

Modi at G7: Trust and international law crucial for global partnerships

Modi, Trump exchange handshakes at G7



New Delhi, June 16: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday told G7 leaders that global partnerships can succeed only when they are founded on trust, stressing that the world today suffers not from a shortage of resources but from a shortage of trust. Calling for renewed international solidarity in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, Modi said mutual trust is the most important strategic asset and warned that disregard for international law remains the biggest obstacle to building global cooperation, and highlighted that dialogue and diplomacy must be prioritised to ensure peace, stability and stronger international partnerships. The remarks came shortly after Modi was seen exchanging a handshake and a brief conversation with US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the summit.

The interaction, ahead of a scheduled bilateral meeting between the two leaders on Wednesday, drew attention amid ongoing discussions on trade, technology, security and geopolitical challenges. Addressing

the Outreach Session on "Forging New Partnerships and Rebuilding International Solidarity," Modi, seated next to Trump, said that while global interdependence has increased, confidence among nations has eroded. "In a world that is getting more interconnected and interdependent than ever before, this subject becomes all the more vital. But partnerships can succeed only when they are founded on trust," Modi said. "Mutual trust is the most important strategic asset today. But, sadly, today, the world does not suffer from a shortage of resources-- it suffers from a shortage of trust. And the future of our partnerships depends on rebuilding this trust," he said.

He also identified the "lack of respect for international law" as the biggest hurdle to building international solidarity and said it must be addressed as a priority. Emphasising the need for peaceful engagement in a volatile global environment, Modi said international partnerships must prioritise "dialogue and diplomacy" to ensure peace and stability. "We, in India, view the world as

one family. Our experience shows that development is most effective when it is connected to the aspirations of people," he said.

Modi cited a series of India-led global initiatives, including the International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and Global as examples of partnerships built around common goals and collective responsibility. A major focus of Modi's address was the need to redefine engagement with developing countries and the Global South. He said nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America were looking for equal partnerships rather than traditional aid arrangements. "The Global South has immense expectations from the world. More than support, it seeks partnership. We must move beyond the donor-recipient mindset and work as equal partners. We must walk together and not merely alongside one another. Partnerships must be linked to dignity, not dependency," he said. The session brought together leaders from the G7 and partner countries, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

On the sidelines of the summit, Modi also held talks with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who said negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) were making "very good progress" and expressed hope of concluding discussions by the G20 summit. Modi said India was enthusiastic about the agreement and identified energy security and technology as key areas for expanding bilateral cooperation.

GI tag for Tripura's tribal musical instrument 'Sarinda' Heritage Earns National Recognition



Guwahati, June 16: Tripura's traditional musical instrument "Sarinda" has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. Chief Minister Manik Saha broke the news on social media, calling the recognition a proud moment for Tripura's rich cultural heritage. "The Traditional #Tripura Sarinda, a unique indigenous string musical instrument, has received Geographical Indication recognition. The Tripura Sarinda will mark a significant step towards preserving and promoting the treasured folk tradition, which will also strengthen the rich cultural heritage of the state," Saha posted on X. "My heartiest congratulations to all the artisans/musicians involved in this creation," he further wrote.

An integral part of folk

music traditions, Tripura Sarinda is a bowed string musical instrument which is crafted from a single block of wood with a hollow resonator. It is closely associated with the state's indigenous communities, used during folk performances and other indigenous musical expressions, and known for its unique craftsmanship and cultural significance.

Locals believed that the recognition would help protect and promote this heritage musical instrument. With this achievement, Tripura now has four GI-tagged products. Earlier, Tripura Queen Pineapple, Risha/Pachra (Rignai), which is a traditional attire of the indigenous tribal communities; and Matabari Peda received GI tag recognition.

NDA moves MLAs to Ranchi hotel ahead of Rajya Sabha elections in Jharkhand

Ranchi, June 16: Ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections for two seats in Jharkhand, opposition NDA legislators were being shifted to a hotel in Ranchi, according to a source within the alliance. Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Babulal Marandi said they will hold meetings to chalk out a strategy for the elections on June 18. Asking if the MLAs would stay at the hotel for two days, he said, "We will hold meetings." The BJP leader exuded confidence in the victory of the BJP-backed Independent candidate Parimal Nathwani in one of the two Rajya Sabha seats in the state. A candidate



is required to secure a minimum of 28 first-preference votes to emerge victorious.

The BJP-led NDA does not have the numbers in the state assembly to make Nathwani a winner in the polls, unless there is cross-voting, a ruling

party legislator said. In the Jharkhand Assembly, the INDIA bloc has 56 members, comprising 34 from the JMM, 16 from the Congress, four from the RJD and two from CPI(M) Liberation.

The NDA has 24 MLAs -- 21 from the BJP and one each from the LJP (Ram Vilas), AJSU Party and the JD(U). The Jharkhand Loktantrik Krantikari Morcha has one MLA. One of the Rajya Sabha seats in the state fell vacant following the death of JMM co-founder Shibu Soren. The other vacancy is due to the completion of BJP member Deepak Prakash's tenure on June 21.

Pakistani Sikh Family's Deportation Stayed; Uttarakhand HC Seeks State Reply

Dehradun, June 16: The Uttarakhand High Court has stayed the deportation of a Pakistani Sikh family and granted the state government four weeks to file its response to a petition challenging the expulsion order. The case concerns Manjit Singh, a Pakistani national from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who has been living in Dehradun's Vasant Vihar area with his family since 2019 on a long-term visa. Singh approached the court after receiving a notice directing him and his family to leave India within 24 hours.

Hearing the matter on Tuesday, Justice Manoj Kumar Tiwari allowed the state additional time for verification and fixed August 11 as the next date of hearing. The court also extended interim protection against deportation until then, provided no evidence emerges indicating a threat to national security.

In his petition, Singh stated that his visa had been regularly extended and remains valid until December 2026. He argued that his family is well-settled in Dehradun, with his daughters

pursuing BTech and BDS courses, while his young son is still in school.

The state government cited security concerns, noting the family's residence near the headquarters of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. The matter will be reviewed further after the government files its response.



Cabinet Okays MSME Ordinance, Land Reforms, ₹5,100-Crore Education Initiative

Kohima, June 9: The Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday, approved a set of major policy decisions aimed at driving economic growth, improving governance, expanding employment, and strengthening public service delivery across the state. The Cabinet cleared the Arunachal Pradesh Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Facilitation of Establishment and Operation) Ordinance, 2026. The ordinance will cut compliance requirements and allow eligible MSMEs to start operations through self declaration. Officials said the move will improve ease of doing business, boost entrepreneurship, attract investment, and create jobs.

Reviewing the “Shikshat Bharat to Shikshat Arunachal” Mission, the Cabinet noted that ₹3,612.50 crore was invested in Phase-I from 2023 to 2026. With ₹1,500 crore planned for Phase-II, total spending will cross ₹5,100 crore by 2029. Key gains include school network rationalization from 2,890 to 1,885 schools, implementation of the Arunachal Pradesh Transfer and Posting Act, 2026, digital governance platforms, better CBSE results, and improved national rankings. The government reported the construction and upgradation of 50 Golden Jubilee Schools, 90 PM Shri Schools, over 120 hostels, 152 science laboratories, 159 libraries, more than 400 sanitation facilities, 300 PM Poshan kitchens, 180 staff quarters and distributed over 75,000 textbooks in ten tribal languages, alongside initiatives to strengthen Bhoti language



education.

