



Derek O'Brien, a supporter of Mamata Banerjee, demands an all-party meeting on delimitation

Kolkata, July 20: Derek O'Brien, a Trinamool Congress MP loyal to Mamata Banerjee, on Sunday demanded an immediate all-party meeting ahead of the Parliament's monsoon session, warning the Narendra Modi-led Centre against deploying "cloak-and-dagger tactics" to rush through laws on delimitation and foreign funding regulations. Rajya Sabha member O'Brien's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi also underscored the BJP-led government's legislative management and past procedural violations. The move follows the

listing of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, for consideration, alongside persistent speculation regarding a fresh push for the Delimitation Bill, which failed to secure a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha this summer. The letter labelled both legislations "draconian" and explicitly challenged the Modi government's track record on parliamentary transparency. "Any legislation related to delimitation has not been included in the parliamentary bulletin listing government business to be taken up during the up-



coming Monsoon Session of Parliament. However, given your government's dubious record of mocking parliamentary rules of procedure and conventions, we are cynical about your intentions," it read. The letter focused its resistance on the immediate societal impact of the proposed FCRA amendments, asserting that the law intends to squeeze civil society and minority-run institutions. "The FCRA Bill risks weakening and destroying institutions that have served India's poorest and marginalised communities for decades in the education and

● **Rajya Sabha member O'Brien's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted concerns regarding the legislative management of the BJP-led government, emphasizing past procedural violations associated with its governance. The letter aims to draw attention to these issues and assess their implications on legislative integrity.**

health sector," it read. "This includes 54,000 educational institutions administered by the Christian community, nurturing six crore students, from all communities, every year, across the nation."

TMC youth leader arrested over 'criminal gang'

Malda, July 20: A former Trinamool Congress youth leader was arrested on Saturday night for his alleged links with a criminal gang, two of whose members were caught last week with a firearm, ammunition and weapons before an alleged robbery attempt. Police said Surojit Saha, who was the president of the Gazole block of the Trinamool Youth Congress in Malda before the party dissolved all its organisational committees in the wake of its Assembly poll defeat, was arrested when his name surfaced during the interrogation of two alleged gang members held on July 15. According to the police, a patrol team spotted a group of youths assembled at a location under Gazole police station limits on the night of July 15. As the police approached, the group fled.

However, two of them were caught after a chase, and an improvised firearm, a live bullet and several weapons were allegedly recovered from them. "During interrogation, the two said that Surojit Saha was one of their associates. Based on the information gathered during the investigation, he was arrested," a senior police officer said.

Saha was produced in court on Sunday. He denied the allegations. Gazole's BJP MLA Chinmoy Deb Burman alleged that several other complaints had earlier been levelled against Saha.

Senior Trinamool leader and Englishbazar municipality chairman Krishnendu Choudhury said the law would take its own course and there was no question of defending anyone accused of crime.

As NCPI MPs, Kakoli attends an all-party meeting

Kolkata, July 20: Opposition members staged a brief walk-out from the customary pre-House-session all-party meeting in protest of the government's invitation to Sudip Bandyopadhyay and Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, arguing that this action legitimizes a breakaway faction of the Trinamool Congress without the Speaker's approval for its merger with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI). This tension foreshadows a contentious monsoon session of Parliament set to begin on Monday, where the government aims to secure a two-thirds majority to pass a constitutional amendment linking women's reservation to a new delimitation exercise. The proposed delimitation seeks to increase the Lok Sabha's strength from 543 to as many as 850 seats. Shortly after the walkout, which was termed "symbolic," the opposition parties returned to the meeting, including the DMK and the Aam Aadmi Party, both of which have distanced themselves from the broader Opposition INDIA bloc. The government is particularly focused on appeasing the DMK following its split with Congress, its traditional ally in Tamil Nadu, which has instead aligned with actor Vijay's successful TVK. Trinamool MP Mahua Moitra confirmed that the Congress, Samajwadi Party, DMK, JMM, Aam Aadmi Party, National Conference, Left parties, and Shiv Sena (UBT) participated in the walkout, labeling the dissenters as "traitors." Moitra criticized the parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju for inviting members whose disqualification is under consideration and raised concerns that the NCPI lacks recognition from the Election Commission and legitimate approval for its merger by the Speaker. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla had on Saturday approved the merger of six Shiv Sena (UBT) rebel MPs with the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena. But he withheld his decision on a petition from the 20 Trinamool turncoats for a merger with the NCPI. He, however, allotted the Trinamool defectors a separate seating block in the House. Rijiju invited Sudip and Kakoli to the all-party meeting as NCPI representatives.

After the meeting, Sudip claimed the NCPI had become the second-largest NDA constituent after the BJP — "bigger than Chandrababu Naidu's TDP and Nitish Kumar's JDU" — and criticised the Opposition's walkout. Asked about the Speaker withholding his approval to the Trinamool rebels' merger with the NCPI, Sudip said the party had approached the Election Commission for recognition.

The NCPI has petitioned the Election Commission for recognition, with Congress MP Jairam Ramesh criticizing the government's invitation to 20 "rebel" TMC MPs as premature. Rijiju downplayed the opposition's walkout, describing it as a technical boycott without allegations, and emphasized that the petition from the MPs is under consideration, thus justifying their representation at the all-party meeting. At the parliamentary meeting, the Opposition pressed for discussions on various issues, including allegations of donation theft from the Ram temple, exam paper leaks, activist Sonam Wangchuk's hunger strike, the deployment of ethanol-blended fuel, and the government's foreign policy. The DMK voiced strong opposition to the proposed delimitation exercise, emphasizing it should not disadvantage southern states. Currently, the government has scheduled only eight bills for this session, omitting the constitutional amendment bill. Government officials are determined to secure a two-thirds majority to reintroduce this bill, which was previously defeated. Opposition reactions will be closely monitored, especially given that 26 MPs from the opposition have joined the NDA since the last session, yet uncertainty remains about achieving the necessary majority. Both the DMK and the Samajwadis appear firmly against the delimitation proposal, with DMK MP Tiruchi Siva stating that clarity on the matter has not been provided by the government and any adverse effects on southern states will be rejected. He expressed that the DMK supports the implementation of women's reservation within the current strength of the Lok Sabha. Samajwadi MP Dharmendra Yadav reiterated his party's opposition to delimitation, stating that both the delimitation bill and the one-nation-one-election bill represent efforts to undermine India's democracy and advance constitutional authoritarianism. Trinamool Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien has also reached out to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting an all-party meeting concerning the proposed delimitation and amendments to the Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act. O'Brien emphasized that delimitation is critical to India's political structure and the health of its democracy, arguing that the government should avoid deceptive tactics in presenting such significant legislation. He warned that the FCRA Bill could weaken vital institutions serving the poorest and marginalized communities in education and health, including 54,000 educational institutions run by the Christian community, which educate six crore students annually from various backgrounds.

According to Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, Bengal will require Bengali for all official correspondence starting on September 1

Kolkata, July 20: Bengal will make the use of Bengali mandatory in all official communications from September 1, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced in the state Assembly on Monday, saying the move follows a letter from Union Home Minister Amit Shah urging greater use of the language in state administration.

The chief minister said the state government would adopt Bengali at every level of governance and use it for all official correspondence with the Centre and other states.

"From September 1, 2026, use of the Bengali language will be mandatory at every level of the state government," Adhikari



said in the Assembly.

"We will use Bengali in all communications

with the Centre and other states," he said, adding that correspondence with the

Union government would be sent in Hindi along with Bengali.

Train accident in Murshidabad

Following the deaths of schoolchildren, rail safety advice for pool car drivers

Two days after a passenger train rammed into a school pool car at an open level crossing near the Karna Subarna station in Murshidabad, killing four schoolkids and a cyclist, Nadia police on Sunday launched a safety awareness campaign for pool car owners and drivers in a bid to prevent a repeat of the tragedy.

The initiative began at Santipur police station, where representatives of nearly 40 pool cars operating for around 15 private schools attended an interactive session with police officers. The Santipur police limit has eight railway level crossings prompting the administration to focus on safe driving practices around railway tracks. During the event conducted by officer in charge Siddharth Mondal, drivers were asked to exercise maximum caution while transporting schoolchildren and

never attempt to speed across railway crossings merely because the gates were open.

Police advised them to slow down, stop if necessary, and ensure that no train was approaching before crossing the tracks. Drivers were also urged to avoid rash driving, overloading, using mobile phones while driving and any behaviour that could compromise children's safety. School authorities and vehicle owners were instructed to ensure that every school vehicle possesses valid registration, fitness and insurance certificates and that only licensed and experienced drivers are engaged. They were also advised to immediately withdraw from service any vehicle found mechanically unfit or lacking mandatory documents. Police stressed the need for additional vigilance while transporting girl students,



asking drivers and school authorities to maintain strict safety and security protocols throughout the journey.

A senior police officer, requesting anonymity, said the objective was to create a long-term culture of road safety rather than merely responding to a single acci-

dent. "The Karna Subarna tragedy has reminded everyone that a moment's negligence can cost several innocent lives. We want every driver, vehicle owner and school authority to understand that the safety of children is their foremost responsibility. Through regular interaction and awareness

programmes, we hope to minimise risks and prevent such incidents in future," the officer said.

A pool car driver who attended the programme described the initiative as timely and practical. "Many of us drive the same routes every day and sometimes become complacent. This session reminded us that carrying children demands tremendous responsibility. The discussion on railway crossings, vehicle fitness and emergency precautions was extremely useful.

We will certainly be more careful from now on since the Karna Subarna accident became an eye-opener," he said. Nadia police officers said similar awareness programmes would now be organised in other police station areas of the district, particularly those with railway crossings and a large number of school vehicles.

The demolition of Abhishek Banerjee's Amtala Lok Sabha office is halted by the Calcutta High Court

Kolkata, July 20: The Calcutta High Court intervened to stay the demolition of Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee's office in Amtala, citing concerns over the fairness of the process leading to the demolition.

Justice Raja Basu Chowdhury ordered the state government to halt all demolition activities and maintain the status quo regarding the property until a subsequent hearing, scheduled for the end of July. This decision stemmed from a writ petition filed by Leaps and Bounds Private Limited, the building's owner,

and involved allegations that the structure was demolished without proper approvals from the South 24-Parganas zilla parishad.

The case was quickly escalated to the high court even during its holiday period, following the commencement of demolition on Saturday. Leaps and Bounds contended that they had not adequately been given the opportunity to respond to a notice regarding the alleged unauthorized construction, arguing that the time given to respond was only seven days, which they claimed was unreasonable. Senior



Justice Raja Basu Chowdhury has ordered the state government to halt the demolition that commenced on Saturday. He mandated the preservation of the status quo concerning the property's nature, character, and occupancy until the forthcoming hearing or until the end of July, whichever comes first.

advocate Kishore Dut-

ta emphasized that legal

rights had been infringed upon as the petitioner was not provided with necessary documents, including the demolition order itself.

In contrast, advocate-general Surajit Nath Mitra defended the state's actions, arguing that the demolition was warranted due to previous notices and inspections revealing that the building exceeded permitted height limits. The opposing side contended that the petitioner did not demonstrate clean hands in their legal approach and that the high court's urgent intervention was unwarranted.

Justice Chowdhury noted

that the petitioner hadn't received prior notification of complaints or recommendations, suggesting that the duty to inform was not fulfilled. While halting the demolition, the court refrained from addressing allegations of vandalism and political interference at the property site made by Abhishek Banerjee, who publicly decried the demolition as illegal and indicative of broader lawlessness in Bengal, echoing the High Court and Supreme Court's rulings against such demolitions. The case is set for further examination later in the month.

High Court Refuses Intervention in ED's Trinamool Account Freeze Decision

Kolkata: The Kalighat unit of the Trinamool Congress suffered a setback in the Calcutta High Court after the court refused to intervene in the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) decision to freeze the party's bank accounts. The ED had frozen multiple bank accounts linked to the Trinamool Congress. Seeking permission to operate those accounts, the Kalighat Trinamool unit approached the Calcutta High Court. The matter came up for hearing before Justice Krishna Rao on Monday. Justice Rao stated that the court would not intervene at this stage in the ED's decision to freeze the bank accounts. The Calcutta High Court on Monday declined to intervene in the case concerning the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) freezing



of the Trinamool Congress' bank accounts. When the matter came up before Justice Krishna Rao, he stated that the court would not in-

terfere at this stage with the ED's decision to freeze the accounts. Earlier this month, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted search op-

erations at five locations in Kolkata in connection with the Trinamool Congress' bank account case. Following the raids, the agency or-

dered the freezing of ₹440 crore across multiple bank accounts linked to the party. According to sources, the central investigating agency is probing whether any financial irregularities were committed through transactions made from these accounts. From the outset, the Kalighat unit of the Trinamool Congress has maintained that the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) decision was motivated and politically driven. In a statement, the party claimed that complete and transparent details of all funds in its bank accounts had been disclosed. It also said that records of all donations and related financial transactions had been duly submitted to both the Election Commission of India and the Income Tax Department.

'Biswa Bangla' Logo Removed from Durgapur Junction

Durgapur: The 'Biswa Bangla' logo was removed from the Durgapur Municipal Corporation intersection in City Centre on Monday, bringing an end to a political controversy that had continued since the change of government in West Bengal. The logo was dismantled with the help of a crane in the presence of administrative officials during the afternoon. Following the BJP's rise to power in the state, questions had been raised by sections of the ruling party over why the 'Biswa Bangla' emblem, widely associated with the previous Trinamool Congress government, continued to remain at prominent public locations. BJP district spokesperson Sumanta Mondal claimed that the earlier Trinamool Congress



government had replaced the Ashoka Emblem with the 'Biswa Bangla' logo. He said the present government, led by Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, was restoring the Ashoka Emblem to its "rightful place" and

that the removal of the logo formed part of that process. There was no immediate response from the Trinamool Congress or the state administration regarding the BJP's claims at the time of filing this report.

BJP Stages Egg Protest Against Abhishek Banerjee

Durgapur: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers on Monday staged a symbolic protest in Durgapur by garlanding a photograph of Trinamool Congress (TMC) National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee with shoes and throwing eggs at it over his alleged remarks targeting the BJP. The demonstration was held on the road in front of Durgapur Government College, where BJP supporters raised slogans and accused Banerjee of making provocative statements.



was inflammatory and detrimental to the state's political atmosphere. District Secretary of the BJP OBC Morcha, Swadhin Roy, said the party was registering its strong opposition to what he described as provocative comments. He added that the symbolic protest, including garlanding Banerjee's photograph with shoes

and hurling eggs at it, was intended to convey the party's resentment. Roy also warned that the BJP would intensify its agitation if similar remarks were made in the future. There was no immediate response from the Trinamool Congress or Abhishek Banerjee regarding the BJP's allegations at the time of filing this report.

Thousands Offer Prayers at Radheshwar Shiva Temple

Durgapur: Thousands of devotees thronged the historic Radheshwar Shiva Temple at Arrah in Kanksa on the first Monday of the holy month of Shravan, offering sacred water to the Shiva Lingam and praying for peace, prosperity and good health amid elaborate security arrangements. According to local tradition, the temple traces its origins to King Ballal Sen, one of the prominent rulers of the Sena dynasty. It is believed that the king once suffered from an incurable illness that could not be treated despite the efforts of renowned physicians. Legend has it that Lord Shiva appeared in his dream and directed him to establish a temple on the banks of the



Kaladighi pond at Arrah. The king is said to have been cured after following the divine instruction, leading to the establishment of the Radheshwar Shiva Temple and the beginning of regular worship that continues to

this day. Over the years, the temple has evolved into one of the region's most revered pilgrimage sites, attracting devotees from across southern West Bengal, particularly during the month of Shravan. From the early hours of

Monday, long queues of worshippers carrying kanwars and pots filled with Ganga water or other sacred water were seen making their way to the temple. After offering the water on the Shiva Lingam, devotees prayed for the well-being and prosperity of their families. To ensure the smooth conduct of the religious observances, police personnel were deployed across the temple premises and adjoining areas. Volunteers assisted devotees in maintaining queues and facilitating the ritual offerings, while the administration implemented traffic management and crowd-control measures to ensure a safe and orderly pilgrimage.

Shah Pushes Maharashtra ATS Model for Bengal

Kolkata: Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday asked senior Bengal police officers to strengthen the state's Special Task Force (STF) on the lines of Maharashtra police's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS). Shah also stressed the need to implement "smart policing", beginning with Kolkata Police and Bidhannagar Police. He emphasised greater coordination and the sharing of intelligence among states and agencies, asking officers to act swiftly on interstate and inter-agency inputs to improve policing on the ground. The meeting, held at Saujanya guest house in Alipore, was attended by officers of the rank of additional director-general of police and above. According to sources, this was the first meeting exclusively focused on the state's law-and-order situation since the BJP assumed office in Bengal. "We were asked to develop the STF on the lines of Maharashtra's ATS.

There were also instructions to strengthen interstate intelligence sharing and to act promptly on inputs received from other states and agencies," an officer who attended the meeting said. Several police officers, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the sharing of information between state and central agencies had often been hindered by preconceived notions and bureaucratic red tape. "We expect better coordination among agencies, irrespective of whether they are state or central bodies," one officer said. Another officer said the Union home minister had asked those present at the meeting to introduce the concept of "smart policing", beginning with Kolkata Police and Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate. According to the officer, smart policing entails greater use of technology, faster response times and a stronger emphasis on crime prevention. Shah also reportedly asked the police to roll out the initiative initially in Kolkata Police and Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate and to consider modernising equipment and services wherever necessary. Shah also reportedly asked Bengal's police leadership to rectify records from the past few years, alleging that the state's crime data had not been properly shared with the Centre, creating an impression that crime levels were lower than they actually were. Allegations have surfaced on several occasions that the erstwhile Trinamool Congress government did not share complete crime-related data with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the central agency that compiles crime statistics from across the country.

