

SC stays Karnataka HC order on ethanol allocation enhancement

New Delhi, June 30: The Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered a stay on the Karnataka High Court order directing enhancement of ethanol allocation for the Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2025-26. The top court was hearing a plea filed by an oil marketing company which claimed that the high court's order would destabilise the national policy of 20 per cent ethanol blending for petrol. A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Sheel Nagu issued notice on the plea filed by the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd challenging the high court order.

The high court had directed the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited and Indian Oil Corporation Limited to consider and decide a representation submitted by a dedicated ethanol manufacturer seeking enhancement of ethanol allocation for the Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2025-26. The high court had held that dedicated ethanol plants, which were established pursuant to government policy and are contractually bound to supply ethanol exclusively to Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), cannot be denied the benefit of preferential allocation contemplated under the Long-Term Offtake Agreement (LTOA). Attorney General R Venkataramani submitted that



HC's order directing OMCs to consider enhancement of ethanol allocation to VINP Distilleries and Sugars would destabilise the national policy. The top law officer submitted that the 20 per cent ethanol blending programme in petrol is still an ongoing experiment and the impact of the policy would become clearer by next year. Venkataramani pointed out that the ethanol supply contracts were concluded in October 2025.

He said the ethanol allocation exercise attained finality on October 17, 2025, and allocations were communicated to 378 suppliers for a total supply of 1,050 crore litres of ethanol, of which 680 crore litres had already been supplied by them by June 18. If one supplier's quota was enhanced, other similarly placed would claim parity which would open litigation floodgates, he said. In its plea before the top court, Bharat Petroleum said the private supplier VINP Distilleries cannot claim an absolute right to supply ethanol based on its designed production capacity, to the detriment of other suppliers, as allocations have been made to vendors.

Sonia Gandhi meets party leaders

Shillong, June 30: Is the Congress all set to revive its old warhorses? The presence of former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot alongside veteran leaders Salman Khurshid, Mukul Wasnik, Pawan Bansal, and Janardan Dwivedi at Sonia Gandhi's 10 Janpath residence has reignited political speculation. A brief video of the meeting has fuelled a big buzz over Gehlot's possible return to the party's national decision-making circle after a long absence. Officially, the leaders gathered for a meeting of Congress-linked trusts, but political observers see a larger message. With electoral challenges mounting, the Congress may rediscover the value of experience. After years in administrative limbo, controversial RAS officer Pinky Meena is back in the system. In the Bhajan Lal government's recent jumbo transfer list of 178 RAS officers, Meena has been posted as Assistant Director (Public Services) in Sawai Madhopur's Administrative Reforms and Coordination Department. The move has revived memories of the 2021 bribery case that made national headlines, when the then Bandikui SDM was arrested by the ACB for allegedly accepting a '10 lakh bribe linked to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway project. Her dramatic wedding during interim bail from jail had also captured public attention.

PM Modi speaks to Iran President, backs diplomacy in West Asia

New Delhi, June 30: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday welcomed the recent understanding reached in West Asia and reiterated that all issues should be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy during a telephone conversation with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. According to an official statement, President Pezeshkian briefed Modi on the latest developments in the region and the way forward. "Prime Minister welcomed the understanding reached, and reiterated India's consistent position that all issues must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy," the statement said. Modi also underscored the need for sustained efforts to ensure "lasting peace and stability in the region" and stressed the importance of safeguarding "freedom of navigation and commerce," the statement added.



The conversation comes amid heightened regional tensions and follows recent diplomatic efforts aimed at reducing hostilities in West Asia. India has consistently called for de-escalation, dialogue and a peaceful resolution of conflicts while emphasising the need to protect vital maritime trade routes in the region.

PM Modi speaks to Iran President, backs diplomacy in West Asia

New Delhi, June 30: In a move to make air travel more convenient and cost-effective for sportspersons, Air India has decided to waive handling charges for sports equipment on both domestic and international flights. Depending on the route and fare category, travellers can save between Rs 2,000 and Rs 7,000. However, excess baggage charges will still apply if limits are exceeded. An official statement from the airline said, "Air India has waived off handling charges for sports equipment across select fare families on both do-



mestic and international routes, making it more convenient for customers travelling with their sporting gear."

The initiative aims to provide greater value and convenience to athletes, sportspersons and sports enthusiasts who frequently travel with specialised equipment. An Air India source said the waiver applies

to Economy Flex, Premium Economy Flex and all Business Class fares. However, standard excess baggage charges will continue if total weight exceeds the permitted allowance. Economy class allows 15 kg, Premium Economy 25 kg and Business Class 30 kg. Beyond these limits, excess baggage fees will apply. Most airlines in India currently levy handling charges on sports equipment, making this move a notable exception. An airline source said this makes Air India among the first to introduce such a facility for sportspersons.

General Dhiraj Seth takes charge as Chief of Army Staff

Gen Seth is an accomplished military officer with the rare distinction of heading two operational Army commands along the western front

New Delhi, June 30: General Dhiraj Seth on Tuesday took charge as the new Chief of the Army Staff, succeeding General Upendra Dwivedi, who retired on the same day, after an illustrious career spanning over 40 years in the armed forces. Gen Seth is an accomplished military officer with the rare distinction of heading two operational Army commands along the western front. He assumed the reins of the 1.3 million-strong force at a time when it is forging a path to become a self-reliant and future-ready Army while meeting challenges on the borders. Gen Seth is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla. He was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986.

Prior to becoming the 31st Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), he served as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff. Gen Seth took over as the COAS at a time when the global geo-strategic environment remains dynamic, with challenges in the security domain becoming more pronounced due to technological advancements and the ever-changing character of modern warfare. On his elevation to the rank of an Army Commander, he served as the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the South Western Command (based in Jaipur) and the Southern Command, earning the rare distinction of commanding two operational commands along the western front, the defence ministry earlier said. During his military career spanning nearly four decades, he has had extensive experience across oper-



ational, strategic, capability development and institutional domains, contributing significantly to the Indian Army's combat effectiveness and long-term transformation. Tenanted pivotal appointments earlier in strategic planning and capability development verticals of the Army Headquarters, he shaped its modernisation trajectory, capability roadmap and long-term force structuring initiatives. Prior to his appointment as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff on April 1, he headed the Pune-based Southern Command, and under his leadership, the elite command maintained a high degree of operational readiness during the Operation Sindoor last year. In nearly four decades, he built an exceptional operational profile across diverse ter-

rains and conflict environments, including counter-insurgency experience.

The general officer has commanded at every level in diverse operational environments. His command assignments included an Armoured Regiment in the Desert Sector, an Armoured Brigade in the Western Theatre, and a Counter-Insurgency Force in Jammu and Kashmir. As a lieutenant general, he commanded the Sudarshan Chakra Corps, one of the Army's premier strike formations.

He subsequently served as General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, overseeing key national and international military engagements and ceremonial responsibilities. He has held several key staff and strategic appointments that have "significantly influenced operational planning, force management and capability development". Gen Seth's contributions have been instrumental in aligning operational requirements with emerging technologies and future battlefield imperatives, according to the defence ministry. An accomplished military professional, Gen Seth consistently excelled in professional military education, securing top positions in courses of instruction it said.

