and 21-19 to advance to the round of 16, where he will face Xuan Chen Zhu of China. After receiving a bye in the first round, Prannoy most recently participated at the Taipei Open in late July, where he lost in the round of 16. He was not selected for the BWF World Championships in New Delhi. Ashmita Chaliha, the top seed in the women’s division, defeated Pornpicha Choeikeewong

of Thailand 21-17, 23-21 to advance to the round of 16. Third seed Annol Kharb beat Hong Kong’s Liang Ka Wing 21-17, 21-9, while Ishaa Pal beat compatriot Aakarshi Kashyap 21-13, 21-7. Ronak Chouhan beat China’s Yu Xuan Liu 21-15, 21-18 in his men’s singles first-round match, then overpowered Chinese Taipei’s Cheng-Han Tsai 23-21, 21-19 in the following round. Saneeth Dayanand beat third-seeded Chinese Tian Yao Dong 9-21, 21-18, 21-11 in another round of 32 fixture. Kiran George, Satish Kumar Karunakaran, Tanya Hemanth and Anwesha Gowda suffered reverses in their singles encounters.