Congress Holds Rally Ahead of July 21 Martyrs' Day

Asansol: The Congress on Sunday organised a preparatory rally in Asansol ahead of the July 21 Martyrs' Day observance, urging party workers and supporters to participate in the commemoration at Kolkata's Shaheed Minar. The march began at Girja More and concluded at Asansol Municipal Corporation More, with party leaders calling on supporters to pay tribute to those who lost their lives during the 1993 protest over the demand to make voter identity cards mandatory. Addressing the gathering, Congress leader Prasenjit Puitundi alleged that 13 Youth Congress activists were killed in police firing during the July 21, 1993 agitation. He claimed that while the Congress has observed the



day every year in their memory, the Trinamool Congress had, over the past 15 years, turned the occasion into its own political programme. He said the Congress would pay homage to the martyrs at Shaheed Minar in Kolkata and highlight their sacrifice. Another Congress leader, Shah Alam, alleged that those who died in the 1993 in-

cident were all Youth Congress workers and claimed that the party had not been allowed to observe the occasion freely in Kolkata for several years. He expressed hope that this year's observance would be conducted with due dignity. Before the rally, Shah Alam also claimed that around 50 Trinamool Congress workers from Barabani

Block had joined the Congress at the party's office near Girja More. The claim could not be independently verified, and there was no immediate response from the Trinamool Congress. Former councillor and Congress leader S.M. Mustafa said a large number of Congress workers from Asansol would travel to Kolkata for the July 21 programme. He described Sunday's march as part of the mobilisation effort and also claimed that people were gradually regaining confidence in the Congress. The statements made by Congress leaders reflect the party's position. Independent verification of the political claims and the alleged defections was not immediately available.

CISF Drone Watch Cracks Down on Illegal Coal Mining

Asansol: The CISF Unit at ECL Sitarampur has intensified its crackdown on illegal coal mining, coal theft and unauthorised transportation through a sustained drone surveillance campaign across sensitive mining areas under the leadership of Commandant Rahul Singh Gautam. According to CISF, nine drone surveillance operations were conducted between May and July 2026 in vulnerable coalfields, leading to the identification of several active and abandoned illegal mining sites, unauthorised mine openings and other high-risk locations requiring immediate intervention. The surveillance missions were carried out

at Pahargora OCP (Salanpur) on May 14, Itapara OCP (Salanpur) on May 21, Galfarbari (Mugma) on May 23, Bansra NSS OCP (Kunustoria) on May 28, Nala Kasta PND on May 29 and June 18, Patmohana (Sodepur) on June 11, Samdi (Salanpur) on June 22 and Gourandi (Salanpur) on July 15. Officials said the drone operations detected illegal excavations, unauthorised mine entries in abandoned pits and several vulnerable points prone to coal theft. The findings were shared with the Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) management and the local administration, following which action was initiated to seal illegal mine

openings, strengthen security and implement other preventive measures. Commandant Rahul Singh Gautam said the deployment of drone technology has significantly improved surveillance in inaccessible and high-risk areas, enabling the timely detection of illegal activities and facilitating coordinated action with ECL and the local administration. He reiterated that the CISF Unit at ECL Sitarampur is following a zero-tolerance policy against illegal mining and coal smuggling. Drone-based surveillance, he added, will continue on a regular basis to safeguard national assets and curb illegal mining and coal theft effectively.

Tribal Minister Assures Full Backing to Ex-Servicemen Body

Mukutmanipur, West Bengal: Tribal Development Minister Khudiram Tudu has assured complete cooperation to the Scheduled Caste Adivasi Ex-Servicemen Agriculture Development Industrial Centre for implementing central government projects in West Bengal. Soumen Kole, secretary of Tapashili Jati Adivasi Ex-Servicemen Krishi Bikash Shilpa Kendra, met the minister at Kansavati Bhavan in Mukutmanipur on Sunday to discuss future operational strategies. For the past 15 years, the previous Trinamool Congress government allegedly ignored directives from the Centre, leaving organisation employees unemployed. With the new double-engine government in place, the minister pledged full support to revive various initiatives aimed at tribal development. Kole expressed optimism that the meeting would end



the prolonged struggle of workers, enabling them to resume duties with renewed enthusiasm. He noted that exist-

ing instructions from Delhi remove any hurdles for smooth functioning under the current administration.

Sujay Sent Back to Police Custody Over Alleged Caste-Based Harassment Case

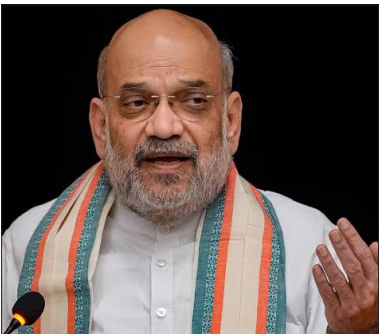
Purulia: In a separate case, a court has again remanded Purulia Zilla Parishad Vice-Chairman Sujay Bandyopadhyay to two days of police custody. According to police sources, a resident of Purulia town lodged a complaint at Purulia Sadar Police Station, accusing Sujay of caste-based harassment, alleging that he insulted and abused him by referring to his caste. Hearing the matter on Monday, the court ordered Sujay to remain in police custody for two days in connection with the case. It may be recalled that Sujay Bandyopadhyay was arrested around midnight on July 11 from his residence in Lakhra village under Pancha police station in connection with a case alleg-



ing an attempt to tamper with government records. Also arrested in the same case were Sujay's nephew Kripasindhu Bandyopadhyay, Vice-Chairman of the Pancha Panchayat Samiti, and Charanpahari Das, a local Trinamool Youth Congress leader and the Public Works Karmadhyaksha

of the Panchayat Samiti. The three were produced before a court on July 12, which remanded them to two days of police custody. After the custody period ended, they were produced again on July 14, when the court extended their police custody by four more days.

Amit Shah calls for better policing and promotes the Maharashtra ATS model for Bengal STF



Kolkata, July 20: Senior Bengal police officers were instructed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday to bolster the state’s Special Task Force (STF) in a manner similar to the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of Maharashtra police. Shah also emphasised the necessity of implementing “smart policing,” starting with the Bidhannagar Police and Kolkata Police.In order to strengthen local policing, he highlighted increased coordination and intelligence sharing across states and urged cops to respond quickly to interstate and inter-agency inputs.Officers of the level of additional director-general of police and higher attended the conference, which took place at the Saujanya guest house in Alipore. According to sources, this was the first meeting exclusively focused on the state’s law-and-order situation since the BJP assumed office in Bengal.“We were asked to develop the STF on the lines of Maharashtra’s ATS. There were also instructions to strengthen interstate intelligence sharing and to act promptly on inputs received from other states and agencies,” an officer who attended the meeting said.Several police officers, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the sharing of information between state and central agencies had often been hindered by preconceived notions and bureaucratic red tape.“We expect better coordination among agencies, irrespective of whether they are state or central bodies,” one officer said. According to a different officer, the Union home minister

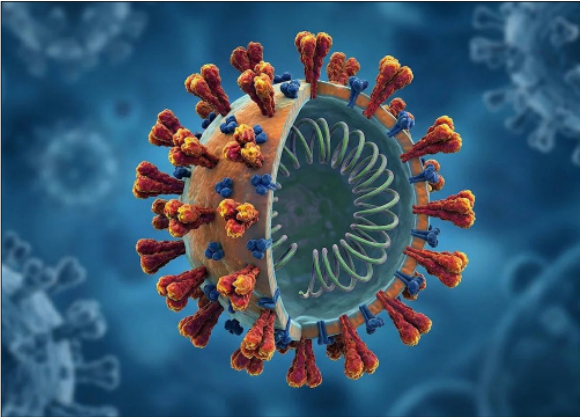
invited everyone in attendance to present the idea of “smart policing,” starting with the Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate and Kolkata Police.The officer claims that more technological use, quicker reaction times, and a greater focus on crime prevention are all components of smart policing.Additionally, Shah allegedly requested that the police consider modernising equipment and services as needed and launch the project first in the Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate and Kolkata Police.

Additionally, Shah reportedly requested that Bengal’s police leadership correct records from previous years, claiming that the state’s crime data had not been appropriately shared with the Center, giving the impression that crime rates were lower than they actually were. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the primary organization that gathers crime statistics from all throughout the nation, has been accused on multiple occasions of not receiving complete crime-related data from the former Trinamool Con-

gress government.An officer stated, “He asked us to correct the records and make sure that there is no future suppression of facts.”During the meeting, issues pertaining to illegal immigration in states that share international boundaries were also discussed. Officers were told that a State Investigation Agency (SIA) would also be established, similar to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). It was requested that the police concentrate on protecting women in rural areas.

Following the meeting, which Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari also attended, Kolkata Police Commissioner Ajay Nand issued an order announcing the STF-D’s creation.In accordance with the provisions of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, the new unit’s main duties will be to verify and authenticate databases of overstayng foreign nationals and illegal migrants, conduct field investigations to locate such individuals, and collaborate with divisional deputy commissioners, the West Bengal Police Intelligence Branch, the Foreigners Regional Registration Office, Calcutta, and other agencies. Initiating legal action for the arrest and deportation of such individuals and keeping a centralised, up-to-date record of all actions performed will also fall under the purview of this unit.Shah stated that every case involving violence following elections since 2021 would be examined. In order to respond to emergencies more successfully, the police were also ordered to prioritise improving the disaster management system.

Fever season in Calcutta is exacerbated by a mild Covid variant; most youngsters test positive



Kolkata, July 20: Many Calcuttans have a fever, and a number of people—mostly kids—have tested positive for COVID-19. But according to medical professionals, the present strain is only producing moderate illness, with the majority of instances being self-limiting and not requiring alarm. Although Covid infections are being identified, doctors stated that different influenza strains are responsible for the majority of fever episodes.A modified strain of the Omicron variety is presently in circulation, according to a microbiologist. It spreads quickly, although it doesn’t cause serious illness. Although this Covid type is highly contagious, it is not seriously harming anyone. It is an Omicron variant strain that has undergone mutation. There are sporadic spikes in instances when the virus changes. Suman Saha, a consultant microbiologist at RN Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Sciences, stated that there is no cause for concern as long as the strain is not virulent.According to Saha, during the

third wave of the pandemic in late 2021, Omicron was the predominant Covid viral subtype. According to him, the most prevalent influenza virus strains that infect humans are H1N1 and H3N2.”The majority of the children tested positive for influenza and adenoviruses, but some children have tested positive for Covid,” stated Apurba Ghosh, a paediatrician and director of the Institute of Child Health. A nine-month-old boy from Bansdroni tested positive for Covid on July 8. “He had a fever of 103 degrees and was coughing continuously. He was unable to eat. The nearly uninterrupted coughing worried us the

most. We feared he might need nebulisation, but that was ultimately not required. The fever subsided, and the coughing gradually eased,” said the boy’s father. Doctors said high-grade fever, runny nose and cough were the most common symptoms among children reporting with fever. Some patients, particularly older children, are also complaining of body aches. According to Chandramouli Bhattacharya, an infectious diseases expert at Peerless Hospital, “sudden onset of high-grade fever, body ache, and coughing” are typical symptoms among individuals reporting fever. According to Bhattacha-

rya, he was recommending testing for individuals who were elderly, had comorbid conditions, or whose health seemed to be deteriorating. The majority of my patients have tested positive for influenza viruses. The H1N1 strain is prevalent, he said.He claimed that during the previous three weeks, a number of patients with fever and cough had to be taken to the emergency room. Over the previous few weeks, many families have witnessed multiple members become ill with fever. A resident of New Town who had a fever for the entire day last week said that her mother had experienced a similar ailment the week before. The majority of the samples tested positive for influenza A viruses, including H1N1 and H3N2, according to microbiologist Saha. If a patient tests positive for influenza A viruses like H1N1 and H3N2, antiviral medicine must be provided. Because of this, testing for influenza becomes essential if the symptoms don’t go away, he explained.

CID detains a woman in Ashokenagar, North 24-Parganas, carrying twelve handguns



Kolkata, July 20: According to CID police, a woman was detained on Sunday in Ashokenagar, North 24-Parganas, for reportedly having a cache of weapons that may have been smuggled from Bihar. The accused, Puja Biswas, was discovered in possession of 200 rounds of 7.65 bore ammunition, 12 magazines, and 12 handguns, four of which were 7.65mm and two of which were 9mm. Additionally, two cell phones and ₹12,000 in cash were taken from her.A few years prior, Biswas was detained in Duttapukur, North 24-Parganas, on suspicion of having illicit guns.The woman is accused of being involved in an interstate arms smuggling scheme, according to the state CID. After discovering a state-issued train ticket in her possession, investigators initially surmised that she had come from Bihar. Biswas allegedly admitted to police upon questioning that she had travelled from Jamalpur, Bihar.She asserted that

she was acting at someone’s request. We are attempting to find out who gave her the assignment to smuggle so many weapons and ammo,” a CID officer stated.To investigate the matter, a four-person Special Investigation Team led by a special superintendent of police has been established. According to CID personnel, they stopped Biswas’s car at Ashokenagar after receiving certain intelligence. The weapons and ammunition were found after a search of the two sizable bags she was carrying.Another CID investigator stated, “Given her background, it seems that she is part of a

larger arms trafficking network.”Investigators have discovered connections between Biswas and suspected guns dealer Shariful Islam of Kaliachak, Malda, according to police sources. Biswas was apprehended in Duttapukur in November 2023 with twelve firearms and an equivalent amount of ammo. After obtaining bail in that case, investigators believe she returned to the illicit enterprise.The intended beneficiaries of the weapons have not yet been identified, according to officials. Biswas has been charged under many provisions of the Arms Act.

Swapan Dasgupta’s visit inspires a civic assessment of land usage and construction in Deshapriya Park



Kolkata, July 20: The club at the southwest corner of Deshapriya Park, Dakshin Kalikata Sansad (DKS), has been requested by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation to take down two makeshift pavilions that it has erected on the ground. According to civic officials, it has also requested documentation from a Durga Puja committee to support the establishment of its office on park property.The previous president of DKS was Debashis Kumar, a former Trinamool MLA and member of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation’s (KMC) mayoral council. According to a club member, Kumar resigned earlier this month for personal reasons. The letters came after Bengal’s finance minister and BJP MLA for Rashbehari, Swapan Dasgupta, recently visited the park. During the visit were KMC engineers and officials, including Smita Pandey, the civic body’s administrator.”We have requested that DKS take down the makeshift pavilions it has erected on the property of Deshapriya Park. They resemble the dressing rooms of athletes, according to a KMC official.Outside the DKS grounds in the southwest section of the park, two makeshift

metal pavilions bearing the names of former Bengali cricketers Gopal Bose and Nirmal Chatterjee have been erected.The pavilions were erected approximately a year ago, according to frequent park visitors. The club has written to the KMC in response. Hiranmay Chatterjee, the general secretary of DKS, said the pavilions were much needed and the club has communicated it to the civic body. “This a venue for cricket matches, including CAB league matches, besides various age-group tournaments. Both men’s and women’s matches are held here. The two pavilions are meant for the competing

teams. A dressing room is a basic facility for teams taking part in cricket matches,” Chatterjee said. “We have communicated to the KMC why the pavilions were set up. The final decision lies with them.” The civic body’s attention has also turned to a two-storey building that has come up at the northwest corner of the park. A neon signboard on the building bears the name of Ballygunge Sarbojonin Durgotsab Samiti (Deshapriya Park Durgotsab). “We asked the committee to produce documents showing it had the KMC’s approval to construct the building. They have submitted land-related documents, which we

are examining,” a KMC official said. When Metro reached out to many puja committee office-bearers on Sunday night, they declined to comment.The office was built inside “a corner meant to be a children’s park,” which startled MLA Dasgupta, he told this newspaper. Dasgupta stated, “I asked the KMC officials to make sure the construction is accounted for.”On a different day, the minister and KMC representatives went to Vivekananda Park on Southern Avenue. The clubs in Deshapriya Park and Vivekananda Park have been accused by several locals of using the property as their own. Access is prohibited to locals. I want a plan where locals have complete access to the parks and the clubs can carry on with their activities during predetermined hours. Additionally, I have requested that the KMC create a policy for municipal parks,” Dasgupta stated.The KMC intends to compare how much land the clubs—at least six of them—occupy and whether they are using more space than allowed by their agreements with the local body after Dasgupta’s visit to Vivekananda Park.

The TMC Mamata faction’s request to operate Rs 440 crore ED-frozen accounts is denied by the Calcutta High Court



Kolkata, July 20: The Mamata Banerjee faction of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) was denied temporary permission by the Calcutta High Court on Monday to manage three of the party’s bank accounts that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had frozen as part of a money-laundering investigation into purported financial irregularities.The ED froze the three bank accounts, which together had balances of Rs 440.42 crore, as part of its investigation into a formal complaint filed by the state police regarding alleged dishonest financial transactions, illegal money collection, and the transfer of suspected funds through specific party bank accounts. Justice Krish-

na Rao had reserved his interim order on July 13 after hearing arguments from both sides and delivered the decision on Monday, declining to grant the relief

sought by the TMC faction.According to officials, the ED’s preliminary investigation found that about Rs 160 crore was transferred from the TMC’s bank accounts to Carewell Aviation India Pvt. Ltd. and a related entity between April 2023 and June 2026. According to the agency, the business then transferred Rs 82.96 crore to another recently established firm between 2023 and 2026. A “significant” sum was moved to this organization, according to officials.According to the officials, an AgustaWestland 109SP helicopter and an Embraer Legacy 600 business jet were allegedly purchased with Rs 112 crore of these cash.