The Cabinet amended the Arunachal Pradesh Land Settlement and Records Rules, 2012. Agricultural land within notified Master Plan areas will now be automatically deemed converted to the land use specified in the Master Plan. This is expected to reduce delays for landowners and support planned urban growth. Under the Chief Minister’s Comprehensive State Rural Road Development Programme (CM-CSRRDP), the government will build all-weather roads to all unconnected habitations with populations below 250 by 2029. The plan targets 1,129 habitations through 6,567 km of roads with an outlay of ₹2,000 crore over three years. The Arunachal Pradesh Cooperation Policy, 2026, aligned with the National Cooperation Policy, 2025, was approved to improve digital governance, market access, and opportunities

in agriculture and allied sectors.

For job aspirants, the Cabinet extended the one time upper age relaxation by one more year. This covers candidates who applied for APPSC exams advertised in 2022 but became ineligible due to delays. Amendments to APSSB Rules, 2018 will allow serving or retired organised service officers with 20 years of service and Super Time Scale status to be appointed as APSSB Chairman. Retired appointees will serve for five years or until age 65.

The Cabinet also approved regularization of contractual services of erstwhile RMSA Trained Graduate Teachers against 74 vacancies through a Departmental Promotion Committee, offering job security to eligible teachers. With a focus on inclusive education and capacity building, the government has appointed 150 Special Education Teachers and trained more than 7,000 stakeholders in the education sector. The tenure of the Arunachal Pradesh Administrative Reforms Commission was extended by six months. Divisional Commissioners will be added as ex-officio members and the Member Secretary post will be upgraded. Recruitment rules for Aviation Officers and Horticulture Department posts were also amended to improve manpower and service delivery.

The Aalo West Division of PWD will be created by re designating an existing establishment, aiming to speed up project execution without added cost. Labour rules were amended to align with the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.

Sikkim: Fire Guts Temple In Jorethang; Probe Ordered



New Delhi, June 16:

Gangtok, June 16: A devastating fire broke out at the Sri Satya Sai Nilayam Mandir in Jorethang, Namchi district, during the early hours of Tuesday, leaving significant damage to the revered temple’s interior. The blaze, which erupted around 3 am, quickly spread through parts of the structure before fire and emergency personnel arrived to contain it. Authorities confirmed that the temple, a prominent place of worship in the region, suffered exten-

sive losses despite the swift response of the emergency services. Firefighters managed to bring the flames under control after receiving an alert, preventing the situation from escalating further.

Police have ordered a probe to determine the cause of the incident, as the temple community and local residents expressed shock over the sudden destruction. The investigation is expected to shed light on whether electrical faults or other factors triggered the blaze.

Sikkim: Fire Guts Temple In Jorethang; Probe Ordered



Manipur, June 16: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) at the Manipur Secretariat to review ongoing efforts and strengthen measures against drug trafficking and substance abuse in the state. The meeting was attended by Home Minister K. Govindas Singh, Director General of Police Rajiv Singh, the Security Adviser to the Government of Manipur, senior police officials, and representatives of various security agencies, including the Assam Rifles, Border Security Force (BSF), and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). During the meeting, the Chief Minister reviewed strategies aimed at enhancing intelligence gathering, information sharing, inter-agency coordination, and enforcement mechanisms to curb the trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Emphasising the need for a coordinated and sustained approach, Khemchand Singh reiterated the state government’s commitment to dismantling drug trafficking networks and intensifying action against individuals and groups involved in the illegal drug trade.

The meeting also discussed measures to strengthen cooperation among law enforcement and security agencies to effectively tackle the drug menace and prevent substance abuse, particularly among the youth. Officials deliberated on ways to improve operational coordination and enforcement capabilities as part of the state’s ongoing anti-drug campaign.

Reaffirming the government’s resolve to build a drug-free Manipur, the Chief Minister stated that the fight against narcotics would continue through stronger enforcement, enhanced institutional coordination, and public awareness initiatives.

The NCORD meeting reviewed the progress of existing anti-drug measures and explored additional strategies to address emerging challenges related to drug trafficking and substance abuse in the state.

Tripura Village Polls Scheduled

Agartala, June 16: Tipra Motha Party supremo Pradyot Kishore Debbarma on Tuesday said that long-pending elections to Village Committees under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) are likely to be held in September this year. Debbarma said the Tripura State Election Commission has informed the Supreme Court through an affidavit that it is ready to conduct the polls, which have been delayed for nearly a decade. He called the development a “victory for democratic rights” of the people. According to the proposed schedule, the election process may begin in early September, with polling likely on September 27 and counting on October 3. The entire process is expected to conclude by October 5. The elections will be held for 2,600 seats across 587 Village Committees, which function as grassroots local bodies in TTAADC areas. Debbarma urged party workers to work for the welfare of the Tiprasa community.

Himanta Biswa Sarma Expands Clean Fuel Network with PNG, CNG Projects

Guwahati, June 16: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday virtually inaugurated key natural gas infrastructure projects, including the commencement of Piped Natural Gas (PNG) supply in Mangaldai and new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) facilities in Tezpur.

The projects, implemented by North East Gas Distribution Company Limited (NEGDC), are aimed at expanding access to cleaner fuel for households, commercial establishments and vehicles across the state.

The expansion is expected to strengthen Assam’s energy infrastructure, reduce dependence on conventional fuels and support the state’s transition towards cleaner and more

sustainable sources of energy. Later in the day, the Chief Minister reviewed the functioning of the Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL) and assessed the progress of key projects in the power sector.

During the review, Sarma examined the state’s power generation capacity, peak-hour demand and ongoing modernisation initiatives. He also reviewed measures aimed at reducing Transmission and Distribution (T&D) losses to ensure reliable and affordable electricity supply across Assam.

The Chief Minister further took stock of ongoing efforts to strengthen power infrastructure and improve service delivery in the sector.



Shopsy launches AI-powered app to target Gen Z and Bharat shoppers



Guwahati: Flipkart-owned Shopsy has launched a new AI-powered version of its shopping app, transforming the hypervalue platform into a gamified and engagement-led commerce destination aimed at Gen Z consumers and Bharat's next 100 million online shoppers.

The company said the new platform has been designed for young and value-conscious consumers across metros and tier-2 and smaller cities, where much of India's

new online shopper growth is taking place. According to a Bain & Company report cited by the company, nearly 65 per cent of new shopper growth is now coming from tier-2+ cities, while Gen Z accounts for around 40-45 per cent of India's e-retail market.

The revamped app combines AI-powered personalization, video-led product discovery and gamification features. Users can earn SuperCoins through app logins, streaks and in-app games, which can later be redeemed during purchases. The platform also uses AI-based search and regional discovery tools to provide a more localized shopping experience.

Balaji Thiagarajan, Chief Technology and Product Officer at Flipkart, said Gen Z shoppers prefer immersive

and interactive shopping experiences driven by videos and engagement.

The company said the platform will also benefit MSMEs and small sellers by offering video-enabled catalogues, AI-powered listing tools and a zero-commission marketplace model to improve product visibility and sales.

The development could also strengthen the e-commerce ecosystem in Guwahati, where digital shopping adoption has been rising steadily among young consumers. Retailers and small businesses in Guwahati are increasingly turning to online platforms to reach wider customer bases, and AI-led discovery tools and low-cost seller models may create fresh opportunities for regional entrepreneurs and local manufacturers.