A graduate of the Higher Command Course and the National Defence College, Gen Seth also attended the prestigious Command and Staff Course in Paris, reflecting his broad strategic outlook and understanding of contemporary military affairs, the defence ministry said.



Khandu briefs Governor on flood relief efforts



Itanagar, June 30: Chief Minister Pema Khandu called on Governor Lt. Gen. Shri K.T. Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd.), at Raj Bhavan today and briefed him on the prevailing flood situation across the state. CM Khandu apprised the Governor of the extent of damage caused by recent flash floods and landslides, along with the relief and rehabilitation measures being carried out by the state administration. He detailed ongoing rescue operations, distribution of essential supplies, and steps taken to restore road connectivity in affected districts.

During the meeting, the two leaders also exchanged views on other important matters concerning the development and welfare of Arunachal Pradesh. Governor Parnaik expressed concern over the hardship faced by flood-affected families and appreciated the state government's response. He urged officials to ensure timely assistance reaches remote villages. The state has seen widespread damage in the past week due to heavy monsoon rains, with multiple districts reporting loss of homes, farmland, and critical infrastructure.

Major Arms Cache Recovered in Jiribam; Joint Security Operation Foils Potential Threat

Agartala, June 29: Security forces achieved a major success after recovering a large cache of arms and ammunition during a joint operation conducted in the Champanagar area of Jiribam district, averting a possible security threat in the region. Based on specific intelligence inputs, a coordinated search operation was launched by Jiribam Police and the Assam Rifles in close coordination with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB). During the operation, security personnel recovered a significant quantity of weapons and ammunition, including six Self-Loading Rifles

(SLRs), one AK-47 rifle, 14 rifle magazines, and 625 rounds of live ammunition. The recovery is being considered a major achievement in the ongoing efforts of security agencies to prevent the circulation and misuse of illegal arms and maintain peace and stability in the region. The successful operation also highlighted the effectiveness of coordination among various security forces and intelligence agencies in addressing emerging security challenges. Officials stated that such joint efforts remain crucial in safeguarding civilians, maintaining law and order, and ensuring a secure environment for the people of Jiribam.



Mizoram marks 40th Peace Accord Day; CM calls for unity

Mizoram, June 30: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Tuesday said that the state has achieved significant progress under an atmosphere of peace and stability and appealed to the people to work together to build a peaceful and harmonious society. In his message marking the 40th anniversary of Peace Accord Day, the Chief Minister said that peace and stability are essential for sustained development. He stated that Mizoram has emerged as one of the country's more developed states and has also become an increasingly popular tourist destination. Mizoram Governor Vijay Kumar Singh said that the



state's peace and stability are not only a source of pride for Mizoram but also serve as a model for the rest of the country. The 40th anniversary of the

Peace Accord Day commemorates the signing of the historic peace agreement that brought an end to decades of insurgency in the state.

Tripura MP highlights healthcare reforms at council meeting



Agartala, June 30: Tripura Rajya Sabha MP Rajib Bhattacharjee attended the 16th meeting of the Central Council for Health & Family Welfare as a member, where key issues related to strengthening

the country's healthcare system were discussed. The meeting was chaired by Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare J.P. Nadda. Union Ministers of State for Health and Family Welfare

Anupriya Patel and Prataprao Jadhav, Tripura Chief Minister Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha, Health Ministers, MPs, and senior officials from states and Union Territories participated in the meeting. Sharing his views, Rajib Bhattacharjee said, "The meeting provided an important platform to discuss strengthening healthcare services, improving Centre-State coordination, and addressing crucial areas including the National Health Mission, food and drug reforms, and Allied Health Services." He added that such discussions would help ensure better healthcare delivery and improved public health infrastructure across the country.

Meghalaya HC upholds bail for Sonam in honeymoon murder case



Shillong, June 30: The Meghalaya High Court has upheld the bail granted to Sonam Raghuvanshi, the prime accused in the alleged murder of her husband during their honeymoon in the state last year. A single-judge bench of Justice W. Diengdoh dismissed the criminal petition filed by the state government, which sought cancellation of the bail order issued by the trial court on April 27. In his ruling, Justice Diengdoh observed that the manner in which the grounds of arrest were prepared demonstrated a "total non-application of judicious mind," thereby affirming the trial court's decision to release Raghuvanshi on bail. The case, which drew widespread attention in 2025, revolves around the death of Raghuvanshi's husband under suspicious circumstances during their honeymoon trip in Meghalaya. The state government had challenged the trial court's order, arguing that bail should not have been granted to the prime accused. However, the High Court's decision marks a significant development in the ongoing legal proceedings.

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma Monitoring Dhemaji Flood Situation; Train Services Suspended

Guwahati, June 30: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has assured that his government is mobilising all available resources to provide relief and long-term rehabilitation for those affected by floods in Dhemaji district. The Chief Minister emphasised that he has been closely monitoring the situation since the floods began, expressing deep sorrow over the hardships faced by residents and reaffirming the government's commitment to stand firmly with them during this crisis. Meanwhile, the Northeast Frontier Railway announced that train services between

Archipathar and Simen Chapari stations have been suspended indefinitely after a railway bridge sustained severe damage due to massive erosion. The suspension of services is expected to continue until safety is restored. In a post on X, Sarma stated, "Since the flood situation has unfolded in Dhemaji, I've been closely monitoring the situation. We are deeply saddened by the impact it has had on the lives of our people and in this difficult time, we firmly stand with them." His remarks underline the government's focus on both immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation measures for the affected communities.



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habilitation measures for the affected communities.

Tata AIA launches multifactor index fund to offer stability amid market volatility

Mumbai: Tata AIA Life Insurance has launched the Tata AIA Multifactor Index Fund, a new unit-linked insurance plan (ULIP) fund aimed at helping investors navigate market volatility while pursuing long-term wealth creation. The fund combines equity market participation with life insurance protection and follows a passive, rules-based investment strategy. The fund invests in 50 companies selected from the Nifty 500 universe using four key factors—low volatility, quality, value and momentum. According to the company, the low-volatility component is designed to reduce exposure to sharp market swings, while the other factors seek to support sustainable long-term returns. The fund will track the Nifty 500 Multifactor MQVLv 50 Index and maintain an equity allocation of 80-100 per cent. The New Fund Offer (NFO) is open from June



23 to June 30, 2026, with policies issued at a Net Asset Value (NAV) of ₹10 effective June 30. The fund will be available across a range of Tata AIA's protection, savings and wealth-oriented ULIP solutions. Tata AIA Life Insurance reported Assets Under Management (AUM) of ₹1.46 lakh crore as of March 31, 2026, marking an 18 per cent year-on-year growth, supported by strong new business premium income and investment performance. The company has advised investors to assess their risk appetite carefully, noting that market-linked investments remain subject to capital market risks and past performance does not guarantee future returns.

CDSL IPF launches anthem to encourage women investors

Guwahati: The Investor Protection Fund (IPF) of Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL) has launched a new investor awareness anthem, 'Bano Ms. Atmanirbhar Investor', aimed at encouraging more women to participate in the securities market and make informed financial decisions.