Rajarhat building explosion: Two people have been arrested in connection with the bombing



Kolkata, July 20: In relation to Friday night’s explosion inside a building in Rajarhat’s Narayanpur neighbourhood, another person was taken into custody on Sunday. According to authorities, there are now two people detained in the case after the most recent arrest.Mohammad Shahenshah has been recognised as the second accused.He appeared in court on Sunday together with Mohammad Shamim, who was taken into custody on Saturday. Shahenshah was detained from Narayanpur, while Shamim was picked up from Kamarhati.Shamim had rented the property through Shahenshah, ac-

cording to the police. The explosion occurred inside the building on Friday night, shortly after a man had rented a portion of the premises, said the police. CCTV footage examined by investigators showed that the blast took place around 8pm, minutes after a local youth placed a white jute bag inside the room where the explosion occurred. The youth later told the police that Shamim had handed him the bag and claimed that he was unaware of its contents. The building’s owner, Zulfikar Ansari, told investigators that Shamim had approached him a few days earlier seeking to rent a

one-room apartment.According to Ansari, Shamim had contacted him through a broker and had been allowed access to clean the room, although no formal tenancy agreement had yet been signed.”On Monday, the tenant was scheduled to move in. A senior officer stated, “The bombs detonated on Friday night.”According to investigators, a resident named Namajid Siddique has been linked to the incident through preliminary investigations. But when the police went to Siddique’s house, he wasn’t there.According to his relatives, he had no connection to the explosion and is innocent.

Beyond shiny pamphlets and opulent furnishings: Parents’ preschool kid safety checklist

Kolkata, July 20: A checklist for parents released earlier this month by an organization supporting early childhood education states that a school should have CCTV cameras in common areas, police-verified personnel, and a well-defined child protection policy.When selecting a kindergarten or crèche for their children, the association has advised parents to look past flashy brochures and expensive furnishings.Child safety and protection, emergency preparedness, communication and transparency, health, cleanliness and hygiene, supervision and care, and ways to boost parents’ confidence are all included in the checklist.A parent must feel secure and at ease dropping their child off at a specific creche or preschool. Simul-

taneously, he or she should speak directly to the school before discussing his or her concerns on social media, the association says.Often, parents, in their anxiety or because of the lack of proper communication channels, flag concerns on social media, which, instead of addressing or resolving them, aggravates the issues.It is one of the schools’ grievances against parents that such posts malign the institution. Parents, however, feel that if there were effective channels of communication, they would not have to resort to social media. The Early Childhood Association and the Inspirenet Learning Foundation (ILF), advocacy organisations committed to ensuring that every child receives high-quality holistic development, care, and educa-

tion, published the checklist.The president of the Early Childhood Association, Swati Popat Vats, stated, “We urge parents to move past marketing gimmicks, like expensive furniture, trendy toys, or curated social media photos and instead focus on quality curriculum and robust safety practices.””The recently released checklist is intended to assist parents in looking past the glossy brochures and assessing the fundamental signs of a joyful, secure, and caring environment,” she stated. According to the checklist, parents should enquire about the school’s policies regarding biting, hitting, and violent behaviour, whether the school regularly holds emergency drills, and whether the staff members are trained in safety and child protection.

The school should explain to parents how accidents are reported, and there should be appropriate routes of communication. The school should thoroughly explain how CCTV cameras are utilised and who can access the recordings, and visitors should be vetted before being permitted on the property. The checklist states that the recordings must be kept for at least 30 days and that having CCTV cameras alone is insufficient if the footage is unavailable when needed. According to the checklist, children who are upset or distressed should be comforted as soon as possible and with kindness. Additionally, it says that employees should not be “distracted by mobile phones” and should appear composed and focused.



The Importance of Knowing Where Information Comes From

People receive more information today than ever before, but access to information does not automatically create knowledge. News reports, social media posts, forwarded messages, and online videos may all present different versions of the same event. Without checking sources and context, people can easily mistake speculation for fact. Information literacy has therefore become an essential civic skill. In a crowded information environment, knowing what to believe begins with knowing where information comes from.

Guwahati Flooding

Urban flooding, which happens even after a little 15-minute shower, has emerged as a major concern in Assam. While many Guwahati residents are afraid during the rainy season, which lasts from mid-April to early October, urban floods have begun to significantly threaten Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Dergaon, Nalbari, and other municipalities in the state. Poor drainage is undoubtedly one of the most prevalent causes of urban flooding. The current drainage system in Guwahati is just insufficient to handle the surplus water that flows down with the rains. In Guwahati, newer neighborhoods are facing flooding in recent years. Panjabari, Juripar, VIP Road, Beltola, Rukmini Gaon, and Narengi Cantonment Road are some of the localities that are some of the worst-affected localities. These include Panjabari, Juripar, VIP Road, Beltola, Rukmini Gaon, and Narengi Cantonment Road. In certain localities, floodwaters have regularly entered residential houses, causing immense loss and suffering to the taxpayers. While it is a fact that rampant and indiscriminate earth cutting in the hills of Meghalaya along the National Highway from Jorabat to Khanapara is one reason, encroachment on the hills of Khanapara to the eastern side of the National Highway within Assam territory is another reason. While eviction carried out in the Silsako Beel was initially expected to ease the Panjabari-Juripar and VIP Road and Rukminigaon flood situation, construction of the new auditorium at Khanapara is now being considered another reason for massive and frequent floods in the Panjabari-Juripar and Rukminigaon and Six Mile areas. Floods in specific areas of the city should not be regarded isolated incidents. Rather, it is the joint duty of all MLAs representing the city's five seats (Dimoriai, New Guwahati, Dispur, Guwahati Central, and Jalukbari). Unfortunately, individuals in many parts of the city who have been affected by frequent floods have yet to meet the Legislative Assembly representatives they elected only a few months ago.

‘All employment’ available to locals

The front-page main story of this newspaper's Saturday edition dealt with a serious issue concerning the state's economy, society, and culture. It is stated that, while Assam has around 78.73 lakh registered workers, the real percentage of youngsters belonging to diverse indigenous ethnicities in the state is abysmally low. According to official figures, the number of registered workers is extremely high in areas where individuals of immigrant stock, with roots in former East Bengal/Pakistan or present-day Bangladesh, are now in the majority. In stark contrast, the number of registered workers is remarkably low in regions where indigenous populations make up the bulk of the population. As mentioned, Nagaon—where immigrant Muslims are in the majority—has over 5.48 lakh registered workers. Likewise, the figure is 5.47 lakh in Barpeta, 4.56 lakh in Dhubri, 3.20 lakh in Darrang and 3.14 lakh in Sribhumi.

In contrast, the number of registered workers in Majuli is only around 44,000; in West Karbi Anglong, around 39,000; in Dima Hasao, only around 20,000; and in Tamulpur, only around 5,000. Charaideo is probably the only district with a high percentage of indigenous population, which has about 85,000 registered workers. The news story also highlighted that in a recent urgent effort to beautify Guwahati ahead of the Japanese Prime Minister's visit (which was ultimately cancelled), approximately 90 per cent of the workforce

Borgeet: Throughout the ages

Few musical traditions have been as spiritually alive and culturally significant as Borgeet. These religious works, created at one of the most transformative moments in Assam's history, have survived for almost five centuries without losing their original intent or musical integrity. They are still sung at xatras, namghars, religious gatherings, and cultural institutions with the same devotion as when they originally appeared under the supervision of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva and his main pupil, Sri Sri Madhavdeva. Their endurance is remarkable because they have resisted the pressures of changing tastes, commercial entertainment, and shifting musical fashions. While many artistic traditions gradually adapt themselves to popular demand, Borgeet has retained its essential character through disciplined preservation and deep collective respect. That continuity has allowed successive generations to inherit not merely a body of songs but an entire philosophy that connects literature, music, spirituality, and cultural identity. Borgeet, therefore, represents far more than a devotional repertoire. It embodies a living civilizational memory that has shaped Assamese society since the sixteenth century. Every performance carries within it echoes of an intellectual movement that sought to transform religious life through simplicity, ethical conduct, and heartfelt devotion. This historical continuity explains why Borgeet still commands admiration not only from devotees but also from scholars of literature, musicology, philosophy, and cultural history. Across centuries, it has remained a bridge linking the past with the present, reminding society that enduring traditions survive not through nostalgia but through constant practice and unwavering faith. The emergence of Borgeet cannot be separated from the wider religious and social movement initiated by Sankaradeva. During an age marked by social divisions and ritual complexity, he introduced Neo-Vaishnavism as a faith rooted in devotion, equality, compassion, and collective worship. Music naturally became one of the most effective vehicles for communicating these ideals. Yet the songs he composed were fundamentally different from ordinary lyrical compositions. Their purpose was neither entertainment nor emotional indulgence. Instead, they were intended to awaken spiritual awareness and inspire moral reflection. The

first known Borgeet, “Mon Meri Ram Charanahi Lagu,” composed during Sankaradeva's pilgrimage to Badrikashram, reflects this orientation from its very beginning. The song expresses detachment from worldly attractions and complete surrender before the Divine. It established the philosophical direction that later Borgeets would continue to follow. Historical records indicate that Sankaradeva originally composed a much larger collection of songs, most of which disappeared after the destruction of an invaluable manuscript in a devastating fire. Only a small number survived through oral transmission. Rather than attempting to recreate what had been lost, Sankaradeva entrusted the continuation of the tradition to Madhavdeva, whose extraordinary literary and spiritual abilities enabled the corpus of Borgeet to reach maturity. Together, Guru and disciple created a devotional tradition that balanced theological depth with artistic discipline.

Their compositions eventually became inseparable from the ritual life of Assamese Vaishnavism and established a standard that later generations chose not to alter. This decision to preserve the original corpus gave Borgeet an exceptional degree of authenticity rarely found in other musical traditions, where expansion and revision often become inevitable over time. One of the defining strengths of Borgeet lies in its remarkable synthesis of language, poetry, philosophy, and music. The Gurus deliberately selected Brajavali rather than everyday Assamese as the medium of composition. This literary language, created by blending Assamese with elements of Maithili and other eastern Indo-Aryan traditions, offered both familiarity and sacred distance. It allowed listeners to experience a devotional atmosphere distinct from ordinary conversation while remaining accessible enough to convey profound spiritual ideas.

The poetry of Borgeet is notable for its economy of expression. Without relying upon elaborate ornamentation, the compositions communicate themes such as surrender, humility, impermanence, divine grace, and unwavering devotion. Unlike many Vaishnava traditions elsewhere in India that emphasized the romantic relationship between Radha and Krishna, the Assamese tradition concentrated primarily upon reverence for the Supreme Being. Sensuous imagery rarely occupies the centre of these compositions.

Instead, the songs celebrate the majesty of God, the limitations of worldly existence, and the spiritual fulfilment that comes through sincere devotion. This theological orientation distinguishes Borgeet within the wider Bhakti movement. Philosophical ideas drawn from Vedantic thought appear throughout the corpus, yet they are expressed with clarity rather than abstraction. Listeners need not possess scholarly training to appreciate their message. That balance between intellectual depth and emotional accessibility explains why Borgeet continues to resonate across educational, social, and generational boundaries. Its language may belong to another era, but its moral and spiritual concerns remain deeply relevant to contemporary society. Equally significant is the sophisticated musical architecture that has enabled Borgeet to occupy a distinguished position within the classical traditions of the Indian subcontinent. Every composition is inseparably connected with a specific raga, and the disciplined observance of melodic structure has remained one of its defining characteristics. Although several ragas bear names familiar within Hindustani classical music, their treatment in Borgeet reflects an independent musical identity shaped by the cultural environment of Assam. Generations of musicians have carefully transmitted this distinctive style through oral instruction, preserving nuances that cannot easily be captured in written notation alone. Rhythm also plays a central role. The interaction of Khol, cymbals, and voice produces an atmosphere of solemn devotion rather than dramatic display. Musical expression remains subordinate to spiritual purpose. Ornamentation is employed only where it enhances contemplation instead of attracting attention to technical brilliance. Another distinctive feature is the association of particular ragas with different periods of the day. Morning, afternoon, evening, and night each possess their own prescribed musical mood, reflecting an intimate relationship between devotional practice and the rhythms of nature. Such discipline reveals that Borgeet developed not merely as a collection of sacred songs but as a complete musical system governed by aesthetic and spiritual principles. This achievement has attracted sustained scholarly attention. Musicologists including Birendranath Dutta observed that Borgeet successfully combines the broader heritage of Indian

raga music with a uniquely Assamese mode of expression. Cultural figures such as Jyotiprasad Agarwala and Bishnu Prasad Rabha likewise recognized within it an indigenous classical tradition deserving independent recognition. Their assessments remain important because they remind modern audiences that Borgeet should not be viewed simply as regional devotional music. It represents a sophisticated artistic achievement capable of standing alongside other classical traditions of India while preserving its own unmistakable identity. The enduring vitality of Borgeet owes much to the institutional framework established by the xatras and namghars of Assam. These institutions transformed the songs from literary compositions into living practices embedded within everyday religious life. Every major congregational prayer begins with Borgeet, and generations of Gayan-Bayan performers have dedicated themselves to preserving its authentic style. Such continuity has protected the tradition against fragmentation and excessive innovation. Unlike many musical genres that expanded through constant addition of new compositions, Borgeet remained confined to the canonical works of Sankaradeva and Madhavdeva. This limitation was not the result of artistic stagnation but of profound reverence. Later composers certainly produced devotional songs in similar styles, yet the community consciously distinguished those works from the original Borgeet corpus.

The decision reflected a belief that the spiritual authority of the Gurus could not be replicated. Consequently, the tradition retained remarkable textual and musical stability over centuries. Even today, aspiring performers undergo rigorous training before they are entrusted with public performance. Such discipline has enabled Borgeet to survive changing political systems, colonial rule, technological revolutions, and rapid social transformation. Nevertheless, new challenges have emerged. Urbanization, shrinking opportunities for traditional apprenticeship, declining familiarity with Brajavali among younger generations, and the growing dominance of commercial entertainment all threaten the continuity of specialised cultural practices. Digital technology, however, has also created valuable opportunities. Archival recordings, online educational platforms, academic research,

and institutional documentation are making Borgeet accessible to audiences far beyond Assam. Universities, cultural academies, and research organisations have begun documenting manuscripts, recording performances, and analysing the musical grammar of the tradition with renewed seriousness. Such initiatives demonstrate that preservation today requires both fidelity to inherited practices and intelligent adaptation to modern methods of cultural transmission. The future of Borgeet will depend not upon nostalgic admiration alone but upon sustained investment in education, research, performance, and community participation. Centuries after its creation, Borgeet continues to illuminate Assamese cultural life with extraordinary grace. It reminds society that great artistic traditions emerge when spiritual conviction, intellectual vision, and creative excellence converge. The songs have outlived kingdoms, political upheavals, and dramatic shifts in public taste because they speak to concerns that remain universal: the search for meaning, the impermanence of worldly existence, the value of humility, and the longing for inner peace. Their influence extends beyond religious devotion into literature, theatre, music, philosophy, and collective identity. For Assam, Borgeet stands as one of the clearest expressions of a civilization that valued learning without arrogance, faith without intolerance, and artistic refinement without extravagance. Every generation inherits the responsibility of ensuring that this legacy remains vibrant rather than merely commemorated. Preserving Borgeet does not mean confining it to museums or ceremonial occasions. It means encouraging serious scholarship, strengthening traditional institutions, supporting young practitioners, and introducing its historical and musical significance to wider audiences without compromising its authenticity. Such efforts will ensure that the melodies first sung by Sankaradeva and Madhavdeva continue to inspire future generations with the same spiritual force that has sustained them for more than five hundred years. Borgeet has endured through the centuries because it represents more than music. It embodies a vision of life in which devotion, discipline, culture, and humanity exist in perfect harmony, making it one of the most enduring and distinguished achievements of Assamese civilization.