Zeptofiles ₹8,010 crore IPO papers with SEBI amid rapid quick commerce growth

Guwahati: Zepto Limited has filed its Updated Draft Red Herring Prospectus-I (UDRHP-I) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for an Initial Public Offering (IPO), marking a major step for one of India's fastest-growing quick commerce platforms. The proposed IPO comprises a fresh issue of shares worth up to ₹8,010 crore and an offer for sale of up to 11.34 crore equity shares with a face value of ₹5 each. The company plans to use the proceeds from the fresh issue to expand its dark store network, fund lease rentals for existing facilities, invest in technology and cloud infrastructure, support marketing and brand promotion through Zepto Marketplace Private Limited, and pursue inorganic growth opportunities, including acquisitions.

According to a Redseer Report, Zepto was the fastest-growing quick commerce platform in India in terms of order volume among scaled players between Fiscal 2024 and Fiscal 2026, recording a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 119.5%. As of March 31, 2026, the company operated 1,139 dark stores and listed an average of 46,623 stock-keeping units (SKUs) across categories ranging from groceries to electronics.

For Fiscal 2026, Zepto reported net revenue of ₹22,623.58 crore and Net Revenue Value (NRV) of ₹24,815.54 crore. The platform served 47.97 million annual transacting users, while advertisement revenue stood at ₹1,635.73 crore. During the quarter ended March 2026, Zepto processed an average of nearly four million units daily and delivered about 2.33 million orders per day through a network of over 286,000 active delivery partners.

In Guwahati, the continued expansion of quick commerce platforms is reshaping consumer buying patterns in Northeast India. Growing demand for faster deliveries of groceries, household products and daily essentials is expected to create opportunities for logistics, warehousing and technology-linked businesses in the Guwahati market, which is increasingly emerging as a key consumption hub for the region. The company's equity shares are proposed to be listed on the BSE and NSE. Axis Capital, Morgan Stanley India, Goldman Sachs (India) Securities, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India), JM Financial and IIFL Capital Services are acting as the book running lead managers to the issue.

Assam's concert economy could unlock ₹700 crore in economic value over five years

Mumbai: Assam's emerging live entertainment sector has the potential to generate more than ₹700 crore in cumulative economic impact over the next five years, according to a new report released by BookMyShow, Assam Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (ATDC) and EY-Parthenon. The report, The Assam Blueprint: Turning Live Music Economy into a Tourism Multiplier, positions Assam as a case study in how live entertainment can evolve into a powerful economic growth engine.

The analysis uses Post Malone's first-ever India solo headline concert in Guwahati in December 2025 as a benchmark. The event generated an estimated ₹43 crore in economic impact, including ₹32 crore in direct spending within As-



sam and nearly ₹5 crore in GST revenue. Despite airline disruptions, the concert drew more than 20,000 attendees, with 53 per cent travelling from outside Guwahati and representing over 200 cities and towns across India.

A key finding of the report is the sector's strong multiplier effect. For every ₹100 spent on tickets, visitors spent an addi-

tional ₹899 on accommodation, travel, dining, shopping and local services. Hotels recorded a 30 per cent rise in occupancy, transport demand increased by over 50 per cent, while restaurants, cafés and retail outlets reported significant gains in footfall and sales. The report also highlights wider economic spillovers. Around 2,500 personnel were employed across security, hospitality, logistics, production and venue management, while local businesses participated in staging, branding, food and beverage, infrastructure, payments and sustainability operations. Visitors also travelled to destinations such as Kaziranga National Park, Majuli, Kamakhya Temple and Sivasagar, extending tourism benefits beyond Guwahati.

According to the report, Assam's Concert Tourism Policy, single-window facilitation through ATDC, infrastructure investments, hospitality expansion and development of local talent ecosystems are creating the conditions for sustained growth. Guwahati recorded a 188 per cent increase in live-event footfalls in 2025 and hosted 55 ticketed events, underlining the city's growing role in India's experience economy. With global acts such as Guns N' Roses scheduled to perform in Guwahati on November 17, 2026, the report concludes that Assam is increasingly positioning itself as a strategic entertainment and tourism hub, offering a replicable blueprint for regional economic development through live entertainment.

TVS Apache RTR 310 presented to India's fastest sprinter Gurindervir Singh



Guwahati: TVS Motor Company on Wednesday presented a TVS Apache RTR 310, the fastest street performance motorcycle in the Apache lineup, to India's fastest 100m sprinter Gurindervir Singh in recognition of his sporting achievements.

The company said the gesture celebrates a shared commitment to speed, precision and excellence, bringing together India's fastest athlete and the fastest TVS Apache motorcycle. Gurindervir recently created history in Indian athletics by clocking 10.09 seconds in the men's 100m race at the Federation Cup, setting a new national benchmark. TVS Apache, which has built a global community of over 6.5 million customers across 90 countries, said the Apache RTR 310 represents the brand's performance-focused DNA, drawing from over four decades of TVS Racing heritage. The motorcycle is designed with a lightweight architecture, agile handling characteristics and streetfighter styling aimed at performance enthusiasts.

Vimal Sumbly, Head Business - Premium, TVS Motor Company, said the association reflects the shared philosophy of constantly pushing limits. "Mr. Gurindervir Singh's commitment to excellence mirrors our own, making this more than an association. It is the coming together of two icons of speed," he said.

Expressing gratitude, Gurindervir Singh said the Apache RTR 310 embodies the values he pursues on the track, including speed, precision and the determination to improve continuously.

The recognition could further strengthen the appeal of premium performance motorcycles among young buyers. In Guwahati, where demand for sports and performance-oriented motorcycles has been steadily rising, such brand-athlete associations are expected to boost interest in premium offerings like the Apache RTR 310 among enthusiasts and aspiring riders.

SARTHI to chart roadmap for reforms in India's ITI ecosystem

Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) will convene the first meeting of the Strategic Advisory and Reforms Taskforce for Holistic ITI Transformation (SARTHI) on June 12 at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi, marking a significant step towards strengthening India's vocational training ecosystem. The meeting will be chaired by Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education. Senior representatives from the Centre, States, industry, regulatory bodies and the skilling ecosystem are expected to participate in discussions on the future of vocational education and training in the country.

Established as an apex advisory mechanism under the Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS), SARTHI aims to create a structured platform for policy convergence, strategic dialogue and coordinated action. The initiative seeks to strengthen Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and align vocational training with evolving industry require-

ments and future workforce needs. CTS currently operates through a network of 13,888 ITIs, including 3,326 government and 10,562 private institutes, offering training in 169 NSQF-compliant trades. During the inaugural meeting, members will discuss reforms related to curriculum, assessment, governance, quality assurance, instructor development, women's participation, industry linkages and the National ITI Grading Framework. In Guwahati, stakeholders in Assam and the Northeast are expected to closely follow the outcomes of SARTHI, as stronger ITI reforms could help bridge regional skill gaps, improve employability and create a workforce better suited to the growing needs of sectors such as manufacturing, infrastructure, logistics and services in the region.

MSDE said SARTHI will serve as a long-term institutional mechanism to promote Centre-State coordination, industry participation and informed policymaking for a future-ready, inclusive and outcome-oriented vocational training system.



India sends 14 skilled workers to Mauritius under mobility partnership



Guwahati: The Government of India on Wednesday sent a fresh batch of 14 skilled workers to Mauritius under the India-Mauritius Government-to-Government (G2G) Labour Mobility Framework, marking another step in expanding overseas employment opportunities for Indian youth through a structured and transparent mechanism.