Sung by singer, actor and content creator Sai Godbole, the anthem forms part of CDSL IPF's ongoing 'AtmanirbHER' initiative, which seeks to promote financial literacy and empower women to take charge of their financial futures. The campaign has been released through a visually engaging film that traces key milestones in a woman's life, highlighting how confidence and informed choices can help overcome hesitation and achieve long-term goals. According to CDSL IPF, women now account for nearly one in four investors in India, reflecting their growing role in the country's investment landscape. However, awareness, confidence,



product understanding and access to reliable information remain crucial factors in expanding women's participation in the securities market.

"The 'Bano Ms. Atmanirbhar Investor' anthem is built around a simple but powerful message, that every meaningful journey begins with a first step," said Sudhish Pillai, Head of the CDSL IPF Secretariat. He added that greater participation by women would contribute to a more inclusive and empowered investment ecosystem.

In Guwahati, the initiative comes at a time when financial awareness and retail investing are gaining momen-

tum across Northeast India. With increasing digital access, rising financial literacy and growing participation of women in the workforce, Guwahati is emerging as an important centre for retail investment activity. Industry observers believe investor education campaigns such as AtmanirbHER can help expand the region's investor base and encourage more women to participate in wealth creation through regulated financial markets.

CDSL IPF said it will continue its efforts to promote responsible investing and long-term financial security among women from diverse backgrounds across the country.

Exim Bank study projects up to US\$ 1.5 billion export potential for Northeast by 2030



Guwahati: Export-Import Bank of India (India Exim Bank) has projected that exports from India's North-Eastern Region (NER) could reach between US\$ 929.2 million and US\$ 1.5 billion by 2029-30, provided targeted policy interventions, infrastructure upgrades and export diversification measures are implemented across the region. The projection was outlined in a study titled "India's Northeastern States: Export Landscape and Policy Insight", released

on Monday during a joint seminar on "MSME: Growth Engine of Northeast Region" organised by India Exim Bank and North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFi) in Guwahati. The report was unveiled by NEDFi Chairman PVSLN Murthy and IIT Guwahati Incubation Centre CEO Urmi Borgohain in the presence of senior Exim Bank officials.

According to the study, the Northeast's economy has grown steadily over the past

decade, with its Gross State Domestic Product rising from ₹2.8 trillion in 2014-15 to ₹5.1 trillion in 2023-24. Assam continues to dominate the regional economy, accounting for 63.5 per cent of the region's total economic output. The report highlights the strategic importance of the Northeast under India's "Act East" and "Neighbourhood First" policies, noting its role as a potential trade gateway to neighbouring countries and ASEAN markets. It recommends diversifying exports beyond tea, strengthening agro-processing, improving quality-testing infrastructure, expanding multimodal transport networks and exploring the creation of a North-East Export Promotion Council to enhance the region's export competitiveness and economic integration with Southeast Asia.

AI adoption gathers pace as 57% of MSMEs see it as key growth driver: Vi Business study

Mumbai: Artificial intelligence is emerging as a major growth catalyst for India's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), with 57 per cent of businesses identifying AI as a vital driver of expansion and one in four already deploying AI tools in their operations, according to the Vi Business MSME Growth Insights Study 2026. The study, based on insights from more than 2.5 lakh MSMEs across 16 sectors through Vi Business 'Ready-ForNext' platform, also reported an improvement in India's Digital Maturity Index (DMI) to 60.8 in 2026 from 58.0 last year.

The report found that 46.3 per cent of MSMEs have adopted cybersecurity solutions to tackle rising digital threats, while women-led enterprises outperformed male-led businesses with a DMI score of 61.6 against 60.4. Vi Business also introduced Financial Readiness as a fourth assessment pillar alongside Digital Customer, Digital Workplace and Digital Op-



erations to evaluate funding preparedness and business resilience.

Telangana and Karnataka topped the state rankings for digital maturity, while Andhra Pradesh entered the top 10 for the first time. Financial Services emerged as India's most digitally mature sector, ahead of IT & ITes, Transportation, Energy & Utilities, and Tourism & Hospitality.

Trinity Business Park aims to transform Northeast's commercial landscape

Shillong: Trinity Business Park has announced the launch of a large-scale integrated commercial development in North Guwahati, a project expected to become one of the largest organised business ecosystems in Northeast India. Spread across 16 acres in Amingaon and offering more than 3 million sq. ft. of planned built-up space, the development will combine retail, office, hospitality and exhibition facilities within a single campus. The project is being positioned as a strategic base for multinational corporations, technology firms and leading Indian enterprises seeking expansion opportunities in the Northeast.

According to Trinity Business Park, the development has already attracted strong interest from business communities, with members of the Assam Textile Merchants' Association committing significant retail space. Discussions are also underway with trade associations from multiple sectors.



The project will feature 16-foot-high showrooms, 12-foot-high office spaces, 18 goods elevators, 25 passenger elevators and parking capacity for more than 3,000 vehicles. Additional amenities include a 22,000 sq. ft. food court, premium outdoor dining spaces, landscaped zones, an amphitheatre and dedicated areas for business networking and events. Partner Hemant Agarwal said the project would provide organised commercial infrastructure at a scale previously unavailable in the region, while partner Ravi Agarwal noted that growing demand for future-ready developments beyond metropolitan centres is creating new

opportunities for cities such as Guwahati. The project could also benefit Shillong-based businesses and entrepreneurs by providing a large commercial hub within the Northeast region.

Companies from Meghalaya looking to expand retail, distribution, professional services or corporate operations may find easier access to organised infrastructure and larger markets through Guwahati's growing business ecosystem, strengthening regional trade and economic integration.

Construction is progressing steadily, with the first phases expected to become operational from 2027 onwards.

Manipal Hospitals expands healthcare awareness drive to Shillong with Anveshana programme

Shillong: Manipal Hospital EM Bypass, a unit of the Manipal Hospitals Group organised its healthcare awareness initiative ‘Anveshana – Medical Education for Media’ in Shillong, bringing together medical experts and journalists to discuss cancer care, preventive healthcare and emergency preparedness.

The programme featured sessions by oncology and emergency care specialists, including Dr. Sourav Datta, Director of Manipal Oncology Services and Senior Consultant–Head & Neck Oncology; Dr. Arindam Mondal, HOD and Senior Consultant–Surgical Oncology; Dr. Debdeep Samaddar, Associate Consultant–Medical Oncology; and Dr. Subhankar Chakrabarti,



Consultant–Emergency. The experts highlighted advancements in cancer treatment, the importance of early diagnosis and the need for greater public awareness on health-related issues.

During the event, Manipal Hospitals also launched a Media Privilege Card aimed at providing journalists with enhanced healthcare access and benefits across its network. A CPR and Basic Life Support training session was conducted for media delegates to improve emergency response

capabilities during cardiac emergencies.

Doctors attending the programme pointed to Meghalaya’s growing healthcare challenges, particularly the high incidence of cancer in East Khasi Hills district, which records cancer rates significantly above the national average. They stressed the importance of screening, timely intervention and access to advanced treatment facilities.