A tribute to the multifaceted intellectual personality of Prof. K.K. Handiqui

“Honest people who complete their jobs secretly are rare. Few trees produce fruit without being seen when blossoming.” These two words from ‘Setubandha’ eloquently summarize Prof. Krishna Kanta Handiqui's erudite intellectual legacy as one of India's most prominent scholars, educators, linguists, Indologists, and administrators. Given the extent of Prof. K.K. Handiqui's scholarly legacy, commemorating his 128th birth anniversary is both an honor and a difficulty. Through this homage, I respectfully pay tribute to a remarkable and renowned son of our state, whose timeless work continues to inspire and enlighten readers of all ages. Krishna Kanta Handiqui was born on 20 July, 1898, at Jorhat in Upper Assam into a family that valued education and culture. Prof. Handiqui was the eldest son of Rai Bahadur Radha Kanta Handiqui, a reputed tea planter and philanthropist of Assam. His mother Narayani Handiqui was the sister of one of the illustrious sons of Assam, Padma Nath Gohain Baruah, the first president of Axam Xahitya Xabha. From an early age, he displayed extraordinary academic ability and an intense interest in classical languages. Handiqui had his early education at Jorhat Govt. High School and passed matriculation in 1913 with creditable success. He passed the intermediate exam from Cotton College, Guwahati. He secured first class in B.A. (Hons) in Sanskrit in 1917 at the premature age of nineteen. In 1919, he got a first class in M.A. Sanskrit at Calcutta University with special papers on Vedic literature. He then proceeded to England in 1920 and earned his M.A. at Oxford University with honours in modern history in 1923. He

studied and learnt many languages like Latin, Greek, French, German, Russian, Italian and Spanish. His extraordinary command over Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, English, etc., enabled him to produce research of international significance. One of Handiqui's most remarkable achievements was his extraordinary linguistic ability. His exposure to both Eastern and Western scholarship enabled him to bridge the traditional Indian knowledge system with modern academic research. The multilingual expertise enabled him to access original manuscripts and conduct comparative research that few scholars of his time could undertake. His research focused on classical Sanskrit literature, ancient Indian philosophy, Indian political thought, Buddhist literature, Jain literature, Indian cultural history, etc. His writings helped international scholars better understand India's intellectual traditions and significantly contributed to the global study of Indology. His studies covered Indian philosophy, ancient political institutions, cultural history, classical poetry, religion and linguistics. He introduced rigorous academic methods into Sanskrit research, emphasising evidence-based scholarship and interdisciplinary study. One of his greatest achievements was his contribution to higher education. From 1930 to 1948, he served as the founding principal of Jagannath Baruah College, Jorhat, the first non-govt college in the state (now upgraded into a university). Subsequently, from 1948 to 1957, he became the founding vice-chancellor of Gauhati University, the oldest university in the Northeast. Under his leadership as the first vice-chancellor of Gauhati University, strong academic

standards were established, research culture was promoted, libraries and laboratories were strengthened, and academic autonomy was protected. His visionary leadership transformed Gauhati University into one of the leading educational institutions in Northeast India. He strongly believed that universities should become centres of research, innovation, intellectual freedom, character building, and national development.

In 1952, he was elected president of the Inter-University Board of India and also presided over the Vice-Chancellors' Conference at Madras University. He was a noted philanthropist and a polyglot. Among his most important publications that earned him global recognition are the English translation of the Sanskrit Mahakavya ‘Naisadhacharita’ by Sriharsha, published in 1934; Yasatilaka and Indian Culture, his second monumental work; and his translation of Pravarasena's ‘Setubandha’, published by the Prakrit Text Society, which is considered one of the finest global achievements in the epic genre. Although internationally recognised as a Sanskrit scholar, Handiqui remained deeply committed to Assamese language and culture. He believed that regional languages were essential for preserving India's cultural diversity while promoting higher education through English and Sanskrit. Although deeply rooted in Assamese culture, he promoted national unity. He believed that every regional language strengthens Indian unity and that cultural diversity is India's greatest strength. Handiqui valued time to an extent that he would be on time everywhere. Our state has travelled a long path from the standard set by

the internationally acclaimed scholar K. K. Handiqui. His stature was such that even the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, a great scholar himself, broke protocol to visit Handiqui's bungalow as a mark of his spontaneous respect for his great scholarship. While at Oxford, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee and W. K. K. Handiqui occupied adjacent rooms in the same hostel, Chatterjee recorded that before Handiqui he was always conscious of his own intellectual limitations. So engrossed was Handiqui in his books that when his wife intimidated him of an earthquake, he quipped, “Earthquake may come, ask him to sit in the drawing room.” He was so immersed in his books that even a calamity like an earthquake did not faze him. To add to his accolades, he was the youngest President of Axam Xahitya Xabha. He presided over the Guwahati session of Axam Xahitya Xabha held in 1937. Undoubtedly, K.K. Handiqui stands among the greatest scholars and educationists in modern India. His remarkable mastery of languages, pioneering research in Sanskrit and Indology, commitment to Assamese literature and visionary leadership in higher education have left an enduring legacy. His life exemplifies the ideals of intellectual curiosity, cultural preservation and educational leadership. Even today, his contributions continue to inspire students, teachers, researchers, policymakers, in fact, the entire academia making him a timeless symbol of scholarship and cultural renaissance in India. This internationally acclaimed scholar passed away on June 7, 1982. Today, on the day of 128th birth anniversary I pay my humblest tribute to this illustrious son of the state.

Kotak Mahindra Bank posts 26% rise in Q1 profit as asset quality improves

Kolkata: Kotak Mahindra Bank reported a 26 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase in standalone net profit (PAT) to ₹4,123 crore for the first quarter of FY27, driven by steady loan growth, higher fee income and improved asset quality. The bank's consolidated net profit rose 23 per cent YoY to ₹5,480 crore, according to the unaudited financial results approved by its Board of Directors on Saturday.

Net Interest Income (NII) grew 9 per cent YoY to ₹7,928 crore, while operating profit increased 10 per cent to ₹6,131 crore. The bank's net advances expanded 15 per cent to ₹5.12 lakh crore, while total deposits rose 12 per cent to ₹5.73 lakh crore as of June 30, 2026. Customer assets climbed 16 per cent YoY to ₹5.71 lakh crore, with the customer base reaching 5 crore.

The lender also reported a significant improvement



in asset quality. Gross non-performing assets (GNPA) declined to 1.18 per cent from 1.48 per cent a year ago, while net NPA fell to 0.27 per cent. Provisions dropped 45 per cent YoY to ₹668 crore, and the provision coverage ratio improved to 78 per cent. The bank maintained a strong capital adequacy ratio of 22.8 per cent under Basel III norms.

At the consolidated level, Kotak Mahindra Bank's key subsidiaries, including Kotak Securities, Kotak Asset Management, Kotak Mahindra Prime and Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance, posted healthy quarterly profits, contributing to the group's overall performance. Consolidated cus-

tomers assets stood at ₹6.46 lakh crore, while assets under management increased 8 per cent YoY to ₹8.06 lakh crore.

The robust quarterly performance is expected to reinforce Kotak Mahindra Bank's position in the Kolkata market, where demand for retail lending, MSME financing, wealth management and digital banking services continues to grow. Strong balance sheet metrics, improved asset quality and healthy deposit growth are likely to strengthen customer confidence and support the bank's expansion across West Bengal, particularly among businesses and retail customers seeking diversified financial solutions.

Veda Rehabilitation launches luxury mental health recovery retreat in Sikkim

Kolkata: Veda Rehabilitation & Wellness has expanded its presence in India with the launch of a luxury mental health, addiction recovery and holistic wellness retreat in Sikkim, marking its fourth centre after Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru. Nestled in the Rumtek Hills, the new facility is designed to support individuals dealing with addiction, burnout, behavioural addictions and other mental health concerns through an immersive recovery programme that combines evidence-based clinical care with nature and holistic wellness practices.

The launch comes at a time when awareness of mental health and substance dependence is increasing across India, prompting more individuals and families to seek professional help despite the social stigma surround-



ing rehabilitation. Veda said the retreat aims to provide a supportive environment where personalised care, spiritual wellness and lifestyle-focused therapies contribute to long-term recovery.

The retreat features 11 all-suite accommodations, including nine luxury suites and a two-bedroom Royal Suite. Guests have access to clinical therapies alongside yoga, meditation, sound healing, art therapy and movement-based sessions. The property also offers guided Himalayan hikes, Tai Chi sessions, interactions with monks from Rumtek Monastery, organic locally sourced meals, an infinity pool, fitness centre, counselling rooms, meditation spaces, a pottery studio and recreational facilities.

Founder and CEO Manun Thakur said Sikkim's tranquil Himalayan setting

made it an ideal destination for the organisation's expansion while addressing the growing demand for quality mental health and rehabilitation services in the Northeast. He added that Veda's people-first approach encourages voluntary treatment, continued family connections and sustainable lifestyle changes beyond recovery.

The launch is expected to strengthen access for patients from Kolkata and eastern India seeking premium rehabilitation and mental wellness services closer to home. With increasing awareness of mental health and addiction recovery across the region, the Sikkim facility is likely to attract clients looking for personalised, wellness-led care in a serene Himalayan environment, reducing dependence on treatment centres in western and southern India.

Extreme heat study flags rising risks for maternal healthcare sector

Kolkata: Prolonged exposure to extreme heat during pregnancy significantly increases the risk of adverse birth outcomes, with women in West Bengal's humid subtropical regions facing a heightened threat of delivering low-birth-weight babies, according to a first-of-its-kind population-scale study conducted across India. The research also found that rural, less-educated and socially vulnerable mothers are the most affected, underscoring the need to prioritise pregnant women in India's heat action plans.

The study, Effect of extreme heat stress on adverse pregnancy outcomes in India, analysed 209,266 births

recorded between 2015 and 2020 by matching each pregnancy with local heat exposure. Researchers measured consecutive "sweltering" days—when the India Heat Index exceeded the 90th percentile of the long-term local climate—and found that every additional day of sustained extreme heat increased the odds of a low-birth-weight baby by around one per cent. Heat exposure during the first trimester was linked to a greater risk of preterm birth, while exposure during the second trimester was associated with lower birth weight.

Led by researchers from the University of Queensland—IIT Delhi

Academy of Research (UQIDAR), IIT Delhi and the University of Queensland, with collaborators from UNSW Sydney, the University of Exeter and Korea University, the study highlighted a strong social gradient. Mothers with little or no formal education were found to face significantly higher risks of low birth weight and stillbirth as heat exposure increased. Lead author Vineetha Vincent said the findings show that "each additional day of extreme heat a mother endures nudges up the risk to her baby," while IIT Delhi Professor Sagnik Dey stressed that adaptation policies must focus on women with the fewest resources to cope

with rising temperatures.

The findings are particularly significant for West Bengal, where a large share of the population resides in humid subtropical districts identified by the study as being strongly associated with heat-related low birth weight. Public health experts say the research is likely to strengthen calls for greater investment in maternal healthcare, heat-resilient public health infrastructure, community awareness campaigns and climate adaptation measures across the state. It could also influence healthcare planning and resource allocation as prolonged heatwaves become more frequent under changing climate conditions.

ABD Maestro launches three super-premium whiskies in Telangana



Kolkata: ABD Maestro Pvt. Ltd., the super-premium and luxury spirits sub-

market with the launch of three award-winning whisky brands — AODH Irish Whiskey, WOODBURNS Contemporary Rare Indian Whisky and YELLO Designer Whisky. The company, co-founded by Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh, unveiled the products at a launch event in Hyderabad on Monday.

The launch marks ABD Maestro's expansion into Telangana's growing premium spirits segment, with the company targeting consumers seeking high-quality and craft-driven alcoholic beverages. The three whiskies are now available at leading retail outlets in Hyderabad and will also be served at premium bars and restaurants across the city.

Speaking at the launch, Bikram Basu, Managing Director of ABD Maestro, said Telangana, particularly Hyderabad, has emerged as a key market where consumers increasingly prefer premium drinking experiences. He said the three

brands offer distinct flavour profiles designed to appeal to evolving consumer preferences and the growing demand for modern luxury spirits.

Among the newly introduced labels, AODH is a triple-distilled Irish whiskey, WOODBURNS is an award-winning Indian whiskey that received the Revelation Blended Whisky Award and Grand Gold at the 27th Spirit Selection by Concours Mondial de Bruxelles 2025, while YELLO is a cross-continental blend of Scotch and Indian malts.

The company said Hyderabad's vibrant pub, bar and restaurant culture, along with rising demand in cities such as Warangal, Karimnagar and Nizamabad, makes Telangana an important market for its premium portfolio. A 750 ml bottle of AODH is priced at ₹3,470, WOODBURNS at ₹2,500 and YELLO at ₹2,630.

Check day 2 subscription status, fresh GMP, details

Mumbai: The initial public offering (IPO) of Caliber Mining & Logistics continued to see a solid response from the investors on the second day of the bidding process thanks to HNI and retail investors. The issue, which kicked off on Friday, July 17, was overall full subscribed on the first day of the bidding. Caliber Mining & Logistics is selling its shares in the price band of Rs 402-424 apiece. Investors can apply for a minimum of 35 shares and its multiples thereafter.

According to the data, the investors made bids for 9,60,51,585 equity shares, or 12.26 times, compared to the 78,35,821 equity shares offered for the subscription by 12.50 pm on Monday, July 20, 2026. The bidding for the issue shall continue for three trading days and close for bidding on Tuesday, July 21. transportation, and rail transportation coordination.

Ahead of its IPO, Caliber Mining & Logistics raised Rs 134.99 crore from anchor investors as it allocated 31, 83, 961 shares at Rs 424 apiece. Caliber Mining reported a net profit of Rs 157.90 crore with a revenue of Rs 1,684.66 crore for the financial year ended on March 31, 2026. It clocked a net profit at Rs 131.55 crore with a revenue of Rs 1,435.57 crore for the year 2024-25.

Gold, Silver Prices Edge Lower in Domestic Bullion Market Amid Weak Demand



Mumbai: The domestic bullion market witnessed a marginal decline during early trading on Monday, with gold and silver prices slipping slightly across major cities amid subdued buying activity. The precious metals market remained largely steady but moved lower as investors adopted a cautious approach ahead of fresh global market cues.

Following the mild correction, 24-carat gold was trading in the range of ₹1,43,280 to ₹1,43,430 per 10 grams across major bullion markets in the country. Meanwhile, 22-carat gold prices were recorded between ₹1,31,290 and ₹1,31,440 per 10 grams. Silver prices also witnessed a marginal decline, with the white metal trading around ₹2,29,900 per kilogram in the Delhi bullion market. Market participants indicated that limited demand and cautious investor sentiment contributed to the

slight movement in precious metal prices.

In the national capital, 24-carat gold was priced at ₹1,43,430 per 10 grams, while 22-carat gold was available at ₹1,31,440 per 10 grams. In Mumbai, 24-carat gold was trading at ₹1,43,280 per 10 grams, while 22-carat gold stood at ₹1,31,290 per 10 grams. Ahmedabad recorded 24-carat gold prices at ₹1,43,330 per 10 grams, with 22-carat gold available at ₹1,31,340 per 10 grams. Chennai and Kolkata reported similar rates, with 24-carat gold trading at ₹1,43,280 per 10 grams and 22-carat gold at ₹1,31,290 per 10 grams.

In other major markets, Bhopal recorded 24-carat gold at ₹1,43,330 per 10 grams and 22-carat gold at ₹1,31,340 per 10 grams. Jaipur and Lucknow saw slightly higher prices, with 24-carat gold at ₹1,43,430

per 10 grams and 22-carat gold at ₹1,31,440 per 10 grams. Patna reported rates of ₹1,43,330 per 10 grams for 24-carat gold and ₹1,31,340 per 10 grams for 22-carat gold.

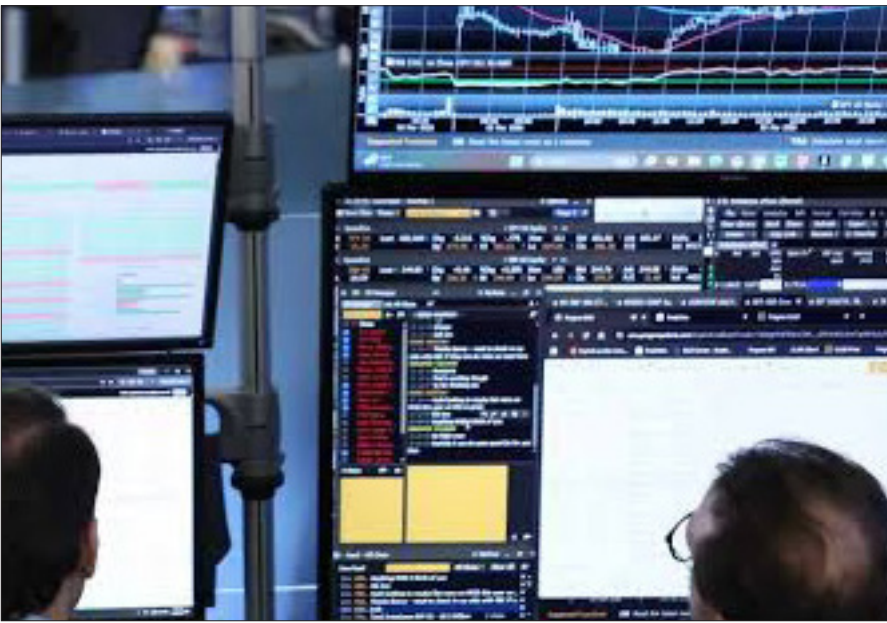
Bullion markets in southern and eastern regions also followed the broader trend. Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Bhubaneswar recorded 24-carat gold prices at ₹1,43,280 per 10 grams, while 22-carat gold was trading at ₹1,31,290 per 10 grams.

Analysts said gold prices continue to remain sensitive to international developments, including movements in global markets, currency fluctuations and investor demand for safe-haven assets. Market trends in the coming sessions are expected to depend on global economic indicators and changes in domestic festive and investment demand.

Global Markets Show Mixed Trends as US Stocks End Lower, Asian Indices Diverge

Mumbai: Global markets presented mixed signals on Monday, with US equities ending the previous session in negative territory, European markets closing with mixed results and Asian markets witnessing a mixed trading pattern. Meanwhile, Dow Jones Futures was trading marginally higher in early trade.

Investor sentiment remained cautious after crude oil prices surged sharply in the international market due to the escalating conflict in West Asia, raising fresh concerns over global inflation. The spike in oil prices weighed on Wall Street during the previous trading session. The Dow Jones Industrial Average declined 406.55 points, or 0.77 per cent, to close at 52,146.42. The S&P 500 also fell 76.08 points, or 1.01 per cent, to settle at 7,457.69. The Nasdaq Composite recorded the steepest decline among the major US indices, losing 361.70 points, or 1.40 per cent, to end at 25,520.24. However, Dow Jones Futures was trading marginally higher, gaining 0.05 points to reach 52,146.47, indicating a flat to slightly positive opening for US



markets. European markets delivered mixed performances in the previous session. The UK's FTSE 100 advanced 0.27 per cent to close at 10,600.37. In contrast, France's CAC 40 slipped 0.47 per cent to 8,338.81, while Germany's DAX declined 0.34 per cent to finish at 24,830.98.