The workers were flagged off by Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education. The departure follows the successful placement of the first batch of Indian workers already employed in Mauritius under the programme. Officials said another 33 candidates are currently undergoing work permit and documentation procedures.

Addressing the candidates, Chaudhary said Indian professionals are increasingly being recognised globally for their talent, professionalism and adaptability. He said trusted government-to-government partnerships are helping create safe and aspirational pathways for international employment while ensuring worker welfare.

The initiative is being implemented under the Memorandum of Understanding on Employment of Workers signed between India and Mauritius in May 2023. The selected candidates come from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab, bringing experience in retail, logistics, hospitality, customer service and technical trades.

Facilitated by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), the programme supports recruitment for Super U Mauritius, a leading retail chain. The workers will be employed in retail operations, inventory management, food preparation and electrical maintenance under three-year contracts offering annual compensation of around ₹4 lakh to ₹4.5 lakh along with accommodation, transport, medical coverage and other benefits.

In Guwahati, the initiative highlights growing international demand for skilled Indian workers and may encourage more youth from Assam and the Northeast to pursue industry-aligned skill training. Experts believe such overseas employment opportunities could boost interest in vocational education and create new pathways for workforce mobility from the region.

The flag-off event was also attended by Shri Niranjana Kumar Sudhansu, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, along with other officials associated with the programme.

Sudarshan Venu hails PM Modi's tenure as transformational for India's growth

Guwahati: TVS Motor Company Chairman Sudarshan Venu has congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on becoming the longest-serving Prime Minister of India, describing his tenure as a period of transformative growth, inclusive development and far-reaching reforms that have reshaped the country's economic and social landscape.

In a statement, Venu said the last 12 years under Modi's leadership had marked a paradigm shift for India, driven by fast-paced growth, societal upliftment and long-term policy initia-

tives. He noted that the government's focus on development and reform had strengthened the foundations of the Indian economy while ensuring broader participation in the country's growth story.

"We applaud Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi for becoming the longest serving Prime Minister of India. His tenure has been a paradigm shift. The last twelve years have been transformational with fast paced growth, inclusive development, societal upliftment and long term reforms," Venu said.

Škoda accelerates premium SUV strategy with launch of all-new Kodiaq RS

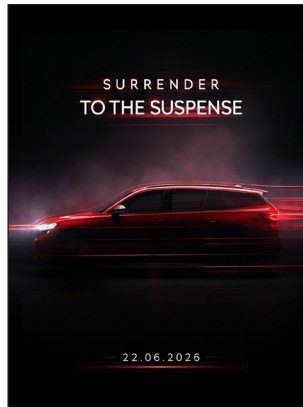
Guwahati: Škoda Auto India has strengthened its premium performance vehicle portfolio with the announcement of the all-new Kodiaq RS, marking the arrival of the brand's first-ever seven-seater SUV in India to carry the iconic RS badge. Bookings for the high-performance luxury SUV will open on June 22, 2026.

The Kodiaq RS combines motorsport-inspired performance, seven-seat luxury and enhanced all-terrain capability through a 4x4 drivetrain. The launch builds on Škoda's more than 50 years of RS heritage and over 125 years of motorsport legacy, reinforcing the company's strategy of differentiating itself in the premium SUV segment.

Ashish Gupta, Brand Director, Škoda Auto India, said the RS badge enjoys a loyal following among Indian enthusiasts. "The latest Octavia RS, launched last year, sold out in just 20 minutes. With the Kodiaq RS, our quickest Škoda yet in India, we are taking that legacy forward by blending performance, space and 4x4 capability into a bold expression of our racing DNA," he said.

The launch also highlights Škoda's strong

motorsport credentials. Recently, the company's entire India lineup—including the Kylaq, Kushaq, Slavia, Kodiaq and limited-volume Octavia RS—set an India and Asia Book of Records mark for the fastest multi-car relay by a single manufacturer on a circuit, clocking a combined lap time of 12:30.97 at the CoASTT track in Coimbatore.



In Guwahati, the arrival of the Kodiaq RS is expected to generate interest among affluent SUV buyers seeking a blend of luxury, performance and all-weather capability. With growing demand for premium SUVs in Northeast India and challenging terrain across the region, the model's seven-seat practicality and 4x4 technology could strengthen Škoda's position in the market.

Globally, Škoda delivered more than 1.04 million vehicles in 2025 and continues its Next Level Škoda Strategy, targeting a position among Europe's top three best-selling brands. In India, the company recorded a 107 per cent year-on-year growth in 2025 with sales of 72,665 vehicles and currently operates across 185 cities through more than 335 customer touchpoints.

Godrej launches toolkit to promote LGBTQIA+ inclusion in manufacturing workplaces

Guwahati: Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL) has launched 'Pride in Manufacturing', a first-of-its-kind toolkit aimed at promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusion in India's manufacturing sector, where conversations around workplace diversity have traditionally remained limited.

The toolkit was unveiled simultaneously at GCPL's headquarters in Mumbai and at its manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu by the company's senior leadership. Developed in partnership with Transformis, an Inclusion and Diversity consulting firm, and Ashoka University student Antara Roy Chowdhury, the toolkit seeks to help organizations create safer, more equitable and inclusive workplaces for LGBTQIA+ employees. According to GCPL, an estimated 45.4 million people in India identify as LGBTQIA+, yet workplace inclusion remains a challenge, with 34 per cent citing personal safety concerns as a barrier to openly expressing their identity at work. The toolkit combines legal guidance, industry insights, workplace practices and real-life scenarios to support leaders, managers and employees in fostering cultures of dignity, respect and belonging.

Speaking at the launch, Sudhir Sitapati, MD and CEO of GCPL, said inclusion is not merely a programme but a belief system rooted in dignity, respect and equal rights. Vaibhav Ram, Global Head-HR at GCPL, said the company's Chengalpattu plant currently has 3 per cent LGBTQIA+ representation and continues to strengthen its inclusion efforts.

In Guwahati, the initiative reflects a growing focus among Indian companies on workplace diversity beyond metropolitan corporate offices. With manufacturing and industrial activities expanding across the Northeast, experts believe inclusive workforce policies could help companies attract a wider talent pool, improve employee retention and align with evolving social and corporate governance standards. The toolkit may also encourage manufacturers in the region to adopt more structured diversity and inclusion practices.

The launch forms part of GCPL's broader Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy aimed at building workplace cultures where every individual can participate, contribute and thrive.

Godrej Enterprises marks 25 years of Chennai facility, expands warehousing capabilities

Guwahati: Godrej Enterprises Group (GEG) has marked the 25th anniversary of its Chennai manufacturing facility and announced continued investments in its Chennai and Bengaluru plants to strengthen automation, innovation and next-generation warehousing infrastructure in India.

The company said the Chennai facility has evolved into a major manufacturing and engineering hub over the past two and a half decades, supporting India's growing logistics and warehousing sector. Backed by more than 70 years of expertise in intralogistics, the business is focusing on automation-led manufacturing, precision engineering and digital design-to-delivery systems to meet rising demand from e-commerce, quick commerce and manufacturing industries. According to the company, the facility is among the largest intralogistics manufacturing units in the region and produces high-precision systems that support automated and high-density warehousing operations. The investments are expected to improve execution speed, precision and scalability for large-scale projects.