The healthcare sector in Shillong is witnessing rising

demand for specialised treatment, preventive healthcare services and medical awareness programmes. With increasing concerns over cancer and cardiovascular diseases, healthcare providers are expanding outreach efforts in the city, while improved connectivity with Kolkata is enabling patients from Meghalaya and other Northeastern states to access advanced tertiary care facilities more conveniently.

Anveshana, which has previously been conducted in cities such as Jamshedpur, Aizawl, Agartala, Darjeeling and Nagaland, is part of Manipal Hospitals’ ongoing efforts to promote healthcare education, early diagnosis and community preparedness across North-east India.

Shree Cement expands healthcare outreach in Meghalaya with eye screening and ambulance initiatives

Shillong: Shree Cement has intensified its healthcare outreach efforts in Meghalaya by launching community-focused medical interventions aimed at improving access to healthcare services in remote areas of the state.

As part of the initiative, the company organised a vision screening programme in villages surrounding its project area, providing comprehensive eye examinations to local residents. The screenings identified a significant number of individuals requiring corrective vision support, with spectacles prescribed

to improve eyesight and enhance daily productivity. Residents requiring specialised medical care were referred for further treatment.

The programme seeks to address a critical healthcare gap in rural Meghalaya, where access to routine eye care services remains limited. Health experts have long highlighted the importance of early diagnosis and timely treatment in preventing vision-related complications and improving overall quality of life.

In a further step towards strengthening healthcare

access, Shree Cement announced plans to deploy ambulance services for communities around its operational areas. The proposed service is expected to improve emergency medical response and facilitate transportation of patients to healthcare facilities, particularly in regions with limited medical infrastructure.

In Shillong, the company’s growing investment in healthcare and social infrastructure reflects an increasing focus on corporate-led community development in Meghalaya. Industry ob-

servers note that such interventions can contribute to improved workforce productivity, better public health outcomes, and stronger socio-economic development across rural and semi-urban areas of the state.

The healthcare initiatives form part of Shree Cement’s broader community development programme, which also includes support for solar village electrification, clean cooking solutions and solar-powered digital education infrastructure in partnership with local stakeholders and the GHE Foundation.

Precision medicine reshapes cancer treatment, says Medanta oncologist

Guwahati: Advances in precision medicine are transforming cancer treatment by enabling doctors to tailor therapies to the unique genetic and biological characteristics of individual tumors, according to oncologists at Medanta – The Medicity, Gurugram.

Dr. Kunjahari Medhi, Senior Director, Medical Oncology at Medanta Gurugram, said cancer care has moved beyond the traditional one-size-fits-all approach. He noted that molecular profiling and genomic testing now allow clinicians to identify specific biomarkers and genetic signatures within tumors, helping them select treatments that are more effective, less toxic and better suited to each patient.

Highlighting recent breakthroughs, Dr. Medhi said immunotherapy is emerging as a powerful treatment option that strengthens the body’s immune system to recognize and destroy cancer cells. He added that the therapy is being successfully used in several cancers, including lung, kidney, colorectal, liver, breast, stomach, head and neck cancers, as well as melanoma. He also pointed to targeted therapies and antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs), which deliver anti-cancer drugs directly to cancer cells while minimizing damage to healthy tissues.

Dr. Medhi stressed that early diagnosis remains critical, urging people not to ignore symptoms such as unexplained weight loss, prolonged cough, unusual bleeding or unexplained lumps.

In Guwahati, growing awareness about advanced cancer care is expected to boost demand for specialized oncology consultations and precision diagnostics in the region. Healthcare experts believe improved access to advanced treatment options, coupled with dedicated patient support services, could encourage more patients from Assam and the Northeast to seek timely cancer screening and treatment.

Residents of Guwahati and nearby areas can consult Dr. Medhi on June 28 at Sunvalley Hospital, GS Road, Bormotoria. Medanta has also launched a dedicated Northeast helpline to assist patients with appointments and access to care in multiple regional languages.

Medanta doctors call for early cancer screening to reduce preventable deaths in Nagaland

Dimapur: Leading oncologists from Medanta – The Medicity have urged greater awareness and early screening for cancer in Nagaland, warning that many deaths from common cancers in the state could be prevented through timely diagnosis and treatment.

Doctors from the Gurugram-based hospital said cervical, stomach,oesophageal and nasopharyngeal cancers continue to claim lives largely because patients seek medical help at advanced stages of the disease. According to specialists, advances in screening, radiation therapy, targeted treatments and immunotherapy have significantly improved survival rates, particularly when cancers are detected early.

Dr. Tejinder Kataria, Chairperson of Radiation Oncology at Medanta, said modern cancer treatments have transformed outcomes over the past decade but delayed diagnosis remains a major challenge. She highlighted several preventable risk factors, including tobacco use, unhealthy dietary habits and lack of regular health screenings. Consultant Radiation Oncologist Dr. Sorun Shishak stressed the importance of routine check-ups and public awareness, encouraging people to seek medical advice at the first sign of symptoms. Doctors also recommended HPV vaccination for women, healthy diets rich in fruits and vegetables, physical activity and reduced consumption of smoked and preserved foods.

In Dimapur, healthcare awareness and access to specialised cancer care are becoming increasingly important as the city strengthens its position as Nagaland’s commercial hub. Experts believe initiatives such as Medanta’s partnership with the Nagaland government under the Chief Minister’s Health Insurance Scheme (CMHIS), along with awareness campaigns and specialist consultations in Dimapur, can improve early detection rates and healthcare outcomes across the region.

Medanta has also launched a dedicated North East helpline and announced that Dr. Sorun Shishak will be available for consultation at Faith Hospital, Dimapur, on June 27.

Renault expands Kiger line-up, makes turbo SUV more accessible



Mumbai: Renault India has expanded the variant portfolio of its compact SUV Kiger, introducing four new variants across naturally aspirated and turbocharged powertrains in a move aimed at making premium features and turbo performance more accessible to customers in the highly competitive B-SUV segment.

With the latest update, the Renault Kiger Turbo now starts at Rs 7.89 lakh (ex-showroom), making it the most accessible turbo-powered SUV in the entry B-SUV category. The company has also introduced a new Evolution+ variant across Naturally Aspirated (manual and AMT) and Turbo (manual) versions,

with prices starting at Rs 6.99 lakh (ex-showroom).

The Evolution+ variant adds several premium features including a Smart Access Card with Push Start/Stop, Automatic Climate Control, Wireless Smartphone Replication, Driver Seat Height Adjustment and light embossed fabric upholstery.

Renault has expanded its turbo range from three to five variants and introduced a 5-speed manual transmission option in the Techno Turbo variant, offering customers greater flexibility and affordability. The naturally aspirated range has also been widened

from six to eight variants.

Commenting on the development, Francisco Hidalgo, Vice President – Sales and Marketing, Renault India, said the company remains focused on making innovation, performance and advanced features more accessible while enhancing the overall ownership experience.

The Kiger continues to offer segment-leading features such as a 100 PS turbocharged petrol engine, 205 mm ground clearance, 405-litre boot space and spacious interiors, reinforcing its position as a value-driven offering in the B-SUV segment.