Asian markets also traded on a mixed note on Monday. Among the nine major Asian markets, four indices were trading in positive territory, while four were in the red. Trading remained

closed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange due to a market holiday, leaving the Nikkei Index unchanged. Gift Nifty was trading lower by 191 points, or 0.78 per cent, at 24,158, indicating a weak opening trend for the Indian equity market.

Taiwan's Weighted Index declined 0.20 per cent to 42,588. South Korea's Kospi witnessed sharp selling pressure and was down 261.18 points, or 3.83 per cent, at 6,559.42. Thailand's SET Composite Index also edged lower by

0.12 per cent to 1,637.03. On the positive side, Indonesia's Jakarta Composite Index gained 0.87 per cent to trade at 6,229.19. China's Shanghai Composite advanced 1.18 per cent to 3,808.39. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index emerged as one of the strongest performers in the region, surging 509.76 points, or 2.08 per cent, to 25,072. Meanwhile, Singapore's Straits Times Index was trading marginally higher, gaining 0.02 per cent to reach 5,510.74.

São Tomé and Príncipe Votes: A Test of Democracy Amid Political Uncertainty

São Tomé : Voters in São Tomé and Príncipe are heading to the polls for a closely watched presidential election as the small island nation seeks to preserve its reputation as one of Africa’s most stable democracies. The election comes at a time of heightened political tension, constitutional uncertainty, and growing public frustration over economic challenges, making the vote an important test of the country’s democratic institutions.

Around 142,000 citizens are registered to participate in the election, according to the National Election Commission, with approximately 15% of voters living abroad. Since gaining independence from Portugal in 1975, São Tomé and Príncipe has developed a strong record of peaceful transfers of power and competitive elections, distinguishing it from many other countries in the region. However, this year’s presidential contest has been shaped by divisions between political leaders and uncertainty over the balance of power between the presidency and government.

Incumbent President Carlos Vila Nova is seeking a second term as an independent candidate after breaking ties with the ruling Acção Democrática Independente (ADI), the party that supported his successful campaign in 2021. His relationship with the

party deteriorated after he dismissed Prime Minister Patrice Trovoada in January last year, triggering a period of political instability. The prime minister’s replacement, former justice minister Ilza Amado Vaz, resigned after only three days, before Américo Ramos assumed office.

Vila Nova’s decision to contest the election independently has transformed the race into a contest not only between candidates but also between competing political forces. Among his main challengers is Nito D’Abreu, the parliamentary leader of ADI, who represents the party faction seeking to regain influence. Former prime minister Jorge Bom Jesus is also on the ballot despite attempting to withdraw his candidacy after missing the official deadline for removal.

The political landscape has become more complex with unexpected alliances. The Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (MLSTP), traditionally a major rival of ADI, has joined a broader coalition supporting Vila Nova. Meanwhile, an ADI faction led by Prime Minister Américo Ramos is backing D’Abreu. If no candidate secures more than half of the votes, a second-round runoff will determine the winner.

The election has also been marked by controversy

over candidate eligibility. Businessman Domingos Monteiro, popularly known as “Nino”, was removed from the race after the constitutional court ruled that he did not meet legal requirements. Monteiro, who has led the São Toméan Football Federation since 2015, argued that the decision violated equal rights, claiming that people born in the country should not face discrimination because of their parents’ nationality. The ruling has sparked debate over citizenship laws and national identity.

For ordinary voters, however, economic concerns remain at the centre of the election. Citizens are demanding action on corruption, rising prices, unemployment among young people, unreliable electricity supplies, and recurring fuel shortages. These challenges have increased public dissatisfaction and created an opportunity for opposition candidates to challenge Vila Nova’s record.

During a presidential debate, D’Abreu described corruption as one of the country’s biggest problems since independence, arguing that stronger institutions and greater transparency are necessary for national development. Other candidates have similarly focused on improving governance and addressing economic hardship.



Beyond domestic politics, the election carries regional significance. São Tomé and Príncipe occupies a strategically important position in the Gulf of Guinea, one of the world’s major maritime security zones affected by piracy threats. The country is also considered a reliable Western partner in maritime security and regional co-operation. Its offshore oil resources remain an important component of its economy, although expectations surrounding energy wealth have not fully translated into broad-based prosperity.

International observers from the European Union, the G7+ group, and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries are monitoring the election process to ensure transparency and credibility. Their presence reflects the wider importance of maintaining São Tomé and Príncipe’s

democratic reputation. The outcome of the presidential election will shape not only the country’s political leadership but also the future relationship between the presidency, government, and political parties. For a nation that has long been praised for democratic stability, the vote represents a crucial moment to demonstrate that political disagreements can be managed through constitutional processes and peaceful electoral competition. The election also highlights the broader challenges facing small island states in an increasingly complex global environment. While São Tomé and Príncipe has maintained political stability compared with many countries in the region, its economic vulnerabilities remain significant. Limited industrial capacity, dependence on imports, exposure

to global price fluctuations, and the effects of climate change continue to shape the country’s development challenges. The next president will face the difficult task of balancing political stability with economic reforms aimed at creating jobs, improving public services, and attracting sustainable investment.

Youth unemployment is expected to remain a major concern for the incoming administration. With a large proportion of the population seeking better economic opportunities, addressing skills development, entrepreneurship, and private-sector growth will be essential. Many young citizens are looking beyond traditional political debates and demanding practical solutions that can improve living standards and reduce dependence on external assistance.

Trump’s Data Deal

Washington : Trump Media & Technology Group is preparing to launch a premium data service that will provide faster access to posts from influential Truth Social accounts, including those of U.S. President Donald Trump. The service, called Truth API, is aimed at financial institutions, hedge funds, trading firms, and other clients that seek immediate access to market-moving information.

The platform plans to offer ultra-fast delivery of posts from 10 high-impact accounts, allowing subscribers to receive updates ahead of regular users through the Truth Social application. The service is expected to cost between \$60,000 and \$100,000, creating a new revenue stream for Trump Media as it expands beyond its social media operations.

The move comes as Trump’s posts have increasingly attracted attention from financial markets. Statements on issues such as tariffs, trade policy, and international relations have previously triggered rapid market reactions, making timely access valuable for algorithmic traders and investment firms that depend on real-time information.

Supporters of the service argue that it responds to existing market demand, as some firms have already

monitored social media posts manually or through unofficial methods. Trump Media executives say the Truth API will provide a more structured and reliable data feed.

However, critics have raised concerns that paid early access could create an advantage for wealthy financial institutions over smaller investors. Some lawmakers have questioned whether the service could increase inequality in access to market-sensitive information.

Legal experts note that subscription-based data services are common in financial markets, though questions remain about fairness and potential conflicts of interest given Trump’s political position and financial connections to the company.

The service, scheduled to launch on August 1, will include continuous monitoring and archived posts dating back to 2022, marking a major step in Truth Social’s effort to monetize its influence. The launch of Truth API also highlights the growing intersection between politics, social media, and financial markets. In recent years, the immediate impact of political statements on investor sentiment has increased as traders rely more heavily on digital platforms for real-time information.



Longer Queues Await Travellers Under Europe’s New EES System

London : Travellers heading to Europe this summer are being advised to prepare for longer waits at passport control as the European Union’s new Entry Exit System (EES) begins affecting border procedures. The digital border system, designed to strengthen security by recording travellers’ biometric details, has resulted in slower processing times at several airports, with some passengers facing significantly longer queues.

Airline company Ryanair has warned passengers that the introduction of the EES has created additional delays at European borders. The carrier has advised travellers to arrive earlier than usual at airports and allow extra time for immigration checks, particularly during busy holiday periods.

The impact of the new system has been particularly noticeable at Rome’s Fiumicino Airport, where officials say passport processing times for British travellers have increased sharply. Ivan Bassato, the airport’s Chief Aviation Officer, said recent improvements, including allowing UK passengers to register fingerprints and photographs at passport e-gates rather than separate kiosks, have helped reduce congestion.

However, he acknowl-

edged that the process remains slower than before the introduction of the EES. The average time taken by UK travellers to complete border checks has increased from around seven minutes to approximately 20 minutes. Officials said the system has not yet reached the same level of efficiency as the previous border process.

The delays have caused frustration among passengers arriving in Europe. Some travellers have reported waiting for hours after landing while completing the additional registration requirements. Carl, a passenger travelling from Yorkshire to Rome with his family, said his group spent about two hours in queues before clearing passport control. He said he expected delays but was surprised by the length of the wait, especially while travelling with children.

Other travellers have also experienced disruptions. David, who arrived from the United States with his wife Marlo, said their one-hour wait at immigration caused them to miss a scheduled airport pickup.

The EES requires non-European Union visitors to provide biometric information, including fingerprints and facial images, when entering and exiting the Schengen Area. The

system aims to replace traditional passport stamping with a more efficient digital process while improving border security and tracking overstays.

However, the transition period has created operational challenges as airports, border officials, and passengers adjust to the new procedures. Authorities expect processing times to improve as travellers become more familiar with the requirements and airports continue upgrading their systems.

For now, visitors to Europe are being encouraged to plan ahead, arrive early, and expect possible delays while the new border system becomes fully established across the region. The introduction of the EES marks one of the biggest changes to Europe’s border management system in recent years. While authorities believe the technology will eventually make crossings faster, safer, and more reliable, the initial implementation phase has highlighted the difficulties of shifting millions of travellers to a new digital process. Airports across Europe are working to increase staffing, improve infrastructure, and educate passengers about the new requirements.



War Uncertainty Drives Russians Back To Cash, Challenging Digital Economy Ambitions

Moscow : More than four years into the war in Ukraine, Russia is witnessing an unexpected shift in consumer behaviour as citizens increasingly return to using cash, reversing years of progress toward a largely digital economy. The growing preference for physical currency is being driven by repeated mobile internet disruptions, economic uncertainty, and concerns among businesses about rising tax pressures.

While the Kremlin has promoted Russia’s digital payment infrastructure as a sign of technological advancement, the renewed demand for cash highlights deeper economic challenges emerging during wartime.

According to data from Russia’s Central Bank, cash in circulation has increased by 1.56 trillion roubles, or around \$20 billion, since the beginning of 2026. The rise marks the largest increase for this period in any year outside the Covid-19 pandemic. The trend has attracted attention because Russia was previously considered one of Europe’s most advanced cashless economies, with widespread use of bank cards, mobile applications, and QR-code payments.

One of the major reasons behind the return to cash is the disruption of digital payment systems caused by security measures linked to the war. Ukrainian drone attacks on Russian territory have led authorities to repeatedly suspend mobile internet services in several regions. Although the restrictions are intended to reduce the effectiveness of drone operations, they have also affected ordinary citizens and businesses that depend on online payment systems.

For many Russians, cash has become a practical alternative during periods when digital services are unavailable. Consumers who once relied almost entirely on electronic transactions are now keeping larger amounts of physical currency to ensure they can continue making purchases during internet disruptions. Similar increases in cash withdrawals were observed during previous moments of wartime uncertainty, including the partial military mobilisation announced by President Vladimir Putin in 2022 and the Wagner

looking for ways to reduce costs and manage increased tax obligations.

The Kremlin raised the value-added tax (VAT) rate from 20% to 22% in January while also lowering the threshold at which small and medium-sized enterprises must begin paying certain taxes. These changes have placed additional pressure on small businesses, including restaurants, pharmacies, beauty salons, and market vendors. Some entrepreneurs are reportedly encouraging customers to make cash payments because such transactions can

ATMs, or self-service terminals, suggesting that money was remaining outside formal financial circulation.

Concerns have also emerged regarding unofficial employment practices. Some companies facing higher costs may choose to pay workers partially or entirely in cash to avoid taxes and social contributions. Such practices reduce government revenue, weaken labour protections, and make it harder for authorities to measure the true state of economic activity.

A survey conducted

in digital financial systems. A move away from electronic payments reduces transparency, complicates tax collection, and creates difficulties for economic policymakers seeking accurate information about consumer behaviour and business activity.

For President Vladimir Putin’s government, the issue is particularly sensitive because economic stability has been a central part of its domestic narrative during the prolonged conflict. Despite sanctions and wartime spending, authorities have sought to demonstrate resilience and maintain public confidence. However, rising cash usage suggests that some citizens and businesses are adapting to uncertainty in ways that may weaken state oversight.

At the same time, the shift does not necessarily indicate a complete rejection of digital payments. Many Russians continue to use banking applications and electronic transactions when services are available. Instead, the trend reflects a search for security and flexibility in an environment where technology infrastructure, economic policies, and geopolitical tensions are constantly changing.



Group rebellion in 2023.

However, the current rise in cash usage is not only a response to technological disruptions. Economic pressures are also encouraging businesses and consumers to rely more heavily on physical money.

Russia’s economy has faced increasing challenges from international sanctions, labour shortages, inflationary pressures, and higher government spending linked to the war. As financial conditions tighten, some businesses are

make it easier to conceal revenue and reduce reported tax liabilities.

The growing use of cash has raised concerns among Russian officials about the expansion of the shadow economy. Taras Skvortsov, chief financial officer of Russia’s largest bank, Sberbank, warned that there were signs of increasing informal economic activity. He noted that some cash was not returning to the banking system through traditional channels such as cash collection services,

by Opora Russia, one of the country’s largest small-business associations, found that around 6% of entrepreneurs had adopted so-called “grey schemes” to cope with the increased tax burden. These methods included avoiding issuing receipts, shifting transactions outside official records, and conducting more business through cash payments.

The return of cash presents a challenge for the Russian government, which has invested heavily

The growing preference for cash therefore represents more than a payment habit; it is a signal of broader economic adjustments taking place inside Russia. As the war continues and financial pressures increase, the country’s move back toward physical currency may become an indicator of declining trust in economic stability and a warning sign for policymakers attempting to manage the long-term consequences of wartime conditions.

Amit Shah promotes the Maharashtra ATS model for the Bengal STF and calls for improved policing



Kolkata, July 20: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday directed senior Bengal police officers to boost the state’s Special Task Force (STF) in the manner of the Maharashtra police’s Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS).Shah also emphasized the importance of implementing “smart policing,” starting with the Kolkata and Bidhannagar police departments. He emphasized improved coordination and intelligence sharing among states and agencies, directing cops to respond quickly on interstate and interagency inputs to improve on-the-ground enforcement. The conference, held in the Saujanya guest home in Alipore, was attended by authorities with the rank of additional director-general of police and higher. According to sources, this was the first meeting exclusively focused on the state’s law-and-order situation since the BJP assumed office in Bengal.“We were asked to develop the STF on the lines of Maharashtra’s ATS. There were also instructions to strengthen interstate intelligence sharing and to act promptly on inputs

received from other states and agencies,” an officer who attended the meeting said.Several police officers, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the sharing of information between state and central agencies had often been hindered by preconceived notions and bureaucratic red tape. “We expect better coordination among agencies, irrespective of whether they are state or central bodies,” one officer said. Another officer said the Union home minister had asked those present at the meeting to introduce the concept of “smart policing”, beginning with Kolkata Police and Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate. According to the officer, smart policing entails greater use of technology, faster response times and a stronger emphasis on crime prevention. Shah also reportedly asked the police to roll out the initiative initially in Kolkata Police and Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate and to consider modernising equipment and services wherever necessary.Shah also reportedly asked Bengal’s police leadership to rectify records

from the past few years, alleging that the state’s crime data had not been properly shared with the Centre, creating an impression that crime levels were lower than they actually were. Allegations have surfaced on several occasions that the erstwhile Trinamool Congress government did not share complete crime-related data with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the central agency that compiles crime statistics from across the country.“He asked us to set the records straight and ensure that there is no suppression of facts in the future,” an officer said. Matters relating to illegal immigration in states sharing international borders also came up for discussion during the meeting. Officers were informed that a State Investigation Agency (SIA), on the lines of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), would also be set up. The police were asked to focus on ensuring the safety of women in rural areas.Following the meeting, which was also attended by chief minister Suvenudh Adhikari, Kolkata Police commissioner Ajay Nand issued an order announcing the formation of the STF-D.The primary responsibility of the new unit will be to verify and authenticate databases of overstaying foreign nationals and illegal migrants, conduct field inquiries to trace such individuals, and coordinate with divisional deputy commissioners, the Intelligence Branch of West Bengal Police, the Foreigners Regional Registration Office, Calcutta, and other agencies under the provisions of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025. The unit will also be responsible for taking legal proceedings to detain and deport such individuals, as well as keeping a centralized and up-to-date record of all actions performed.Shah stated that all incidences of post-election violence since 2021 will be studied. The police were also advised to lay a greater emphasis on improving the disaster management system in order to respond more effectively to catastrophes.