Vikas Choudaha, Business Head, Storage Solutions, Godrej Enterprises Group, said the warehousing sector is witnessing strong growth, with annual absorption crossing nearly 39 million sq. ft. He noted that one in every three warehouses in India is powered by Godrej racking solutions and that the business has recorded a CAGR of 17 per cent over the past five years.

In Guwahati, the expansion is significant as the Northeast is increasingly emerging as a logistics and distribution gateway for trade with Southeast Asia. Growing warehousing demand in and around Guwahati is expected to benefit from advanced storage and automation solutions that improve supply-chain efficiency and support regional industrial growth. The company exports intralogistics solutions to more than 40 countries across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, ASEAN and Australia, and said it will continue focusing on automation, digital transformation and sustainability to strengthen India's supply-chain competitiveness.

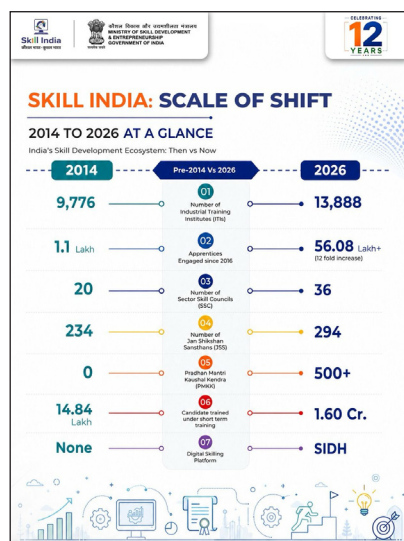


Skill India completes 12 years, expands skilling ecosystem across the country

Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) on Thursday marked twelve years of Skills, Scale and Transformation, highlighting the growth of one of the world's largest skilling ecosystems and its contribution to India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The ministry said it has built a comprehensive framework integrating vocational education, industry-led training, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship development, digital skilling and international workforce mobility. Over the past decade, the number of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) has increased from 9,776 in 2014 to more than 13,888 across the country. More than 56.08 lakh apprentices have been engaged since 2016, while over 1.64 crore youth have been trained under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Jayant Chaudhary, said skills have emerged as a key driver of opportunity, productivity and economic transformation. He said the ministry is preparing



India's youth for emerging jobs through stronger industry partnerships, digital innovation, entrepreneurship support and global mobility pathways.

The ministry has also strengthened entrepreneurship development, with over 25 lakh beneficiaries trained under Entrepreneurship Development Programmes. The Skill India Digital Hub has regis-

tered more than 1.5 crore candidates and offers over 1,000 courses in 23 languages. Programmes focused on artificial intelligence have recorded over 4.5 lakh enrolments.

In Guwahati, industry stakeholders and training institutions in Assam have increasingly focused on skill development in sectors such as information technology, logistics, tourism and services. Experts believe the expansion of digital skilling platforms and apprenticeship opportunities could help improve employability among youth in the region and support local businesses seeking a skilled workforce.

India's global skills profile has also improved, with its ranking at WorldSkills competitions rising from 29th in 2015 to 13th in 2024. The ministry has further announced 30 Skill India International Centres and is expanding international workforce mobility initiatives. Going forward, the ministry said it will continue to focus on quality training, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship and future-ready skills in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds introduces Nuwa collection for modern diamond jewellery lovers



Mumbai: Consumers looking for elegant and contemporary diamond jewellery have a new option to explore as Malabar Gold & Diamonds has launched NUWA, a natural diamond collection inspired by the beauty and patterns found in nature.

The collection celebrates modern luxury through natural diamonds and draws inspiration from nature's finest creations, including stripes, honeycombs, fluid formations and organic patterns shaped by the earth. Crafted in 18kt and 14kt gold, NUWA combines natural diamonds with coloured gemstones, ceramic colour enamelling and multi-tone rhodium finishes to create distinctive designs with a global appeal. According to the company, the collection has been designed for women who appreciate understated luxury and meaningful design. Each piece blends intricate detailing with fluid forms, offering jewellery that is versatile enough for both everyday wear and special occasions.

Adding to the collection's appeal, acclaimed actress Kareena Kapoor Khan continues as the face of NUWA. Malabar Gold & Diamonds said her elegance, confidence and individuality reflect the collection's focus on modern femininity and timeless sophistication. Commenting on the launch, M. P. Ahammad, Chairman of Malabar Group, said the collection was inspired by the intricate textures and formations that quietly shape the natural world. "With Nuwa, we wanted to translate that beauty into a contemporary diamond collection that feels sophisticated, versatile and relevant to today's woman," he said.

With the launch of NUWA, Malabar Gold & Diamonds continues to expand its natural diamond portfolio through a blend of craftsmanship, design innovation and contemporary luxury.

Tetley highlights role of L-Carnitine and green tea in supporting weight management

New Delhi: Tetley has highlighted the role of L-Carnitine and green tea in supporting fat utilisation and weight management as part of everyday wellness routines, positioning its Green Tea Slim Care range as a practical option for health-conscious consumers.

According to the company, L-Carnitine is a nutrient involved in energy production by transporting long-chain fatty acids into the mitochondria, where they are utilised for energy. The nutrient is naturally found in foods such as dairy products and is also produced by the human body from the amino acids lysine and methionine.

Scientific evidence indicates that L-Carnitine can support the utilisation of stored

body fat when combined with a balanced diet and regular physical activity. Tetley said that when paired with green tea, the ingredient complements daily routines and may help support the overall weight management process.

Responding to growing consumer interest in healthier lifestyle choices, Tetley Green Tea Slim Care incorporates added L-Carnitine into premium green tea blends. The company said the variants are designed for regular consumption, encouraging consistency through a familiar beverage format rather than promoting quick-fix solutions.

In Guwahati, demand for wellness-focused beverages and functional drinks has been rising as consumers increasing-



ly seek products that fit into their daily health routines. Industry observers note that green tea continues to gain popularity in the city, with products offering additional health-supporting ingredients attracting interest among fitness-conscious and urban consumers.

ICICI Prudential launches ULIP with guaranteed maturity benefit and life cover

Imphal: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched ICICI Pru Signature Secure, claiming it to be the Indian life insurance industry's first Unit Linked Insurance Plan (ULIP) with an in-built guaranteed maturity benefit. The new product combines guaranteed returns, life cover and tax-efficient wealth creation within a single investment solution.

ICICI Pru Signature Secure is a non-participating linked individual savings life insurance plan aimed at customers seeking assured outcomes along with market-linked growth potential. Under the plan, customers make a one-time investment, receive life cover throughout



the policy term and get a maturity benefit after five years. At maturity, policyholders receive the higher of the fund value or the guaranteed maturity benefit.

According to the company, the

product offers a guaranteed maturity benefit of up to 140 per cent of the initial premium paid. It also comes with zero premium allocation charges and policy administration charges.

Explaining the offering, Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said customers increasingly seek better post-tax returns alongside financial protection. He said the product addresses this demand by combining ULIP benefits, guaranteed maturity value and life insurance cover in a single proposition.

For example, a 45-year-old customer investing ₹5 lakh can opt for a life cover of ₹6.25 lakh and receive a guaranteed maturity benefit of ₹7 lakh.