Vi partners Spotify to offer free Premium access to postpaid users

Mumbai: Telecom operator Vihas announced a strategic partnership with audio streaming platform Spotify to offer complimentary Spotify Premium access to eligible postpaid subscribers, strengthening its digital entertainment portfolio.

Under the partnership, Vi postpaid customers on select individual and family plans will receive three months of Spotify Premium at no additional cost upon activating or retaining their connection. The offer allows users to enjoy ad-free music streaming, offline downloads, unlimited skips, full playback control across devices and high-quality audio streaming of up to 320 kbps. Eligible customers who have not previously used Spotify can activate the benefit through the Vi App.

Vi said the complimentary subscription will be available on individual postpaid plans priced at Rs. 451, Rs. 551, Rs. 751 and Rs. 1,201 (REDX), along with select family postpaid plans, where the benefit will be available to the primary member. After the three-month promotional period, subscribers can continue Spotify Premium through Vi's "Add to Bill"



facility at Rs. 139 per month.

Vi Chief Marketing Officer Avneesh Khosla said the collaboration reflects the company's focus on enhancing customers' digital experiences through premium entertainment offerings. Spotify India Managing Director Amarjit Batra said the partnership aims to make Spotify Premium more accessible while supporting artists, creators and the wider music industry.

Retirement readiness remains low as longer lifespans raise financial concerns: Study

Guwahati: India's growing life expectancy is exposing a widening gap in retirement preparedness, with a majority of urban Indians at risk of outliving their savings, according to the fifth edition of the India Retirement Index Study (IRIS 5.0) conducted by Axis Max Life Insurance in partnership with Kantar.

The study found that India's retirement readiness score stands at just 48 out of 100, highlighting inadequate long-term financial planning despite increasing awareness. While 86 per cent of "Empty Nesters" know the retirement corpus they require, only 33 per cent believe their savings will last beyond 10 years after retirement. Similarly, only 38 per cent of the "Sandwich Generation"—those supporting both parents and children—expect their retirement savings to sustain them for more than a decade.

The report also revealed that 77 per cent of urban Indians

believe a retirement corpus of ₹1 crore or less is sufficient, despite rising inflation and healthcare costs that could significantly erode its value over time.

Traditional investment options such as fixed deposits continue to dominate retirement planning, although 44 per cent of urban Indians are now investing in mutual funds and SIPs. The study also noted growing interest in the National Pension System and annuity-based retirement products to provide sustainable post-retire-

ment income.

According to the report, 24 per cent of urban Indians have made no progress toward retirement savings, underscoring the need for early financial planning. It stressed that beginning retirement investments early can significantly reduce monthly savings requirements through the power of compounding, enabling greater financial security and helping address the challenges posed by increasing longevity.



Air India Express to launch first direct Guwahati-West Asia flights

Guwahati: Air India Express has announced the launch of direct flights connecting Guwahati with Dubai and Abu Dhabi, becoming the first airline to offer non-stop services between Northeast India and West Asia. The Guwahati-Dubai service will commence on August 4, while the Guwahati-Abu Dhabi flight will begin operations on August 7, expanding international travel options for the region.

The airline said the new services mark its first international operations from Guwahati, one of the largest stations in its network with nearly 120 weekly flights. The direct links to the UAE's two major commercial and travel hubs are expected to strengthen tourism, trade and cultural exchanges while improving access to global markets for travellers and businesses in Northeast India. Bookings have opened through the airline's website, mobile app and other booking platforms.

According to the schedule, the Guwahati-Dubai flight will depart every Tuesday at 12:25 pm and arrive at 4:10 pm local time, with the return flight leaving Dubai at 5:10 pm and reaching Guwahati at 12:25 am. The Guwahati-Abu Dhabi service will operate every Friday, departing at 11:30 am and arriving at 3:15 pm, while the return flight will leave Abu Dhabi at 4:15 pm and land in Guwahati at 11:30 pm.



The launch is expected to enhance Guwahati's position as the aviation gateway to Northeast India by improving international connectivity for business travellers, exporters, students and tourists. Direct access to Dubai and Abu Dhabi could boost trade with the Gulf region, support the tourism and hospitality sectors, and provide greater convenience for the large number of people from the Northeast travelling to the UAE for employment and business opportunities.

With the addition of the two UAE destinations, Air India Express will operate more than 290 weekly flights from four Northeast stations—Dibrugarh, Dimapur, Guwahati and Imphal. The airline also highlighted its 'Tales of India' initiative, featuring traditional Northeast motifs such as Assam's Gamosa and Jaapi, Nagaland's Tsungkotpesü, Manipur's Akyobi, MoirangPhee and SapheeLanphee, Arunachal Pradesh's Idu Mishmi, Meghalaya's Khneng and Mizoram's Puanchei on aircraft tail designs to showcase the region's cultural heritage globally.

Air India launches 'Easy Connect' flights, Guwahati among next cities to join network

Guwahati: Air India on Thursday launched its first 'Easy Connect' flight under the Government of India's new hub-and-spoke aviation framework, marking the beginning of a nationwide initiative aimed at enabling seamless international travel from cities across the country through the airline's major hubs.

The inaugural Easy Connect service, flight AI1111, departed from Varanasi's Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport to Delhi, allowing international passengers to connect onward to nine overseas destinations, including Dubai, Colombo, Jeddah, Riyadh, Kathmandu and Phuket. The service was inaugurated by Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, who said the initiative would make international air travel more accessible by allowing passengers to begin their overseas journeys



from their home cities through Indian transit hubs.

Air India said the phased rollout will expand the Easy Connect network over the coming months to Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Chennai, Goa, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kochi, Mumbai, Patna, Vadodara and Visakhapatnam. Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Campbell Wilson said the initiative addresses the long-standing dependence of Indian travellers on foreign transit hubs, offering greater convenience and strengthening India's aviation ecosystem.

According to Air India, nearly

25 million passengers travel on long-haul international routes to and from India every year, with around 20 million requiring connecting flights. Of these, nearly 85 per cent currently transit through overseas hubs instead of Indian airports.

The inclusion of Guwahati in Air India's upcoming Easy Connect network is expected to significantly enhance international connectivity for travellers from Assam and the wider Northeast. The service is likely to improve access to global destinations through Air India's hubs in Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, while supporting business travel, tourism, education and medical travel. The development is also expected to strengthen Guwahati's position as the region's leading aviation gateway and contribute to the Northeast's growing integration with international markets.

Stayfree® launches Xpert XL to expand menstrual hygiene range

New Delhi: Stayfree® has expanded its menstrual hygiene portfolio with the launch of Stayfree® Xpert XL, a new sanitary napkin designed to offer enhanced protection, comfort and convenience for women. The company said the product has been introduced nationwide as part of its efforts to

address evolving consumer needs and changing lifestyles. The new Stayfree® Xpert XL features a 3-in-1 protection system comprising Gel Lock Pockets for deep and instant absorption, an Air Soft Cover for improved comfort during use, and a compact, individually wrapped design that fits easily into a pocket while

allowing convenient disposal. The product is available in packs of six, 18 and 40 units, with the six-unit pack priced at ₹48. Commenting on the launch, Supriya Srinivasa, Marketing Director, Stayfree®, said the company continues to develop products that cater to the varied menstrual hygiene needs of wom-

en. She said the new product combines superior absorption, enhanced comfort and portability to help women manage their periods more confidently. To support the launch, Stayfree® has rolled out a digital influencer campaign featuring actors Aditi Bhatia and Ashnoor Kaur, among others. The campaign high-

lights common concerns such as leakage, skin irritation and the inconvenience of carrying sanitary pads while travelling or at work.