Sonam Wangchuk and Hunger Strikes What the Law Says and Doesn’t

New Delhi, July 20: The forced removal of activist Sonam Wangchuk from the Cockroach Janta Party protest site in central Delhi this week highlighted one of democracy’s most important balancing acts: the right to peaceful protests, including hunger strikes, versus the state’s obligation to protect lives, even if it means force-feeding. The question is, when does that duty kick in?Fasting is recognised by Indian courts as a legal method of protest, as protected by the Constitution. The courts have also recognized that a mentally competent person who is aware of the risks of fasting may refuse to ingest food. They have also held a hunger strike cannot be seen as a suicide bid; in 2021, the Madras High Court said a farmer protesting the government’s (now-scrapped) ‘black’ farm laws could not be seen as trying to die by suicide. This is an important distinction because it means the state cannot then stop the strike - since suicide is a crime - and force-feed the protester.But simultaneously, the courts have also held the government responsible for the people’s safety.In February 2013 the Supreme Court ruled: “It is the bounden duty of any State to ensure the lives of its citizens and other persons are at all times protected.” The court drew from



Article 21 in that instance, which guarantees protection of life, and has been read by the court as requiring the state to act if a citizen’s life is in imminent danger. An inferred additional responsibility, then, is also force-feeding a hunger strike protester if - and this distinction is critical - medical reports indicate a threat to life if fasting were to continue. Instances like these, i.e., cases where the right to protest and autonomy over one’s body - including hunger strikes - clash with the state’s duty to protect lives, are a Catch-22 situation.The courts have said a citizen’s right to assembly and protest, peacefully and without arms, is the cornerstone of democracy. And hunger strikes have been seen as valid and protected forms of such protests, though that

right, like all others, is subject to reasonable restrictions.In this case, that would include potential threats to the protester’s own life.The catch is in establishing those ‘reasonable restrictions’. Force feeding, for example, is neither permitted nor prohibited under Indian law.In the Wangchuk case, as his wife, Gitanjali Angmo, and attorneys have pointed out, forcibly feeding the activist while in the hospital would violate his physical autonomy, especially because transporting him from the protest site does not legally invalidate or terminate the demonstration. However, the state is compelled not to let Wangchuk’s condition to deteriorate to the point where his life is in danger, as contended in the Delhi High Court appeal, implying that he would be force-fed.

A Maharashtra family was burned alive after a truck overturned and collided with a car

Wardha, July 20: Six persons were burned alive after a container truck flipped and hit a vehicle from behind in Maharashtra’s Wardha district. The two vehicles caught fire, killing everyone on board - four family members in a car, the truck driver, and his assistant.

The collision occurred at 3 a.m. on the Samruddhi Mahamarg, a six-lane highway that connects Mumbai and Nagpur.According to the inquiry, a truck transporting ethanol was involved in an accident that resulted in a gasoline leak. Traffic was then shifted to the other lane. Amidst this, a vehicle trav-



eling from Pune to Wardha was hit from behind by a speeding truck filled with chilies. The automobile was crushed under the

truck, and both cars were in flames.The four passengers of a vehicle were inhabitants of Salod in Wardha, going home after dropping

off one of their daughters at college in Pune for her MBA studies. The fatalities have been named as Rajesh Tiple, his wife Sushma Tiple, their daughter Jahnvi, and their driver Ankush Raut. The other two victims were truck driver Sanjay Kumar and cleaner Samarjit Pal. Teams from the Highway Safety Patrol, Wardha Police, the fire department, and the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation went to the scene to conduct rescue and traffic restoration operations.According to traffic police records, the Samruddhi Expressway had 185 accidents in 2025, up 35% from 137 in 2024.

India maintains a 7.7% growth rate despite the Middle East crisis: PM Modi

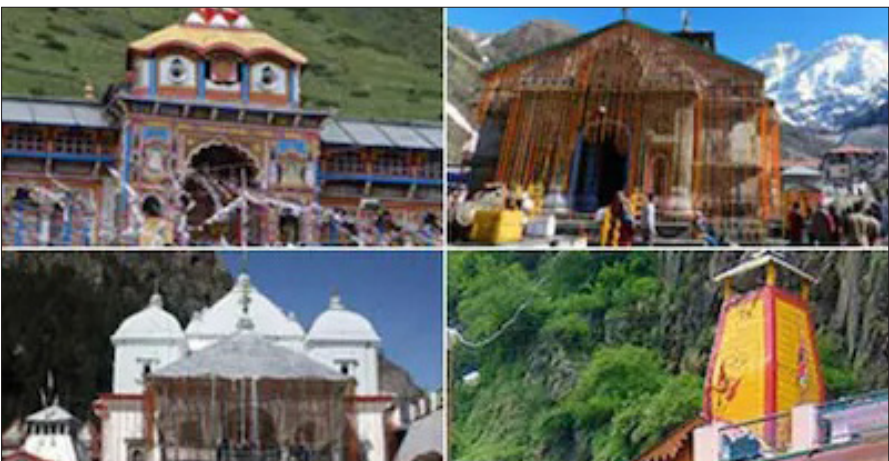


New Delhi, July 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday that India’s 7.7% growth rate despite the Middle East turmoil indicates the country’s “inherent strength” and “offers a reflection of the enthusiasm and zeal” with which it aims to reach new milestones.PM Modi addressed the media at the commencement of Parliament’s Monsoon Session, saying, “Everyone is aware, and the world is concerned, about the potential of conflict in many places. The Middle East conflict has created a serious issue for countries such as India, which relies on others for oil, fuel, diesel, LPG,

fertilisers, and chemical supplies. Despite this, India has maintained a 7.7% growth rate, making it the world’s fastest-growing major economy. The Prime Minister said that this reflects India’s “inherent strength” and “offers a reflection of the enthusiasm and zeal” with which India aspires to achieve new milestones.“Against this backdrop, the Monsoon Session is commencing; the nation has gathered momentum, and the spirit of Parliament infuses fresh energy into that pace. A positive spirit is very essential for achieving the country’s goal. Our Parliament also has many experienced

parliamentarians, regardless of their party affiliation. At a time like this, both Parliament and the nation need their experience and knowledge. Therefore, I believe the need of the hour is the functioning of Parliament, meaningful discussions, and a collective resolve to take the nation forward,” he added.“The country’s youth, who are full of aspirations, demand that we move forward,” PM Modi said. “Today, it is the demand of the hour that the voice of those filled with national dedication and living for national devotion gets a proper platform in the House. May they raise their voices to provide direction to the nation, and therefore, I hope, and I am firmly confident, that where there are facts and where there is logic, there is no place for creating a storm,” he added. The Prime Minister further called on the parliamentarians to engage in productive debate and ensure that “every voice finds an opportunity”. ”When arguments and facts are strong, one may effectively express their point even in a calm manner. I hope that such thinking and evidence will help to inform House deliberations. May every voice be heard, and every notion be treated with respect. I encourage all Members of Parliament to fully participate in the House’s proceedings,” he said.

The Char Dham Yatra in Uttarakhand has been halted because to heavy rains and the risk of landslides



Uttarakhand, July 20: The Uttarakhand authorities briefly suspended the Char Dham Yatra on Monday as a precautionary measure due to persistent heavy rains, Red and Orange signals issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), and landslides at many pilgrimage routes.The Garhwal Commissioner asked all District Magistrates and authorities to ensure that pilgrims already on the journey are lodged in secure places. They have also been directed to let pilgrims to continue their trek only when the pathways have been confirmed entirely secure.Officials have also been requested to give timely and accurate information to pilgrims and the general public via the media and other communication channels. The administration said the decision was taken solely as a precautionary

measure, with the safety of pilgrims being the top priority in view of the prevailing weather conditions and the condition of the Yatra routes. The pilgrimage will resume once the routes are declared safe and the situation returns to normal. Pilgrims have been advised not to pay attention to rumours, to rely only on official advisories issued by the administration, and to follow the directions of the respective district authorities until weather conditions improve.Meanwhile, continuous rainfall in Rudraprayag district has led to a sharp rise in the water levels of the Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers, both of which are nearing their warning levels. Ghats developed under the Namami Gange project have been submerged due to the rising water levels. The Rudraprayag district administration has directed

all departments to remain on high alert as light rain and dense fog continue across the district.According to the administration, Rudraprayag recorded 22 mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours, while Ukhimath received 77 mm and Jakholi recorded 53 mm.The latest readings showed the Alaknanda River at 625.00 metres and the Mandakini River at 624.15 metres, both approaching their respective warning levels. Water levels were also recorded at 799.90 metres in Ganganagar and 1,974.12 metres in Gaurikund. The District Emergency Operations Centre has directed all relevant departments to maintain the greatest level of preparation to cope with any rain-related emergencies. Residents and pilgrims have also been warned to avoid riverbanks and keep watchful.

DMK MLA Arrested for Defamatory and Threatening Remarks Against Vijay

New Delhi, July 20: DMK MLA G R Markendiyar has been detained for allegedly defamatory and threatening statements against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay.Following the detention, DMK supporters held a demonstration with placards decrying the police conduct. The MLA is being questioned at the Tuticorin SP Office. The dispute arose from a public gathering conducted on July 18, when Markendiyar replied to the Chief Minister’s words about his “search for father,” which were widely seen as an oblique attack of DMK president M K Stalin following his electoral setback in the Kolathur constituency. During his speech, Markendiyar allegedly said, “In the Assembly, the Chief Minister says he is searching for the father. Shameless Chief Minister. We will take care of you in the Assembly.

He says he will lock the doors of the Assembly. If he locks them, his bones will be crushed. Let him lock the Assembly and see.”Subsequently, a TVK functionary filed a complaint.Earlier this month, Tiruchendur DMK MLA Anitha Radhakrishnan was also arrested in connection with remarks against the Chief Minister and was later released on bail the same day.

PM Modi’s Dig At ‘56-Year-Old Youth’ Rahul Gandhi Before The Monsoon Session

New Delhi, July 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that the average age of team members of Skyroot Aerospace, a commercial space business that made history with VIKRAM-1, India’s first private rocket to reach orbit over the weekend, is 28 years. He clarified that he is not referring to a “56-year-old youth,” implying Rahul Gandhi, a youth leader.India’s youth have successfully launched a fresh flight into space. In his usual statements ahead of the Monsoon Session, PM Modi stated that the average age of the whole team of young people working at Skyroot is 28. The rocket completed its final burn and injected its payloads into a nearly 450-km orbit, making India the third country in the world with private orbital launch capability.“I am not talking about a 56-year-old ‘youngster,’” PM Modi said, taking a swipe at the Leader of Opposition, who turned 56 this June. Narendra Modi, then the BJP Prime Ministerial candidate, in the run-up to the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, introduced the phrase “56-inch chest”, implying immense strength, courage,

The Congress has used the phrase to attack the Prime Minister.In February, Rahul Gandhi, who was not allowed to quote from ex-Army Chief MM Naravane’s unpublished memoir in parliament, took a swipe at the Prime Minister, saying “what happened to the 56-inch chest when China was standing against us”. Without dwelling on the “56-year-old youth”, the Prime Minister continued with his address.“Congratulations are certainly due to these young people - with an average age of 28 - who have planted India’s flag in space. These are the kinds of achievements that fill India with self-confidence,” PM Modi said.The Prime Minister recalled that before last year’s Monsoon Session, an Indian reached the International Space Station (ISS), and this time, Hyderabad-based Skyroot Aerospace successfully launched Vikram-1, the country’s first privately developed orbital rocket, under Mission Aagaman.PM Modi said that India’s global profile is gaining “universal recognition and acceptance”.“This is not a coincidence; it is a message, and a very powerful one, that

the potential and aspirations of our country’s youth are as boundless as space itself -- there cannot be a more inspiring message for the country than this,” he added. PM Modi also expressed hope that both the ongoing monsoon season and the Monsoon Session of Parliament would prove productive for the country.“The benefits of the monsoon are visible, and the Monsoon Session is also commencing. Both the monsoon and the Monsoon Session are very productive; when both are productive, it leads to the welfare of the nation and the welfare of all living beings. Therefore, we pray that both the monsoon and the Monsoon Session remain productive,” he said.The Prime Minister urged parliamentarians to “focus on facts”, and hoped that discussions will be conducted with logic. “I believe that where there are facts, there is no need for chaos. If your logic and facts are strong, there is no need to raise your voice. I hope the discussions in parliament are conducted with logic and facts. Every voice should find an opportunity to be heard. That is the role of Parliament.

The government has introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha to increase the number of Supreme Court justices

New Delhi, July 20: Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal tabled the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, in the Lok Sabha on Monday, as the opposition continued to shout protests on the opening day of the Monsoon Session. Meghwal attempted to present a measure that would modify the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act of 1956. The proposed bill will supersede a previous order issued by the Centre to increase the sanctioned strength of Supreme Court justices from 33 to 37. The law passed despite opposition members’ continued objections over the suspected NEET-UG paper leak and the Ram Mandir contribution embezzlement issue. With the disturbances continuing, the Lok Sabha was delayed till 12:30 pm, which was eventually extended until 2 pm.

‘Pooja Meri Jaan’ Finally Arrives After Long Release Delay

Mumbai : Pooja Meri Jaan is finally seeing the light of day after being in a limbo for four long years. The thriller, which has been delayed for so long, will now be released on Zee 5. Recently, the streaming platform announced the film’s premiere as part of its upcoming slate. As of now, the exact release date remains unclear.

Pooja Meri Jaan is directed by Navjot Gulati and backed by Dinesh Vijan’s Maddock Films. The film faced uncertainties because it was initially scheduled for release on JioCinema. However, after its merger with Disney+ Hotstar, the film hit a roadblock. Starring Mrunal Thakur and Huma Qureshi, Pooja Meri Jaan completed shooting in August 2022. Since then, no update was given to



them about the release. In February this year, director Navjot Gulati had publicly expressed his anguish, urging Dinesh Vijan’s Maddock Films to finally release the long-stalled project. Gulati revealed that the film was originally commissioned for OTT and slated to premiere on JioCinema. However, after JioCinema’s merger with Disney+ Hotstar, producers were allegedly informed that

the film could be sold elsewhere. That, Gulati claimed, is where the delays began. In a heartfelt conversation with Variety India, Gulati revealed that his father, who passed away in 2024, kept asking about the film’s release during the final months of his life. He shared that his father never stopped hoping the film would be released and kept asking when Pooja Meri Jaan would final-

ly reach audiences. Gulati said it was his father’s final wish—one that is yet to come true.

He claimed that co-producer Amar Kaushik has not responded to his calls or messages since October 2025. “I’m tired of calling and texting and yet not hearing back,” he said. “The only reason I’m speaking publicly is because there’s no accountability. The film is still topical and relevant. But if I don’t push now, I fear it may never be released because they simply don’t care.”

The thriller film, Pooja Meri Jaan, shows the intense world of stalking and cyber-crime. The film also features Vikram Singh Chauhan and Vijay Raaz in pivotal roles. The filming and post-production were wrapped by the end of 2022.

Arijit Singh Returns to Music for ‘Awarapan 2’ Title Track

Mumbai : Arijit Singh announced his retirement on January 27, leaving all his fans in shock. But it looks like there is happy news for all his fans, as the ace singer has reportedly returned to playback singing for Emraan Hashmi’s upcoming film, Awarapan 2. As per the recent update, the song, Yeh Awarapan, will be released tomorrow, July 21, and features Arijit’s melodious voice, all set to enchant us yet again.

As per Pinkvilla sources, “Vishesh Bhatt, the creative force behind the Awarapan franchise, has curated and built the music of Awarapan 2 as a statement in itself. With Yeh Awarapan, he delivers the song that sits at the very soul of Shivam Pandit’s world. And he delivers it in the voice of Arijit Singh.” The source further added, “The relationship between Arijit Singh and Vishesh Films is woven into the fabric of Hindi cinema’s last fifteen years. It was Vishesh Films that first placed faith in Arijit Singh, giving him Phir Mohabbat in Murder 2, the collaboration that introduced a generation to a voice it would carry with it for years.” Vishesh Films and Arijit Singh later collaborated on several projects, including Tum Hi Ho from Aashiqui 2, Muskurane from CityLights, the Khamoshiyan title track, the Hamari Adhuri Kahani title track, and Pal from Jalebi. Now, they have reunited for this new track, which is even more special for music lovers as it marks Arijit Singh’s return after a months-long hiatus. Arijit Singh’s announcement

On January 27, Arijit Singh took to social media to announce that he would not accept any new playback singing



assignments. His note read, “Hello. Happy New Year to all. I want to thank you all for giving me so much love all these years as listeners. I am happy to announce that I am not going to take any new assignments as a playback vocalist from now on. I am calling it quits. It was a wonderful journey.” Awarapan 2 brings Emraan Hashmi back in the lead role as Shivam Pandit. The sequel also stars Disha Patani and Shabana Azmi in key roles. Backed by Vishesh Films, the film is directed by Nitin Kakkar, who is known for films such as Filmistaan, Ram Singh Charlie, and Notebook.

Anupam Kher to Play Jatayu, Rakul Preet Shurpanakha in ‘Ramayana’

Mumbai : Nitesh Tiwari’s Ramayana is shaping up to be one of Indian cinema’s most crowded mythological productions, bringing together actors from Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Marathi cinema. While Ranbir Kapoor, Sai Pallavi, Yash and Sunny Deol have remained at the centre of the film’s publicity, the supporting cast is equally extensive.

More names were formally linked to their characters during the Pratham Sankalp event at Delhi’s Bharat Mandapam, where the team screened four minutes of footage and unveiled a special comic book introducing the film’s principal figures. The promotional material has also settled at least one widely circulated casting rumour. Amitabh Bachchan is not voicing Jatayu. That role has gone to Anupam Kher. Here is a breakdown of who plays whom in Ramayana.

Ranbir Kapoor And Sai Pallavi Lead As Rama And Sit Ranbir Kapoor plays Lord Rama, the prince of Ayodhya whose exile, separation from Sita and war against Ravana form the



central narrative of the epic. Sai Pallavi has been cast as Mata Sita. Her character’s abduction by Ravana sets Rama’s journey towards Lanka in motion, but the role extends far beyond that incident. Sita is also central to the story’s examination of resilience, duty, sacrifice and dignity.