In Imphal, growing awareness

of long-term savings and insurance-linked investment products in Manipur is driving demand for solutions that combine protection with wealth creation. Products offering guaranteed benefits and tax efficiency are expected to attract salaried professionals, business owners and first-time investors in the Imphal market seeking stable and predictable financial outcomes.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance reported a claim settlement ratio of 99.3 per cent with an average turnaround time of 1.1 days in FY2026. As of March 31, 2026, the company managed assets worth ₹3.14 lakh crore and had a total in-force sum assured of ₹46.11 lakh crore.



Vedanta marks historic milestone with four new listings on BSE and NSE

Guwahati: Vedanta Group on Monday created corporate history by listing four newly demerged companies simultaneously on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and National Stock Exchange (NSE), marking one of the largest restructuring exercises in India's corporate sector.

The newly listed entities — Vedanta Aluminium, Vedanta Oil & Gas, Vedanta Iron & Steel and Vedanta Power — began trading alongside Vedanta Limited, the Group's flagship listed company. The move is aimed at creating focused sector-specific businesses and unlocking shareholder value across strategic industries including aluminium, oil and gas, power, iron and steel, and critical minerals.

Speaking at the listing ceremony, Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal described the occasion as a historic moment for the company and India's industrial future. He said the newly independent businesses are positioned to support the country's ambitions in manufacturing, infrastructure, energy security and self-reliance. Agarwal highlighted that Vedanta had delivered over 300 per cent total shareholder returns in the last five years and said the new entities would help bridge India's growing demand-supply gap in minerals, metals and ener-



gy resources.

The company outlined ambitious expansion plans across its businesses. Vedanta Aluminium aims to double production capacity, Vedanta Oil & Gas plans investments of about US\$5 billion to increase output, Vedanta Iron & Steel targets significant capacity expansion, while Vedanta Power plans to scale generation capacity from 4.2 GW to 20 GW.

In Guwahati, the restructuring could attract strong investor interest from the Northeast, particularly as Vedanta Oil & Gas expands operations in Assam and the region. Market participants believe the separate listings will provide investors with greater sector-specific investment opportunities while boosting confidence in resource and infrastructure-linked businesses that are expected to benefit from India's long-term growth story.

JICA-backed highway projects boost connectivity in Northeast

Shillong: Major National Highway projects supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) marked a significant milestone in Northeast India's infrastructure development as foundation stones were laid and completed stretches dedicated to the nation in Meghalaya on Monday.

The ceremony at Polo Ground, Shillong, was led by Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Jairam Gadkari and presided over by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma. The event was attended by senior state leaders, Members of Parliament, Japanese Embassy officials and JICA representatives.

Among the six highway projects inaugurated in Meghalaya, JICA is financing three major corridors with a total investment of ₹1,592 crore under the Northeast Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project. These include the Dhubri-Phulbari Bridge to Selsella Simbulkolgre section (NH-127B), the Selsella Simbulkolgre to Goeragre stretch (NH-127B), and the Shillong-Dawki Road project.

The projects are expected to improve interstate connectivity, facilitate cross-border trade with Bangladesh, reduce travel time, enhance road safety, lower vehicle operating costs and support sustainable development through reduced greenhouse gas emissions. The Shillong-Dawki corridor, which links India with Bangladesh near Tamabill, includes an upgraded four-lane stretch from Rilbong Junction to Pomlum, improving traffic flow in Upper Shillong. In Shillong, improved highway infrastructure is expected to strengthen trade and logistics, ease the movement of goods and tourists, and enhance commercial activity. Better connectivity with Assam, West Bengal and Bangladesh could create new opportunities for businesses, hospitality operators and transport services in the state capital.

JICA India Chief Representative TAKEUCHI Takuro said the projects would create opportunities for jobs, businesses and improved livelihoods while promoting sustainable and inclusive growth across the region.

Xiaomi launches FX Mini LED TV series with Fire TV built-in in India

Guwahati: Xiaomi India has announced the availability of its new Xiaomi TV FX Mini LED Series with Fire TV built-in, expanding its smart television portfolio with a range designed to deliver an enhanced home entertainment experience. The series is available in 43-inch, 55-inch, 65-inch and 75-inch variants and combines QD Mini LED display technology, immersive audio features and smart connectivity options.

According to the company, the new lineup integrates Quantum Dot Mini LED technology, 4K Ultra HD resolution, HDR10+, Filmmaker Mode and Xiaomi's Vivid Picture Engine 2 to offer improved colour accuracy, contrast and picture clarity. The televisions also feature MEMC, Auto Low Latency Mode (ALLM) and DLG 120Hz support on select models to improve gaming and sports viewing experiences. The series comes with Fire TV built-in, enabling access to streaming platforms such as Netflix, Prime Video and YouTube from a single interface. Alexa voice control, personalised profiles, parental controls, AirPlay 2, Miracast, Bluetooth audio output and HDMI CEC support are also included.

Commenting on the launch, Sandeep Singh Arora, Chief Business Officer, Xiaomi India, said the new series brings advanced display technology, immersive audio and smart features together while making premium technology more accessible. Sayantani Choudhuri, Head of Fire TV, Amazon India, said the integration of Fire TV and Alexa transforms televi-



sions into entertainment and smart-home hubs.

In Guwahati, the launch is expected to strengthen competition in the premium smart TV segment, where demand for larger screens, streaming-focused devices and connected home entertainment solutions has been steadily rising. Retailers in the city are witnessing growing consumer interest in feature-rich televisions, particularly during festive and promotional sales periods.

The Xiaomi TV FX Mini LED Series is available through Mi.com, Amazon.in, Xiaomi retail stores and offline partners. Launch prices start at ₹29,999 for the 43-inch model, ₹39,999 for the 55-inch variant, ₹59,999 for the 65-inch model and ₹79,999 for the 75-inch version, including bank offers of up to ₹3,000.

SARTHI initiative aims to make India's ITIs industry-ready

Guwahati: In a move aimed at strengthening India's workforce pipeline and supporting future economic growth, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) on Thursday convened the first meeting of the Strategic Advisory and Reforms Taskforce for Holistic ITI Transformation (SARTHI) at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi.

Chaired by Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary, the meeting brought together ministers from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh, along with senior officials and stakeholders from the skilling ecosystem. Established under the Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS), SARTHI will serve as an apex advisory platform to drive evidence-based reforms and strengthen Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) across the country.

Addressing the meeting, Chaudhary said skilling reforms must remain closely linked to

emerging sectors, industry demand and learner aspirations. He said the objective is to build a dynamic and aspirational ITI ecosystem while ensuring that policy reforms translate into high-quality employment opportunities for young people. The discussions focused on improving institutional performance, quality assurance, assessment systems, technology adoption, industry engagement, entrepreneurship, governance reforms and expanding access to vocational education, particularly for women. Members also deliberated on strengthening pathways between education, skilling and employment. In Guwahati, industry players across Assam and the Northeast have been increasingly seeking job-ready talent in manufacturing, services, logistics and emerging technology sectors. Stakeholders believe that stronger industry-linked ITIs and modernised vocational training can help address skill gaps, improve employability and support business expansion in the region's growing economy.

LPL gets major boost as promoters secure multimillion-dollar funding ahead of Season 6

Mumbai: The Lanka Premier League (LPL) has received a significant financial boost ahead of its sixth season, with promoters Innovative Production Group FZ, LLC (IPG) announcing a multimillion-dollar strategic funding arrangement through a partnership with a Nasdaq-listed entity.

The development comes just weeks before Season 6 of the LPL is scheduled to begin on July 10. IPG has completed its strategic all-stock merger with Flash Sports & Media, Inc., bringing its portfolio of T20 league commercial rights, including the LPL, to the

Nasdaq-listed platform UGRO (NASDAQ: UGRO).