The company said Stayfree® Xpert XL is now available across modern retail outlets, general trade stores, pharmacies, e-commerce platforms and quick commerce channels

across the country.



Operation Amistad showcases India's humanitarian diplomacy and indigenous medical capabilities

Guwahati: India has launched Operation Amistad, deploying emergency medical aid and relief supplies to earthquake-hit Venezuela in a move that underscores the country's growing stature as a global first responder and highlights its expanding humanitarian diplomacy.

Two Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft carrying a 41-member specialist medical team, an Indian Army field hospital unit, medicines, two indigenously developed BHISHM Cubes and over 35 tonnes of relief materials have departed for northern Venezuela following two powerful earthquakes measuring 7.2 and 7.5 on the



Richter scale. The disaster has reportedly claimed more than 235 lives and left over 4,300 people injured.

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar said the mission reflects India's commitment to supporting Venezuela during the crisis. The medical contingent from the Army's renowned

60 Para Field Hospital, comprising nine military doctors, is equipped to provide emergency care, trauma management and complex surgeries.

A key feature of the operation is the deployment of two BHISHM Cubes under the Aarogya Maitri Project. These modular field hospitals can be-

come operational within minutes and provide critical care for nearly 200 patients simultaneously, showcasing India's indigenous healthcare innovation.

Travelling nearly 14,300 kilometres, Operation Amistad reinforces India's "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" philosophy while strengthening bilateral ties with Venezuela. Building on relief missions in Nepal, Türkiye, Syria, Myanmar and vaccine assistance to over 100 countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative further enhances India's global reputation as a reliable humanitarian partner and responsible major power.

'Sampoorna Care - Cancer' and 'Sampoorna Care - Cancer Fund' launched by TATA AIA Life Insurance



Mumbai: Tata AIA Life Insurance has launched 'Sampoorna Care - Cancer', Tata AIA's first cancer plan to offer replacement of income, with flexible payouts that can be customised to every family, and Sampoorna Care - Cancer Fund, an option of adding a savings health fund that allows tax free withdrawals for health treatments. Rajan (fictional name) was 41 when the diagnosis came. A senior manager. Two children in school. A home loan with eleven years left. Retirement plans and education funds neatly mapped out on a spreadsheet. The word "cancer" never featured in any of the rows — and now it frightened him. It made him look at his family and ask the questions he had never had to ask before. He had health insurance. His hospitalisation expenses would be covered - radiation, chemotherapy, surgery, all of it. But what about the months of rehabilitation ahead? Would there be enough leaves, or would he venture into the territory of "leave without pay"? The EMIs would not pause. The children's school fees would not pause. The household expenses would not pause. And the SIPs he had built, brick by brick, over years those were now at risk of being abruptly stopped. Was cancer going to cancel his life plans? Rajan's anxiety reflects the reality of millions of Indian families. Over 1.57 million people are diagnosed with cancer in India every year, according to WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer. Awareness around cancer insurance has grown but one dimension has remained largely unaddressed.

Before designing a solution, Tata AIA asked con-

sumers a simple question: if you were diagnosed with a critical illness like cancer, how would you want the money to come to you? The findings reshape the conventional wisdom that a single lump sum is what families wanted. Recognising this gap, Tata AIA Life Insurance today announces the simultaneous launch of two landmark products: Sampoorna Care - Cancer and Sampoorna Care - Cancer Fund. "A cancer diagnosis in an Indian family can be both emotionally and financially draining. It can disrupt the rhythm of a steady income, as patients may need time to recover fully and regain their earning potential," said Sujeet Kothare, Chief Business Officer - Proprietary Business, Propositions & Marketing, Tata AIA Life Insurance. Sampoorna Care - Cancer: Because Income Needs Protection Too: The plan offers up to ₹50 Lakh in cover, paid out in the way that fits each family's reality: Regular income, 100% lump sum, A combination of both. Sampoorna Care - Cancer includes a Diagnostic Benefit that supports early-stage medical testing expenses, making proactive screening genuinely accessible, not just advisable. Sampoorna Care - Cancer includes an Overseas Treatment Booster that provides an additional 10% of the cancer sum assured towards world-class international treatment within a specified timeline of diagnosis. The Health Fund: Your Savings Don't Stop Fighting Either: This is where Sampoorna Care - Cancer Fund steps furthest ahead of anything else in the market. To explore benefits, payout structures, and eligibility conditions, visit www.tataaia.com.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance introduces ICICI Pru iProtect Smart Plus with a 10-Year Life Cover

Imphal: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has introduced ICICI Pru iProtect Smart Plus with a 10-Year Life Cover designed for customers with defined financial commitments such as home loans, business loans and children's education goals. The product provides life cover during a period when financial responsibilities and dependence on income are often at their highest. For many individuals, the first decade after taking on a major financial commitment can be a phase of heightened financial responsibility. The proposition is particularly relevant



for self-employed individuals with business loans of a defined duration, home loan borrowers and parents planning for their children's education. The 10-Year Life Cover has been designed to align protection with this critical phase, offering an affordable life cover solution. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "Many financial goals such as purchasing

a home, building a business or funding a child's education are linked to defined time horizons.

ICICI Pru iProtect Smart Plus has been designed to provide protection during these important years, helping customers safeguard their financial commitments while securing their loved ones' financial future. It reflects our focus on offering protection solutions that address evolving customer needs at different life stages. Thus,

driving insurance penetration in India and contributing to the 'Insurance for All by 2047' goal." A key feature is that the life cover remains constant throughout the 10-year policy term. This ensures that families have access to the full life cover amount, enabling them to manage not only loan-related obligations but also broader financial needs and future goals. With this proposition, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance continues to strengthen its protection portfolio by offering solutions that help individuals and families build greater financial resilience.

Team India clinches 3 Gold, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze at GSC Australia 2026, boosts WorldSkills Shanghai preparations

Guwahati: Team India has delivered a strong performance at the Global Skills Challenge (GSC) Australia 2026, winning 5 medals— 3 Gold, 1 Silver, and 1 Bronze— marking another significant milestone in India's journey towards the 48th WorldSkills Competition in Shanghai later this year. The international competition, held from 23–29 June 2026, brought together nearly 600 competitors, experts, translators, and officials representing 16 WorldSkills member nations, including India alongside Australia, Austria, China, the USA, Japan, France, Korea, and more. Team India's standout performers: Pavan Bhadravati Suresha (Karnataka): Gold medal in Additive Manufacturing, (Silver Japan); Mausam Kumar Giri (Bihar): Gold medal in Cloud Computing, (Silver Japan); Bronze Singapore); Vishnupriya Sunil (Delhi): Gold medal in Health and Social Care, (Silver Australia); Harsh Ramesh Pawar (Maharashtra): Silver medal in 3D Digital Game Art; Muskan (Haryana): Bronze medal in Painting and Decorating. These achievements underscore the

growing global competitiveness of India's skilled youth across advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, creative industries and service-sector skills.