Ravie Dubey plays Lakshman, Rama’s devoted younger brother who accompanies him and Sita during their exile. Adinath Kothare appears as Bharat, while

Nitish Sharma plays Shatrughna, completing the four princes of Ayodhya. Arun Govil Returns To The Ramayana World As Dasharath Arun Govil, who remains closely associated with Lord Rama because of Ramanand Sagar’s television adaptation, takes on a different role in Tiwari’s film. He plays King Dasharath, the father of Rama, Bharat, Lakshman and Shatrughna. Indira Krishnan portrays Kaushalya, Rama’s mother. Lara Dutta plays Kaikeyi, whose

two boons from Dasharath lead to Rama’s 14-year exile and Bharat’s proposed coronation.

Sonal Jha has been cast as Sumitra, the mother of Lakshman and Shatrughna. Seeba Chaddha plays Manthara, Kaikeyi’s attendant whose intervention changes the course of the royal succession and, eventually, the entire story. Shishir Sharma appears as Vashishtha, the royal priest and spiritual guide of the Ikshvaku dynasty. Ajinkya Deo plays

Vishwamitra, the sage who takes Rama and Lakshman away from Ayodhya to confront demons threatening sacred rituals. Yash Plays Ravana, With Kajal Aggarwal As Mandodari Yash steps into the role of Ravana, the ruler of Lanka and the principal antagonist of the film. The character is expected to receive substantial screen time, with the production assembling a full supporting cast around Ravana’s family and kingdom. Kajal Aggarwal plays Mandodari, Ravana’s queen, while Shobhana appears as Kaikesi, his mother.

Harish Uthaman portrays Vibhishana, Ravana’s younger brother who eventually rejects his actions and supports Rama. Faisal Malik plays Kumbhakarna, the giant warrior and another of Ravana’s brothers. Vivek Oberoi has been cast as Vidyutjihva, while Rakul Preet Singh plays Shurpanakha. Her encounter with Rama and Lakshman becomes a crucial turning point, setting off a chain of events that leads to Sita’s abduction.

Salman Khan’s ‘Maatrubhumi’ Clears Release Confusion, Set for 2026

Mumbai : Well, fans of Salman Khan won’t have to wait much longer for his next film, Maatrubhumi. It was initially scheduled for release in April 2026, however, due to unforeseen circumstances, it got delayed. Since then, the new release date still hasn’t been announced yet.

Notably, some reports surfaced on social media recently that Maatrubhumi might get pushed to 2027, leading to a frenzy among fans. Today, July 20, Salman Khan Films took to X to deny the rumours and confirm that Maatrubhumi will release in 2026 only. They also shared a new poster in which they have written “2026”. SKF tweeted, “A soldier’s promise. A family’s strength. A nation’s pride (sic).” Maatrubhumi, Salman Khan’s upcoming film co-starring Chitrangada Singh, is one of the most anticipated films of the year. Earlier, there were reports suggesting that Maatrubhumi might get pushed to 2027, as the Ministry of Defence had reservations about the film’s content and the mention of China in it. As per Bollywood



Hungama, a trade source shared, “The issues are yet to be resolved. Even if they are resolved soon, it will now be difficult to secure a good release slot, as most major dates have already been taken. In our industry, it is common for actors and filmmakers to take over a date that has already been claimed by another film. But Salman Khan is an exception. He is very fair and doesn’t believe in clashing with another film unnecessarily. Even if he decides to clash, he will inform the other party before making an announcement.” Later, SKF issued a statement clarifying that the film had

not been submitted to the CBFC. The statement read, “Any claims suggesting that Maatrubhumi: May War Rest In Peace has encountered issues with the CBFC or that its certification has been put on hold are false. The film has not yet been submitted to the CBFC for certification.” The statement further read, “Therefore, such reports are entirely baseless. We request that media outlets and individuals refrain from circulating unverified information. Any official updates regarding the film will be shared by Salman Khan Films through its official channels only.”

Kangana Ranaut Says Government Cannot Be ‘Arm-Twisted’ During Protest Debate

Mumbai : BJP MP and actor Kangana Ranaut on Monday criticised the ongoing Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led ‘Chalo Sansad’ protest near Parliament, saying parliamentary sessions provide the appropriate platform for discussions and that demonstrations should not disrupt legislative proceedings.

Speaking to media persons after arriving at Parliament for the Monsoon Session, Kangana said that Parliament is meant for elected representatives to raise issues and discuss matters in detail. She stressed that debates and questions inside the House are the proper ways to address concerns related to governance. “Our Parliamentary sessions are meant specifically for us to discuss all issues in an extensive and detailed manner,” Kangana said, adding that elected representatives have the responsibility to raise relevant issues during the session.

Reacting to the protest outside Parliament, the actor-turned-politician said that creating disturbances and disrupting proceedings was not the right approach. She argued that voters have chosen the government through the democratic process and that decisions regarding governance should be made through established constitutional mechanisms. “If you feel strongly about an issue, you should stand for election yourself,” Kangana said, adding that pressuring or forcing the government through protests was not an acceptable method of



seeking change. Meanwhile, tensions were reported at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar as the CJP began its ‘Chalo Sansad’ protest march on Monday amid heavy security arrangements. The demonstration was organised despite reports that permission for the march had not been granted by Delhi Police. Security personnel were deployed in large numbers around key areas near Parliament to manage the situation.

The protest was led by CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke and focused on demands raised by the organisation. Several public figures and celebrities had earlier expressed support for the movement.

Veteran actor Shabana Azmi visited Jantar Mantar on Sunday to extend her support to the protesters. Her

appearance came after she had previously backed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who joined the movement and began an indefinite hunger strike on June 28. Apart from Shabana Azmi, actors including Prakash Raj and Poonam Pandey were also seen at the protest site. Several other celebrities, including Soni Razdan, Zeenat Aman, Abhay Deol, Sonakshi Sinha, Omi Vaidya, Imran Khan, Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah, had voiced their support for Wangchuk and the protesters through social media. The developments have triggered political debate, with supporters of the protest calling for attention to their demands, while critics, including Kangana Ranaut, questioned the methods adopted by demonstrators.

Rakhi Sawant Supports Sonam Wangchuk, Questions Aamir Khan Over Silence

Mumbai: Actor and television personality Rakhi Sawant has voiced her support for climate activist Sonam Wangchuk amid his ongoing hunger strike, urging the government to address his concerns and appealing to Wangchuk to end his fast before his health deteriorates.

Rakhi, known for her outspoken statements, recently interacted with paparazzi and expressed concern over Wangchuk’s decision to continue his hunger strike. She appealed to both sides, requesting the government to listen to the activist’s demands while also asking Wangchuk to take care of his health. Speaking about the situation, Rakhi urged Wangchuk to continue his efforts through dialogue rather than risking his life. She said that his work and contribution were important and that she did not want him to become a martyr while fighting for his cause. “Sonam ji, khao piyo aur lado. Aap agar pran tyag diye, yeh mom-batti le ke bahar niklenge,” Rakhi said while addressing the activist. In another interaction, Rakhi said she



was willing to travel to Delhi and participate in the protest if required. She appealed to the government to intervene and help bring an end to Wangchuk’s fast, saying that his efforts were aimed at raising issues concerning society and future generations. Rakhi also reacted to actor Aamir Khan’s recent comments regarding Sonam Wangchuk and the connection with the film 3 Idiots. She expressed disappointment over Aamir’s statement that he was unaware of Wangchuk before the film’s release. Addressing Aamir, Rakhi said that many people associated Wangchuk with the inspi-

ration behind the popular film and felt that his contributions deserved recognition. She questioned why the activist’s work was not being acknowledged despite the widespread success of the movie. Earlier, Rakhi had appealed directly to Wangchuk through the media, requesting him not to put his life at risk. She said she wanted to visit Jantar Mantar personally and support efforts to convince him to end his hunger strike. Meanwhile, several other members of the film industry have also expressed support for Wangchuk and the protesters. Veteran actor Shabana Azmi visited the protest

site at Jantar Mantar, while actor Prakash Raj and Poonam Pandey were also seen extending their support to the movement.

Other celebrities, including Soni Razdan, Zeenat Aman, Abhay Deol, Sonakshi Sinha, Omi Vaidya, Imran Khan, Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah, have previously shared messages of support on social media.

The ongoing protest has drawn attention from political circles, public figures and the entertainment industry, with discussions continuing over the demands raised by the protesters and the government’s response.

Supreme Court Urges Restraint in Ram Temple Donation Dispute

NEW DELHI, July 20: The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Uttar Pradesh government to clarify whether a Special Investigation Team (SIT) could be entrusted with the probe into the alleged embezzlement of donations linked to the Ram temple in Ayodhya, while cautioning the parties involved against giving the matter a political colour.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymaya Bagchi and V. Mohana sought a response from Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, on the possibility of assigning the investigation to the SIT that had earlier examined the matter before registration of the FIR. The court observed that the issue before it was related to an alleged criminal offence and that the focus should remain on ensuring a fair and transparent investiga-



tion. “Please don’t politicise the issue. The courts are not a place for politics. It is a simple case of commission of crime. We are just here to ensure a proper investigation,” the Chief Justice said during the hearing. The Solicitor General informed the bench that the state government had submitted a status report in compliance with the court’s earlier directions. He said that the investigation was currently underway and that eight people had been arrested so far. However, he added that details of the probe could not be dis-

closed at this stage. When the bench asked about the role of the SIT, Mehta explained that the team had initially been constituted to examine the allegations and determine whether a cognisable offence had taken place. Following the SIT’s findings, the matter was handed over to the local police for further investigation. The court noted that senior officials, including two IAS officers and the Inspector General of Police (IGP) of Lucknow, were part of the SIT and questioned whether the same team could under-

take the main investigation to maintain greater confidence in the process. The bench indicated that it would examine the matter further and issue appropriate directions during the next hearing scheduled for Monday. Earlier, on July 13, the Supreme Court had directed the Uttar Pradesh Police to submit a status report regarding the alleged donation irregularities. The court had also issued notice to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust on petitions seeking a fair, independent and time-bound investigation into the allegations. The matter relates to pleas alleging irregularities in the handling of donations made in connection with the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The Supreme Court’s observations came as it considered the need for an impartial probe while ensuring that the proceedings remain focused on legal and investigative issues.

‘Parliament Must Debate, Not Just Announce’: Tharoor Targets Centre

NEW DELHI, July 20 : Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Monday criticised the government over the denial of discussions in Parliament on several issues raised by the Opposition, including the alleged irregularities related to temple donations in Ayodhya and the NEET-UG paper leak.

Tharoor said Parliament should serve as a platform for elected representatives to raise matters of public importance and should not be reduced to a place where the government only introduces bills and gets them passed without debate. Highlighting the importance of parliamentary discussions in a democracy, the Thiruvananthapuram MP said the Opposition must be given an opportunity to present the concerns of citizens, even though the ruling party has the numbers to pass legislation. “Everyone knows these are important issues across the country. It would be logical to have a discussion on



them,” Tharoor said, adding that Parliament is meant to reflect the voices and concerns of the people.

He said the government, with its majority, has the right to respond to Opposition arguments and reject suggestions if it chooses, but preventing discussions altogether weakens the role of Parliament. “The Opposition must have its say because the government will have its way,” Tharoor said, stressing that debate and disagreement are essential parts of parliamentary functioning. The Congress leader said repeated disruptions in the

House were a result of the Opposition being denied the opportunity to raise issues on the floor of Parliament. He added that cooperation between the government and Opposition was necessary for smooth functioning of the legislature. “Let them permit certain discussions, and we will get them to have their bills. There has to be give and take. That is how Parliament is supposed to function,” he said.

Tharoor also criticised the reported use of force by security personnel during a protest near Parliament Street, where members of

the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) allegedly attempted to breach barricades while marching towards Parliament.

Questioning the use of a baton charge during a demonstration, Tharoor said that non-violent protests should be handled differently. He argued that the use of force goes against the principle of peaceful expression. The Congress leader said the Opposition wanted discussions on issues including the alleged “Ayodhya chanda chori” matter, the NEET examination controversy and concerns raised through the party’s ‘Chhatron Ki Goonj’ initiative. Tharoor questioned why the government was unwilling to allow debates on these matters and asked whether it was avoiding scrutiny. His comments came after the first day of the Monsoon Session witnessed repeated adjournments as Opposition members raised slogans and demanded discussions on various issues.

PM Modi Calls for Productive Monsoon Session, Urges Fact-Based Debates

NEW DELHI, July 20 : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called for a productive Monsoon Session of Parliament, urging lawmakers to ensure that debates are guided by “logic and facts” instead of disruptions as the session began. Addressing the media before the start of proceedings, Modi said both the seasonal monsoon and the parliamentary session should remain active and beneficial for the country. He expressed hope that the session would focus on meaningful discussions and contribute to national development.



tions, the NEET paper leak controversy and concerns over E20 petrol, Modi emphasised that discussions in Parliament should be based on evidence, reasoning and facts. “I believe where there are facts, there is no need for chaos. If your logic and facts are strong, there is no need to raise your voice. Every voice should get an opportunity to be heard. That is the role of Parliament,” Modi said. The Prime Minister also highlighted India’s economic performance amid global challenges, particularly disruptions caused by conflicts in West Asia that affected sectors such as fuel

and fertilisers. He said India had continued to remain the fastest-growing major economy despite international uncertainties. Referring to the country’s reported growth rate of 7.7 per cent, Modi said the performance reflected India’s economic strength and resilience in difficult circumstances. During his remarks, Modi also highlighted recent achievements in science, technology and infrastructure, saying they demonstrated the growing capabilities of Indian youth and innovators. He recalled milestones in the space sector, including an Indian presence on the

International Space Station, and praised the achievements of youth-led startups that have enhanced India’s global standing. The Prime Minister also mentioned major developments in infrastructure and technology, including the commissioning of an oil refinery, the inauguration of a semiconductor facility and progress in hydrogen-powered transportation. He said such achievements were the result of the vision and efforts of Indian engineers, entrepreneurs and innovators working towards building a stronger nation. Modi added that reforms introduced by his government had created opportunities for young Indians to pursue ambitious goals and contribute to India’s growth story. The Monsoon Session began amid expectations of heated debates, with the Opposition set to raise several contentious issues while the government urged members to focus on constructive parliamentary discussions.

Till I am playing, there will always be noise: Rohit Sharma

London: Acutely aware but dismissive of the “noise” around his future in international cricket, veteran Indian batting star Rohit Sharma says he knows that speculation won’t stop till he is playing but he would rather focus on scoring runs instead of fighting it.

With a facile 138 at the Lord’s on Sunday, Rohit could not prevent India’s 27-run loss didn’t look his usual, possibly trying to mask the insult and hurt he must have felt. “The noise, since I made my debut was there. Till I am going to stay here, it is always going to be there, so it doesn’t really matter too much,” the 39-year-old, who became the oldest Indian centurion and first from the country to score a ton in 50-over cricket, told BCCI.TV. “What really matters is what I do on the field, try and contribute to the success of the team. That’s where all my focus is. Let the noise be there, if there is no noise there is no fun. My job is inside, their job is outside, that’s how I look at it. “My job is with bat, come and play, represent my country, that’s what I have been told to do since I made my debut, so that’s what I am going to do,” added the man, who is within touching distance of 12,000 ODI runs. Under pressure, his 34th ODI ton was one of his best knocks in recent times. Rohit said he has always enjoyed playing in England. “I love playing in England. The atmosphere, the grounds, the pitches, when you turn up to play any format over here, it challenges you in different ways. And that’s what you want as a cricketer. To be challenged in every way possible. I enjoyed out there in the middle,” he said. The century stand with Virat Kohli, who smashed 74, raised visions of an improbable win despite the steep chase of 388. It didn’t happen but their on-pitch understanding was still as smooth as it was a decade and half ago. “We (him

and Kohli) played our entire career together, so it was nice to have him in the middle, we have had so many partnerships.

It’s fun batting together as we understand each other so much, bouncing off ideas,” Rohit said. Rohit did admit that it was disappointing to lose the series after starting off with a win in Birmingham. “Little disappointed with the result as I thought we were playing good cricket. How we started off in Birmingham, we played good cricket. We fell a bit short in Cardiff with the bat not scoring enough runs. “Here it was a massive total to chase and we tried whatever we could but we fell 20-25 runs short,” Rohit said. The Indian pace attack had a cumulative experience of 51 ODIs among four bowlers and Rohit predictably defended them.

“Again with bowling, you got to understand that these guys haven’t played a lot of ODIs and you got give them time. We can learn from this game, take things in our stride and when we again come across situation like this, we try and better ourselves,” he said. “Disappointed with the result, we couldn’t finish off the game, we have to move on,” he signed off.



He has not told us anything: Gill on whether Lord’s will be Rohit’s last

CHENNAI: Shortly after Rohit Sharma made a statement century (138) in India’s 27-run loss to England in the third ODI at Lord’s on Sunday, skipper Shubman Gill dismissed the speculations about the 39-year-old’s retirement.