The move places IPG and the leagues under its management within a publicly governed structure aimed at accelerating growth and expansion. Backed by the new institutional framework, IPG plans to invest USD 20 million over the next two years to further strengthen and expand the LPL.

While the intellectual property rights of the LPL remain with Sri Lanka Cricket, IPG will continue to hold the league's exclusive commercial and media rights. The company said

the new structure would support enhanced governance standards, long-term planning and improved access to capital.

IPG Founder and Chairman Anil Mohan said the LPL would be the "biggest beneficiary" of the development, adding that the platform would help scale the league while maintaining commercial discipline and increasing franchise value.

Flash Sports & Media Chief Executive Officer Bradley Natrass said the partnership would enable deeper sponsor integration, stronger broadcast partnerships and greater

fan engagement across multiple cricket markets. Chief Financial Officer Eric Sherb said the public-market structure would support phased investments in league infrastructure while ensuring disciplined returns.

Beyond Sri Lanka, IPG also holds long-term agreements to develop T20 leagues in Malaysia and Zimbabwe. The group plans to expand across emerging cricket markets, with a focus on centralised sponsorship revenues, 4K broadcast production upgrades, recurring revenue streams and long-term asset appreciation.



SC seeks responses from Centre, States on plea to use Aadhaar only as identity proof

New Delhi, June 16: The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notices to the Centre and state governments on a petition alleging that Aadhaar cards issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India are being misused as proof of citizenship, domicile and residence. The plea seeks directions to ensure Aadhaar is used strictly as a document for identity verification. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana sought response from the Centre and all the states and UTs on a plea filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay and tagged it with the pending similar matters.

The plea has sought directions to the Centre, states and the Election Commission to ensure that Aadhaar is used as a proof of identity and not as a proof of citizenship, domicile, address and date of birth. The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Dubey, also sought directions that the use of Aadhaar as a proof of date of birth and residence in the application form for new voter registration be considered against Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act,

2016, Section 23(4) of the RPA, 1950 and Article 14 of the Constitution. "Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016 expressly states that 'Aadhaar is not the evidence of citizenship or domicile'.

The Unique Identification Authority of India notification



dated August 22, 2023 clearly states that 'Aadhaar is proof of identity, not of citizenship, address or date of birth'... "Despite this, Aadhaar is not only being used as a proof of age, citizenship and domicile for school admission, property purchase and to obtain a birth certificate, ration card, driving licence, but also being used in the application form for new voter registration (Form-6) as a proof of date of birth and

proof of residence. And thus, infiltrators and illegal immigrants are obtaining various documents using Aadhaar," the plea said.

The petition contended that the existing verification mechanism under Form-6 is inadequate and might allow

individuals without proper supporting documents to be included in the electoral database. The plea sought a comprehensive overhaul of the verification framework used in electoral processes and proposed the establishment of a high-powered monitoring committee comprising a retired Supreme Court judge along with cybersecurity and forensic experts to oversee reforms.

Om Birla hails 'Nari Shakti' initiatives at Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament 2026

New Delhi, June 16: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla inaugurated the Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament 2026 at the historic Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan on Tuesday. Addressing the gathering, Birla emphasized that India's youth hold the responsibility for achieving the "Viksit Bharat 2047" vision, noting that over five million young people are now engaged in the Youth Parliament programme. Highlighting India's deep-rooted democratic heritage and constitutional

principles of equality, Birla praised the nation's immediate adoption of universal adult franchise at independence. He underscored the rising influence of women in leadership, pointing out that their participation in local bodies has reached 50 percent in several states. Birla described the landmark Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam as a decisive step to institutionalize this representation at the highest legislative levels, firmly reshaping India's political landscape.



Air India Express flight returns after engine fault



Ranchi, June 09: An Air India Express flight from Kannur to Jeddah returned to the airport on Tuesday, less than two hours after take-off, following an engine-related alert, airport sources said. The flight, carrying over 180 passengers, departed Kannur airport at 7.40 am. Around two hours into the journey, pilots noticed an engine warning light and decided to turn back as a precaution, the sources said. "The flight landed safely in Kannur, and all the passengers are fine," they said. Subsequent inspections found an issue with the aircraft's fuel filter, according to the sources. Before landing, the aircraft circled the airport for some time to burn excess fuel, they added.

Mann Rejects Accusation, Slams Religious Misuse



Chandigarh, June 16: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla inaugurated the Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament 2026 at the historic Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan on Tuesday. Addressing the gathering, Birla emphasized that India's youth hold the responsibility for achieving the "Viksit Bharat 2047" vision, noting that over five million young people are now engaged in the Youth Parliament programme. Highlighting India's deep-rooted democratic heritage and constitutional principles of equality, Birla praised the nation's immediate adoption of universal adult franchise at independence. He underscored the rising influence of women in leadership, pointing out that their participation in local bodies has reached 50 percent in several states. Birla described the landmark Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam as a decisive step to institutionalize this representation at the highest legislative levels, firmly reshaping India's political landscape.

BJP begins early groundwork for 2027 Assembly polls in key states

Leadership assesses state preparedness to strengthen prospects

New Delhi, June 16: The BJP is learnt to have intensified its strategic focus on Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab as it begins early preparations for the 2027 Assembly polls. The party leadership is consulting state leaders, reviewing issues and assessing grassroots preparedness to strengthen its electoral prospects in the three key states. In Uttarakhand, 17 Assembly constituencies have been placed under direct monitoring, with extensive organisational outreach and ground-level engagement programmes underway. Similar focused efforts are being carried out in 70-75 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh and 117 constituencies in Punjab. As part of its early poll preparations, the BJP is learnt to have begun strengthening its organisational structure from the district level up to the state leadership. The party is working to reinforce its booth-management network through the 'Panna Pramukh' model while mobilising local workers to engage with voters on issues affecting their respective areas.

The BJP typically begins preparing for state elections one to two years in advance. Besides Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab, the party has reportedly initiated groundwork in



four other states that are scheduled to go to the polls in 2027. Encouraged by its recent organisational success in West Bengal, where the party adopted a systematic grassroots campaign, BJP strategists are now considering a similar model for Punjab, which is currently governed by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Speaking to this newspaper, a senior BJP source here said that feedback from workers on the ground is first collected on local issues and other concerns to assess where the party's position is weak and where it remains consolidated, based on local people's views. The source added that public feedback on the performance of sitting

MLAs is also being gathered through multiple channels. Such assessments are expected to play a significant role in determining whether incumbent legislators are retained or replaced during the ticket distribution process. If party sources are to be believed, the BJP may not hesitate to make difficult decisions regarding candidate selection, particularly in politically crucial states such as Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. In Uttar Pradesh, the party is reportedly focusing on 70 to 75 Assembly seats it narrowly lost in recent elections.

These constituencies are receiving special attention as part of the BJP's pre-poll groundwork. In fact, BJP

strategists view Uttar Pradesh as central to the party's long-term political calculations. With the state sending 80 Members of Parliament to the Lok Sabha, the BJP is expected to leave no stone unturned in its efforts to maintain its political dominance ahead of the high-stakes 2029 General Election. However, the BJP also faces challenges from opposition parties, particularly the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress, which have been raising several issues against the ruling party. In Uttarakhand, the BJP is pursuing a focused strategy to prevent fragmentation of its voter base and ensure it retains power in the next state polls. In Punjab, sources said that the BJP is seeking to challenge the AAP government on issues such as law and order, development, welfare delivery and anti-incumbency sentiment.