Other competitors also delivered strong performances across multiple categories, gaining valuable international exposure and benchmarking themselves against some of the world's best young skilled professionals. Congratulating Team India on its performance, Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and Minister of State for Education, Government of India, said, "Team India's outstanding haul of 3 Gold, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze medals at the Global Skills Challenge 2026 is a proud moment for the nation and a testament to the talent, determination and hard work of our Skill Champions, experts, mentors and industry partners." The 30-member Indian contingent, comprising 15 competitors and 15 experts, represented the country across 15 skills spanning advanced manufacturing, digi-

tal technologies, construction trades, creative industries and service-sector skills. India competed in the skill categories of 3D Digital Game Art, Additive Manufacturing, Automobile Technology, Beauty Therapy, Bricklaying, Cloud Computing, Floristry, Graphic Design Technology, Hairdressing, Health and Social Care, Industrial Mechanics, Painting and Decorating, Restaurant Service, Wall and Floor Tiling, and Web Technologies.



CBDT Chairman Ravi Agrawal reappointed for another six months

New Delhi, June 30: The government on Tuesday approved the reappointment of Ravi Agrawal as Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on a contract basis for a period of six months. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved Agrawal's fresh term, which will be effective from July 1 to December 31, 2026, or until further orders, whichever is earlier. The ACC approved the proposal for Agrawal's continuation as the head of the apex direct tax administration body, ensuring continuity in the functioning of the CBDT. The order stated that the reappointment has been made on the usual terms and conditions applicable to re-employed central government officers and in relaxation of the recruitment rules. "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the re-appointment of Ravi Agrawal as Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), on contract basis, for a period of six months with effect from July 1 till December 31, or until further orders, whichever is earlier, on the usual terms and conditions applicable to re-employed Central Government officers, in relaxation of the Recruitment Rules," the official order stated.



Agrawal, a 1988-batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer of the Income Tax cadre, was appointed CBDT Chairman in June 2024, succeeding Nitin Gupta. Before taking over as Chairman, he had served as Member (Administration) in the CBDT from July 2023. He was subsequently reappointed for a one-year term from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026. The CBDT, the apex policymaking body of the Income Tax Department under the Department of Revenue, is headed by a chairman and can have up to six mem-

bers in the rank of Special Secretary to the Government of India. It is responsible for administering direct tax laws, formulating tax policies, strengthening compliance and improving taxpayer services. The reappointment comes at a time when direct tax collections have continued to register healthy growth. According to the Income Tax Department, net direct tax collections rose 14.64 per cent year-on-year to Rs 5.21 lakh crore during the April 1-June 17 period of the current financial year.

Deputed by Centre, Union Ministers Shivraj and Rijiju assess flood situation in Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal floods damage infrastructure, three dead, two missing

Guwahati, June 30: The Central government deputed ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Kiren Rijiju to assess the flood situation and the damages caused in Arunachal Pradesh, even as one person died in the deluge in Assam. The floods in the two neighbouring states were triggered by heavy monsoon rains.

Thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for deputing the two ministers to assess the ground situation, Arunachal Chief Minister Pema Khandu said his government's immediate priority was to ensure swift relief for every affected family, restore essential services, and expedite the reconstruction of the areas impacted by the floods. He posted on X that with this commitment, he and the two Union ministers were on the ground in one of the affected districts, Keyi Panyor, on

Tuesday to assess the situation firsthand, review the ongoing response, and understand the immediate requirements of the affected communities. Khandu also called on Governor Lt Gen KT Parnaik (Retd) and briefed him on the

sised coordinated efforts to strengthen disaster response and resilience. "The governor commended the dedicated services of the State Disaster Response Force, district administrations, Public Works, Civil Aviation and Disaster

bridges and houses. At least three persons were killed, while two remained missing. Meanwhile, the death in Assam occurred in Dhemaaji, the worst-hit district. The floods in the state affected a population of 46,938 in six districts. According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority, rivers Brahmaputra and Disang were in spate, flowing above the danger level at Neamatighat and Nanglamuraghat, respectively.

Authorities set up 10 relief camps/centres where 486 affected people were lodged. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the state government was leaving no stone unturned in its flood response. "While I continue to monitor the situation closely, my Cabinet colleagues and MLAs are on the ground overseeing relief efforts, protection measures and ensuring timely assistance," Sarma said.



prevailing flood situation. He apprised Parnaik about the measures being undertaken by the government to provide relief and ensure the safety of the marooned. Expressing concern over the impact of the floods on lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure, the governor empha-

Management departments, Indian Red Cross Society, volunteers, and residents for their tireless efforts in relief, rescue, and rehabilitation operations," a government statement said.

Twelve of Arunachal's 28 districts are affected. The floods have damaged roads,

Chhattisgarh recommends CBI probe in Koriya murders

Raipur, June 30: The Chhattisgarh state government on Tuesday formally recommended a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the sensational Naugai triple murder case that took place on the night of June 16. An official notification granting consent to extend the jurisdiction of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (CBI) across the state for the case has been issued. The case pertains to a horrific incident in the Sonhat police station limits, where members of the sand mafia allegedly killed three members of the same family, identified as Bharat Singh, Nagendra Singh, and Virendra Singh. A mob of nearly 30 attackers allegedly used a heavy dumper

truck to ram an SUV, pinning its doors shut, before dousing the vehicle in petrol and setting it ablaze on June 16. Following the brutal killings, the victims' grieving family members had been continuously demanding a CBI investigation.

The announcement coincides with the 'Terhavin' (traditional 13th-day mourning ritual) of the deceased, during which Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Vijay Sharma spoke directly with the family members. This marks the second major case referred to the central probe agency since the Vishnu Deo Sai-led BJP government came to power in late 2023.



Chhattisgarh recommends CBI probe in Koriya murders

New Delhi, June 30: The Congress on Tuesday sought initiation of privilege proceedings against Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, alleging that he misled Parliament by stating that no Indian soldiers were martyred during Operation Sindoor. In a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Congress MP and PAC chairperson KC Venugopal invoked Rule 223 of the Rules of Procedure, claiming Singh's statement in the House on July 28, 2025, was "incorrect and misleading."

Venugopal said the Defence Minister had informed Parliament that no personnel were harmed during the operation. However, he pointed to an official list released later naming six armed forces personnel who died in the operation, including members of the Indian Army and Indian Air Force. The Congress lead-

er alleged that withholding such information amounted to a breach of parliamentary privilege and contempt of the House, and urged action against the Defence Minister. In a post on X, Venugopal reiterated his charge, saying



the statement had "misled the people of India" and disrespected the families of the deceased personnel.

The government had released the names of the six personnel on June 26, prompting the Congress to escalate its criticism and demand accountability over the contradiction between parliamentary statements and official disclosures.

Vaibhav's time is now, but will he get a chance?