After two low scores in England, multiple reports and speculations emerged on Rohit’s future. The air was filled with murmurs that the selectors are ready to move on and the third ODI at Lord’s will be Rohit’s last match in India colours. The Mumbai batter, who has expressed his desire to continue and win the 2027 ODI World Cup on multiple occasions, came out all guns blazing with a vintage century in the 388-run chase. He scored a 84-ball hundred before getting out for 138 from 110 balls. From thereon, India crumbled before following short in the end. Shortly after the match, Gill said that Rohit has not told the team anything about his retirement in the post-match press conference. “We have not had a chat. He’s not told us anything. I think it’s all out in the media, but there’s not been any discussion like that,” Gill said. This comes after the statement from BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia on Friday ruling out Rohit’s potential retirement at Lord’s. “There are a lot of speculations going on in the media about Rohit Sharma’s future. I want to firmly assert that there has been no such discussion that Rohit will be playing his last match at Lord’s on Sunday,” Saikia said in a statement to the media. “Rohit is a regular member of the Indian ODI team and



he will continue to represent the country as long as he is in the scheme of things. In other words, Lord’s ODI won’t be his last match,” Saikia added. Though Rohit may not necessarily be guaranteed a spot in the squad the next time India play an ODI in September, the innings at Lord’s might just be what he needed to keep the conversation going with the selectors. It is clear that Rohit is living on borrowed time at the moment and runs are his necessary currency. The result may not have gone India’s way, but the 36th ODI century will give him the confidence to get another lease of life. Injuries a concern Meanwhile, Gill also came out strongly on the recurring injury concerns within the squad. Hardik Pandya is still not back, Nitish K Reddy is out of action and so is Harshit Rana. While Pandya’s return will be closely monitored, the other two came back from injuries only to go down again before this series. It did not help that Washington Sundar too

got injured and was ruled out in the middle of the series.

Ahead of the decider, Jasprit Bumrah sustained an impact injury and missed the match. It meant, India were forced to play six batters and five bowlers, which included four tail-enders. It also cost them in the death overs against England where the hosts smashed 82 runs in the last five overs. “If you look at the first squad that we announced, we didn’t play this match with at least five players. So if one player is injured, we have to play a different combination. If two players are injured, we have to play a different combination. I think after every match, if we are missing a player, we are missing a few tricks. If you look at the World Cup, we have played 11 matches in a row. And the players are not able to finish two-three matches in a row.

There is something missing somewhere. Our players are not able to play a match in a row. They play one-two matches. If something goes wrong, we are forced to play a different combination which we don’t think we have to play. So looking at all these things, it is difficult,” Gill rued. “One day in the morning, if you get a call that someone is injured and then it’s almost like you want to take a chance. If someone is 80% fit, you are playing with five bowlers. If he leaves five bowlers and comes out, who will you play with? So all these things run in the mind. It is difficult,” said the skipper apparently expressing his frustration.

Ryan Fox Triumphs at the 154th Open Championship with Late 20-Foot Birdie

England: New Zealand’s Ryan Fox produced a memorable finish to capture the 154th British Open, draining a dramatic 20-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole at Royal Birkdale to secure a one-shot victory on Sunday

Needing a birdie at the final hole after drawing level with American Cameron Young at nine under par, Fox held his nerve under immense pressure. He struck a superb approach shot that settled around 20 feet from the pin before calmly rolling in the winning putt, sparking jubilant celebrations as the galleries erupted. The 39-year-old closed with a four-under-par 68 to finish the championship on 270, edging Young by a single stroke. Young had set the clubhouse target earlier in the day after producing one of the finest rounds of the tournament, carding a brilliant seven-under-par 64 to finish at 271. Fox’s triumph marks the biggest victory of his career and places him alongside Bob Charles, who won the Open Championship in 1963 at Royal Lytham & St Annes, as only the second New Zealand man to lift golf’s oldest major trophy.



Starting the final round within striking distance of the lead, Fox displayed composure throughout a tense afternoon. He mixed steady ball-striking with confident putting, keeping himself in contention despite strong challenges from several players. As others faltered under the pressure of the closing holes, Fox remained patient and seized his opportunity when it mattered most. Young’s remarkable final-round charge briefly

appeared enough to force a playoff. His flawless display featured a series of birdies that propelled him to the top of the leaderboard, but he could only watch as Fox produced the decisive moment on the final green. American Sam Burns, who began the day with the overnight lead, was unable to maintain his advantage. Despite a determined effort, Burns settled for third place at eight under par after a final round that lacked the momentum need-

ed to hold off the chasing pack.

Fox’s victory adds another memorable chapter to New Zealand’s golfing history and crowns a season of consistent performances. His fearless finish under the greatest pressure demonstrated the composure and confidence required to win a major championship, with the clutch birdie on the 72nd hole destined to be remembered as one of the defining moments of the tournament.

Spain Boss Luis de la Fuente Jokes It's Tattoo Time for Cucurella Now

New Delhi: Marc Cucurella made a promise before the FIFA World Cup final between Argentina and Spain took place on Sunday, July 19. The Spanish defender is known to make such vows after he coloured his hair red after La Roja won the Euros in 2024. But this time, he went a step further. Cucurella boldly claimed that if Spain won the World Cup final, he would get a tattoo of manager Luis de La Fuente on his body. The Spanish defender wanted to get it to thank his boss for the work he had done with the team and even revealed where he was planning to get it. "I'm thinking about getting a tattoo if we win the World Cup. It will be the face of Luis de la Fuente, for everything he has done for us. It would be something truly wonderful. Now that the match is done and Spain have their second World title, De La Fuente isn't ready to let Cucurella go off the hook. Speaking after the win, De la Fuente said that the defender made a mistake in making that promise. The 65-year-old joked that he wasn't that



ugly and he will have to stick to his word. "I am too old for tattoos but my players are men of their word and I know they will stick to their word," De la Fuente told at the press conference, as quoted by Reuters. "They made a mistake and they will stick to it. I am not that ugly." De La Fuente came in and, instead of taking Spain away from tiki-taka, helped them to evolve the philosophy and make it better. The Spanish tactician said that he was proud of his players for staying true to their mantra and setting an example as a team and a family. "I'm so proud of this generation of footballers who have grown up with this philosophy, remained true to it, made it

even better, and set an example as a team and a family – they're excellent, world-class footballers with exceptional talent," De la Fuente said. "I'm very moved. Looking back and thinking about them, we've won everything, absolutely everything, with this generation of players." De La Fuente won his third major title with Spain following the win in New York on Sunday. Marc Cucurella promised to tattoo the face of Spain's manager Luis de La Fuente if Spain won the 2024 FIFA World Cup final against Argentina. After Spain secured their second World Cup title, De La Fuente humorously insisted Cucurella honor his vow.

Rohit Sharma's Unbeaten 138 Goes in Vain as England Clinch Lord's Series 2-1 Against India

New Delhi: There are days when a man walks off to a standing ovation, head bowed, having done everything asked of him, and still ends up on the losing side. Sunday at Lord's belonged, for long stretches, to Rohit Sharma. By the time the last ball had been bowled, though, it belonged to England. Chasing a monstrous 388, India were given hope by an opening stand of 147 between Rohit and Shubman Gill, and then kept alive by Rohit's alliance with Virat Kohli. In the end, though, the gulf created during the first 30 overs of England's innings proved too wide to bridge, and the hosts closed out a 27-run win to follow their 4-0 demolition in the T20Is with a 2-1 series victory in the 50-over format. For an India side that arrived in England as the No. 1-ranked ODI team in the world, it has been a chastening tour. If this was to be the last time Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli played together in England, then Lord's provided a fitting stage. Those



who packed the ground for the series decider watched two of India's finest ODI batters show they still belong at the highest level. Rohit scored a magnificent 138, his 34th ODI century, while Kohli chipped in with a fluent 74, his 133rd score of fifty or more in the format. Between them, they dragged India back into a chase that had seemed beyond reach. The only thing they could not deliver was victory. That belonged, to England. The hosts piled up

387 for 3 after Ben Duckett's career-best 141 and Jacob Bethell's 91 laid the platform before Jos Buttler's explosive 41 not out from just 13 balls lifted them to a daunting total. India responded with 360 for 7 despite Rohit's 138, Gill's 77 and Kohli's 74, as England sealed a 2-1 series win, their first ODI series victory over India since 2018 and only their eighth in 22 bilateral contests.

With his back against the wall and an illustrious career under the spotlight, Rohit silenced the retirement rumours the only way he knows, with one of his most memorable ODI centuries. It was an innings worthy of winning a match. Instead, it became the defining performance in defeat. The damage was done inside the first two-thirds of England's innings. Ben Duckett scored a superb 141 and, alongside a rampaging Jacob Bethell, put on 192 for the first wicket as England raced to 387

for 3. It was carnage of the most clinical kind. The powerplay alone brought 58 runs and, between overs 11 and 30, the innings simply ran away from India's attack. Duckett peppered the boundary with eighteen fours and a six, while Bethell, fluent from the very first over, struck eleven fours and a maximum before eventually holing out to Prasidh Krishna. Bethell reached his half-century off just 51 deliveries and, by the time England crossed 100 in the 16th over, India had already leaked fifteen boundaries with their lines badly astray. There was no respite even after the platform-builders departed. Joe Root, in the form of his life, made an unbeaten 74 off 48 balls, his third half-century in as many games on this tour, to drag the total past 350. Jos Buttler then blitzed 41 not out from just 13 deliveries, taking particular toll of Gurnoor Brar, who finished with figures of 0 for 97. Between them, England hit 42 boundaries and six sixes.

Quiet finale: Argentina's legend struggles without a shot in disappointing title match Spain Beat Messi by Denying Every Decisive Space



New Delhi: The promise of every Lionel Messi match is wonderfully uncomplicated. Give him the ball often enough and, sooner or later, he would conjure some magic that nobody could have dreamt of in their wildest of imaginations. Spain did not spend the World Cup final in New York worrying about that possibility. They simply played their own game. By the end of the regulation 90 minutes, Messi had become less a conductor than a commuter, forever travelling between Argentina's midfield and attack in search

of the pocket of space that had brought him eight goals, four assists and countless defining moments over the previous month. More often than not, by the time he turned to face goal, Spain already had their shape back and another passing option had disappeared. That, perhaps, was the most impressive part of Spain's display. They were never consumed by the idea of stopping Messi. Instead, they trusted their structure, monopolised possession and forced Argentina to play the game on their terms. Messi still found the

ball, but rarely in the places where who could pull off maybe another winner against England or Egypt. For one of the few times in his career, he looked like a player reacting to the game rather than controlling it. You rarely judge Messi's influence by numbers alone, but this was one of those evenings when they painted an accurate picture. He saw plenty of the ball, just not in the areas where he has spent the last month deciding matches. Messi's passing map was concentrated around the left half-space and central

midfield, with most of his combinations coming with Rodrigo De Paul, Nahuel Molina, Leandro Paredes and Giuliano Simeone rather than Argentina's forwards. It was a reflection of where Spain forced him to play, and why Argentina struggled to create sustained pressure for almost the entire evening. The effect was visible long before the numbers told the story. Messi was repeatedly collecting possession 35 or 40 yards from Spain's goal, receiving passes with his back to goal and surrounded by teammates who were themselves struggling to escape Spain's press. Instead of orchestrating attacks around the edge of the penalty area, he found himself helping Argentina progress beyond the halfway line. There is a tendency to assume that stopping Messi requires an extraordinary individual performance, a defender glued to his shoulder or a series of desperate tackles. Spain needed none of that. Their greatest strength was that nobody looked as though they were doing anything extraordinary.

Jasprit Bumrah Misses Crucial Lord's ODIs Against England; Here's the Reason Behind Absence

New Delhi: India suffered a major setback ahead of the series-deciding third ODI against England at Lord's after pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was ruled out with a knee injury. Captain Shubman Gill confirmed Bumrah's absence at the toss on Sunday, revealing that the fast bowler had failed to recover in time for the contest at the Home of Cricket. "Boom misses out, he's unavailable due to some knee injury," Gill said. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) also clarified that Bumrah had sustained the injury while fielding during the second ODI in Cardiff. "Jasprit Bumrah had an impact injury on his left knee while fielding in the second ODI in Cardiff."



He was not available for selection for the third ODI due to reactive swelling in his left knee," the board said in a statement. Bumrah's absence comes as a significant blow for India, who are aiming to clinch their first ODI series win in England since 2014. The premier fast

bowler had returned to the national side in ODIs after nearly three years since the ODI World Cup final against Australia in November 2023. India made three changes to the side that lost the second ODI in Cardiff. KL Rahul replaced Shivam Dube in the batting line-up, while uncapped seamer Prince Yadav came in for the injured Washington Sundar. Arshdeep Singh also returned to the XI in place of Bumrah. England, meanwhile, made one change, bringing back pacer Josh Tongue in place of Saqib Mahmood as both teams looked to gain the upper hand in the decider. History is not on

India's side at Lord's. The visitors have not won an ODI at the iconic venue since their 23-run victory over England in 2004. Since then, India have lost three of their four ODIs at the ground, while the 2011 contest against England ended in a dramatic tie. Despite their struggles in the format at Lord's, India will take confidence from recent memories at the venue. Just a week ago, the Indian women's team scripted history by defeating England by 270 runs in the first-ever women's Test at the ground. Bumrah's absence will undoubtedly test India's bowling resources, particularly on a

surface expected to offer assistance to the seamers. India faces a major setback ahead of the series-deciding third ODI against England at Lords as key fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah is ruled out due to a knee injury sustained during the second ODI. Captain Shubman Gill confirmed Bumrah's absence, impacting India's bowling strength on a seamer-friendly pitch. India made multiple team changes, aiming to break a long-standing poor ODI record at Lords. England also adjusted their lineup for the crucial match. The game holds significance as India seeks their first ODI series win in England since 2014.

Yuvraj Singh Sends Strong Message to BCCI: Back Rohit-Kohli or Move On

New Delhi: Former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has urged the BCCI and team management to provide Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli with complete clarity over their ODI futures, insisting that players of their stature deserve to know whether they remain part of India's plans for the 2027 World Cup. Speaking to JioStar during the third ODI between India and England at Lord's, Yuvraj said the uncertainty surrounding the two batting greats reminded him of the final years of his own international career, when he felt he was left in the dark about his role in the side. "I have been in that position, which Rohit and Virat find themselves in. So, it's not fair for us to judge whether they should play. It's the team management, the coach and the selectors



who have to decide that," Yuvraj said. The former India star stressed that if the selectors want Rohit and Kohli to continue until the next World Cup, they must communicate that decision clearly and back them through difficult phases. "If you want them to play the World Cup, you have to put your hand on their shoulders and tell them, 'Guys, we want you to play the World Cup. We are back-

ing you all the way. Go out there and be yourselves. There is no stress that tomorrow, if you don't have a good series, that you're not going to be in the team,'" he added. The debate over the futures of Rohit and Kohli has intensified in recent months. Questions over Rohit's future resurfaced during India's tour of England, although BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia moved quickly to dismiss

reports suggesting that the Lord's ODI could be his final appearance in Indian colours. Reflecting on his own experiences, Yuvraj said uncertainty can place an unnecessary burden on senior players who have given years of service to the national team. "You need to have that clarity from the coach, captain and selectors, whoever it is. Because I did not have that clarity, and I thought that was not good for someone who had represented India for so many years," he said. The 44-year-old also called for honesty from the selectors as India build towards the next World Cup cycle. "And if someone isn't in your plans, be honest with them. It will be a hard call, it might look bad on the outside, but they'll appreciate that you said it to their face."

Ludhiana Girls Emerge State Swimming Champions After Stellar Performances Across Multiple Events This Season

Ludhiana: Ludhiana girls' team (11-12 years) clinched the title with an impressive all-round performance at the 37th Sub-Junior Punjab State Swimming Championship, held at Ferozepur on July 17 and 18. The boys' team ended second. Ludhiana girls dominated Group III, amassing 43 points to lift the championship trophy. Faridkot finished runners-up with 23 points. The district boys performed creditably, finishing runners-up with 37 points. Host Ferozepur won the title with 48 points. Jalandhar was adjudged the overall champion of the championship with an aggregate of 103 points with consistent performances across categories. For

Ludhiana, Peharreet Kaur Deol secured the third position in the 200m individual medley in girls' Group-II. Divyansh came out victorious in the same event in the boys' Group-III. Parsim Kaur Kainth won in the Group-III. Ludhiana quartet of Divyansh, Mansehajpreet Singh, Taresh Gupta and Tanish Gupta finished runners-up in the 4x50m freestyle relay in the boys' Group-III. In the girls' section, relay team comprising Navya Thakur, Mishika Mehra, Jinat Handa and Parsim Kaur Kainth secured top honours in the same discipline. In the boys' Group-III, Bhavishya Yug clinched bronze medals in 100m freestyle,



50m butterfly stroke and 50m breaststroke. Divyansh secured the gold medal in Group-III in 100m freestyle. In the girls' Group-III, Parsim Kaur Kainth walked away with the gold medal in 100m freestyle event. Palkin Jatin finished as second runner-up to claim the bronze medal in 50m butterfly stroke in the girls' Group-II. Earlier, Ferozepur MP Sher Singh Ghu-

baya inaugurated the championship. Office-bearers of the Punjab Swimming Association distributed the prizes. Ludhiana's young swimmers have created a new milestone by clinching the state swimming championship title after delivering impressive performances across multiple events this season. The girls showcased exceptional talent, determina-

tion, and consistency to dominate the competition and secure top honours. Competing against some of the best swimmers from across the state, the Ludhiana team produced strong displays in various categories, earning medals and valuable points. Their success was the result of months of rigorous training, disciplined preparation, and the guidance of their coaches.

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Owner by Printed & Published by YASH MEHTA and Printed from, NEXT MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT, 16 Dr Lal Mohan Bhattacharya Road Kolkata: 14, South 24 PGS, RNI. NO. WBENG/2012/47123, E-mail: editor.headlinesnow@gmail.com, Contact. No.: 9874454321 / 033 2725 1111, Editor- Nitu Rai, Sub-Editor- Arghyadeep Ganguly