The party is also expected to raise concerns over the drug menace, cross-border smuggling of narcotics and arms, and the increasing use of drones by smuggling networks operating from across the border. To counter AAP's positioning on agricultural concerns, the BJP is learnt to be considering a range of welfare measures and policy promises aimed at Punjab's farming community.



Mandhana Lone Indian on TIME Sportsperson List



New Delhi, June 16: India vice captain Smriti Mandhana has been named in TIME magazine's list of the 100 Most Influential People in Sports 2026, emerging as the only Indian sportsperson to feature in the prestigious global ranking. TIME's list of the 100 Most Influential People in Sports 2026 features athletes, coaches, advocates and investors who are "people shaping sports today."

The list, headlined by American basketball legend LeBron James, includes superstars from the world of sports such as football icon Lionel Messi, Chinese-American skier Eileen Gu, tennis star Carlos Alcaraz, basketball player Victor Wembanyama, legendary golfer Rory McIlroy among others.

The other big names in the list include another football icon Cristiano Ronaldo, South African cricket captain Temba Bavuma, who last year led his team to a historic Test series win in India as well as victory in the World Test Championship (WTC), basketball player for the New York Knicks Jalen Brunson and FIFA president Gianni Infantino. Mandhana, 29, the

vice captain of Indian women's national team, is part of the elite club. TIME's profile for Mandhana said that the Mumbai-born left-handed opening batter was the "first Indian woman to score a double century in a domestic one-day game, the first to score a century in all three international formats, and is a joint holder of the most international women's cricket centuries with 17" as it noted that the "records keep tumbling in" for Mandhana.

She is also the first woman to score more than 1,000 one-day international runs in a calendar year. "But Mandhana is proudest of the team honors she is also accumulating.

She captained the Royal Challengers Bangalore to the 2024 and 2026 Women's Premier League titles and was vice captain for India's triumph at last year's ICC Women's World Cup, scoring the second-most runs in the tournament," TIME said. In 2024, she set the record for most international runs across formats by a woman and then beat her own record last year — "a feat that contributed to her being crowned BBC Indian Sportswoman of 2025."

Neymar's World Cup doubts continue after Brazil forward has new tests on his injured right calf

Injured Neymar faces fitness battle before World Cup

London, June 16: Doubts over Neymar's debut at the World Cup continued Monday after the Brazil forward underwent new tests on his injured right leg. There had been hope that Neymar could return to training on Monday, but the Santos player did not join his teammates and instead went to a clinic for the tests on his right calf. The Brazilian soccer confederation did not immediately reveal the results of the tests. The 34-year-old Neymar, in his fourth World Cup, has been sidelined since getting injured with Santos in Brazil on May 17.

Brazil plays Haiti on Friday at Philadelphia. Neymar has yet to participate in any full training session since the five-



time world champions began their World Cup preparations in Morristown, New Jersey. Brazilian media said Brazil's medical staff was hoping to have him back fully fit for the knockout stages. Neymar's potential return gained more significance after Brazil's disappointing 1-1 draw against

Morocco in the teams' World Cup opener on Saturday.

Neymar still brought some star power to the game at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. He was seen on the sidelines before kickoff saluting celebrities such as rapper Travis Scott and seven-time Super

Bowl champion Tom Brady. Brazil's struggles in attack against Morocco immediately prompted calls for a more experienced playmaker like Neymar on the field.

There was widespread debate in Brazil over whether Neymar, whose first World Cup was in 2014 on home soil, should have been called up for the World Cup by new coach Carlo Ancelotti. Some believe the veteran could still help Brazil, but others say Neymar is past his prime and took a spot away from a younger player. Three other players did not join the group and trained separately Monday to improve their fitness: Gabriel Magalhães, Bruno Guimarães and Raphinha.

Deepika's brace sparks India's 3-2 comeback victory over USA



Auckland, June 15: The Indian women's hockey team staged a stunning comeback to defeat the USA 3-2 in their FIH Nations Cup Pool A opener on Monday. Dragflick specialist Deepika starred with a crucial brace,

while Navneet Kaur netted the decisive goal to secure all three points for the side. The Americans caught India off guard early on, storming into a 2-0 lead within seven minutes. Ashley Sessa opened the scoring with a

swift field goal, followed quickly by Madeleine Zimmer, who converted a penalty corner.

Refusing to back down, India found their rhythm in the second quarter. Deepika spear-headed the fight-back, firing home two penalty corners in the 17th and 24th minutes to level the game. Just before halftime, Navneet converted another penalty corner to cap off a brilliant turnaround. A scoreless second half saw both defenses hold firm, sealing India's victorious start to the tournament.

West Indies beat Sri Lanka by 5 wickets to clinch the T20 series



Kingston, June 15: Sherfane Rutherford and Jason Holder anchored a dramatic, late-overs onslaught as the West Indies clinched a thrilling five-wicket victory over Sri Lanka on Sunday, securing a 2-1 T20 international series win with two balls to spare. Chasing 170, the hosts slumped into trouble before Rutherford took control, anchored by an unbeaten 54 off 40 deliveries. He was handed crucial lifelines by a sloppy Sri Lankan fielding side that dropped him twice. The momentum turned decisively in the penultimate over when Jason Holder clobbered three massive sixes, blasting a lightning-fast 21 not out off just five balls to push the target within reach.

Earlier, the West Indies won the toss and opted to bowl, an attacking strategy vindicated by Shamar Joseph. The pace-man tore through Sri Lanka's lineup to claim brilliant figures of 5-33, capping a player-of-the-match performance that restricted the visitors to 169.

Neeraj to return to action at Doha Diamond League

Chennai, June 16: After quite a bit of suspense, double Olympic medalist Neeraj Chopra has decided to take part in the Doha Diamond League to be held on June 19. As mentioned by this newspaper earlier, Doha would be his first pit stop ahead of two mega events — Commonwealth and Asian Games.

Neeraj has been training in Switzerland for a while and seems to be fit to compete. He usually prefers to begin his season in Doha but this year, the Diamond League was postponed from May to June because of the US-Israel war on Iran, which affected the West Asian countries. This also gave Neeraj enough time to get back to his best of fitness. He was provisionally named in the Commonwealth Games team but he has to achieve the qualification mark of 82.61m.

Neeraj has been nursing an injury



since the World Championships in Tokyo last year where he finished eighth with a throw of 84.03m. Since the Paris Olympics, where he finished sec-

ond behind Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, Neeraj has not been in the peak of form because of an adductor issue which he spoke about after the Paris silver medal.

At the Tokyo worlds and later he has been complaining about a back injury. "The wait is over. First throw of 2026 lands in Doha! Neeraj Chopra returns to competitive action on June 19," his management firm Vel Sports announced on Instagram. Neeraj is yet to compete after the showcase event in Tokyo on September 18.

Though Neeraj's name was missing initially, the Doha DL website now brought his name on the start list. Earlier, they had announced that new Sri Lankan sensation Rumesch Tharanga Pathirage — who threw this year's world leading distance and his personal best of 92.62m at Rome Diamond League — would take part. Nadeem's name is missing. World champion Keshorn Walcott too will feature at the event and has a season's best of 83.45m. Meanwhile, Anderson Peters has a season best throw of 86.08m.