Durham, June 30: All eyes will be on 15-year-old batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi as India begin their five-match T20I series against England on Wednesday, with speculation growing over whether the teenager will make his international debut. India captain Shreyas Iyer remained non-committal on the team combination but praised the youngster's talent. "He is a brilliant prodigy. Whenever he gets an opportunity, he will do brilliantly," Iyer said on Tuesday, refusing to reveal the playing XI.

The debate over Sooryavanshi's inclusion has intensified following India's historic T20I series loss to Ireland. Former England spinner Graeme Swann described the 15-year-old as a "once-in-a-generation talent" and said India should build their future batting line-up around him. Swann cited Sooryavanshi's fearless IPL performances, including an impressive innings against Australian pacer Pat Cummins, as evidence that

he is ready for international cricket. Batting great Sunil Gavaskar also backed the youngster's inclusion, saying a fresh series presents the ideal opportunity for him to make an immediate impact. Gavaskar noted that England would have little knowledge of Sooryavanshi beyond his IPL exploits, making him a potential match-winner.

However, fitting the teenager into the playing XI poses a challenge. Openers Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson have both been in good form, and dropping either could disrupt a successful opening partnership. Replacing Samson would also leave India with three left-handers at the top of the order, an issue the team has previously sought to avoid. With head coach Gautam Gambhir and skipper Iyer facing a selection dilemma, Wednesday's opening T20I in Durham is expected to provide the answer on whether India's newest teenage sensation will finally receive his maiden international cap.

Morocco 'unstoppable' says coach after Netherlands thriller

Coach backs Morocco for deep World Cup run

Monterrey, June 30: Morocco coach Mohamed Ouabhi believes his team is primed to make a deep run at the World Cup, declaring that the Atlas Lions could be "unstoppable" if they play to their potential. The Moroccans, beaten semi-finalists at the 2022 World Cup, advanced to the last 16 on Monday after winning a thrilling battle with the Netherlands on penalties in Monterrey. It was another stylish display by the African champions, who dominated for long periods in a match that finished 1-1 after extra-time. Ouabhi said Moroccan football is now reaping the benefits of the 2022 team's groundbreaking exploits in becoming the first African team to reach the World Cup semi-finals. "The World Cup in Qatar changed the mentality of the Morocco team, and I'm well placed to speak about this," said Ouabhi, who last year coached Morocco to a momentous victory at the Under-20 World Cup in Chile. "Moroccan players in Morocco believe in them-



selves, the supporters, the fans believe in us as well. It's so important. They're demanding, but it's because they know just how far we can go," he said.

Morocco face co-hosts Canada in the last 16, with a potential quarter-final meeting with France looming on the horizon. Ouabhi said there would be no question of complacency against Canada. "We know that it's game after game, and people think that it's kept to be easy for us, it's going to be a walk in the park for Morocco, which is not the case. Canada is a team that is going to be difficult for us." But Ouabhi said Morocco could go even further than the 2022 team if they fired on

all cylinders. "What we need to be telling ourselves is no one can stop us," he said. "We're unstoppable if we play the football that we know how to play. "But nobody is unbeatable. And I tell my guys that as well. If we get things wrong, we'll go home, and we need to ensure that we have all the tools that we're using, the tools in our arsenal to go as far as we can, and that's the mentality that we want all of our players in Morocco to have."

Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman meanwhile said Morocco's emergence reflected the quality of African football. "It's very clear watching this World Cup that African teams have greatly improved in tactical sense, and also in the way they play their matches," Koeman said. "Morocco is the country that, in terms of talents, really generates good players, young players that continue to join the major clubs in Europe. It's not without a reason why they have a higher ranking than the Netherlands."

Brits suffer early exits at Wimbledon

London, June 30: British tennis endured a disastrous start to Wimbledon as 10 home players lost in the first round on Monday, following the high-profile withdrawals of Emma Raducanu and Jack Draper. Raducanu pulled out on the eve of the tournament due to a stress fracture, while Draper withdrew on Monday citing a long-term arm injury, removing two of Britain's biggest hopes before the tournament even gained momentum. The setback was compounded on court as all 10 British players who completed their opening-round matches suffered defeat. A 11th, Jack Pinnington Jones, was also on the verge of elimination before his

match was suspended due to bad light.

The defeats included a five-set loss for world No. 26 Cam Norrie, a former Wimbledon semi-finalist and the only seeded British player in the draw. Draper's withdrawal also disrupted plans for two-time Wimbledon champion Andy Murray, who was set to assist his coaching team during the tournament. Raducanu's absence was particularly disappointing after her strong run to the Queen's Club final earlier this month.

Tournament organisers acknowledged the setbacks but expressed hope that remaining British players could still deliver results in the coming rounds.



Rugby Premier League Season 2: Hyderabad Heroes capture top prize

Hyderabad, June 28: Hyderabad Heroes were crowned champions of the Rugby Premier League Season 2 after defeating Mumbai Dreamers 41-17 in a thrilling final at the Gachibowli Stadium here on Sunday. Organised by GMR Sports in partnership with Rugby India, the second season of the league concluded in the presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister of Telangana Shri Anumula Revanth Reddy, Kiran Kumar Grandhi, Corporate Chairman, GMR Group, Chiranjeevi, Indian actor and philanthropist, PV Sindhu, world champion and Olympic medallist and Rahul Bose, president of Rugby India and League Commissioner of the Rugby Premier League.

Hyderabad Heroes lifted the championship trophy and received the winners' prize of Rs 45 lakh, while Mumbai Dreamers claimed Rs 25 lakh. Bengaluru Bravehearts secured third place and

received prize money of Rs 15 lakh. In the final, Hyderabad produced a clinical performance to emerge victors. Mumbai dominated early possession but were unable to convert it into points as Hyderabad's disciplined defence forced crucial



turnovers.

The Heroes capitalised through swift counter-attacks, with Francisco Cosculluela's steal setting up Taitaifono Tavita before Manuel Moreno won possession to create an easy finish for Shivam Shukla. Maurice Longbottom

then added a drop goal to give Hyderabad complete control heading into the break. The Heroes maintained their relentless tempo after half-time, with Tavita again creating space on the left for Diego Ardao to score. Mumbai finally found a breakthrough as quicker ball movement released Ethan McFarland, but Hyderabad continued to punish turnovers, with Ardao grabbing his second before Kevin Wekesa finished a flowing move out wide.

Terio Tamani extended the advantage early in the final quarter, while James Turner pulled one back for the Dreamers before setting up Sukumar Hembrom late on. However, Hyderabad's clinical finishing and defensive intensity ensured they closed out a commanding victory. Meanwhile, Bengaluru Bravehearts secured third place after defeating Chennai Bulls 22-19 in an entertaining play-off encounter.

India retain Harmanpreet as Asian Games captain

New Delhi, June 30: Harmanpreet Kaur has been retained as India captain for the 2026 Asian Games in Japan despite the team's early exit from the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in England. The 15-member squad, announced by the Women's Selection Committee, includes Smriti Mandhana as vice-captain.

India, defending gold medallists, will compete in the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya from September 19 to October 4.

The only change from the World Cup squad is the inclusion of G Kamalini in place of Yastika Bhatia. Shreyanka Patil has also been named, subject to fitness clearance after injury.

