

## Defence secretary tours Japan's JS Niyodo amid Mogami frigate pitch to India



**New Delhi, July 14:** Amid Japan's historic loosening of its post-war arms export curbs, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh visited the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's (JMSDF) JS Niyodo during his trip to Japan, as Tokyo steps up efforts to secure an Indian order for its Mogami-class stealth frigates through an offer of technology transfer and local production. Singh toured the seventh Mogami-class frigate at the Kure naval base in Hiroshima and met Vice Admiral Matsumoto Tamotsu, Commandant of the Kure District. "The visit reaffirmed the commitment of India-Japan to further strengthen maritime security cooperation and deepen defence ties," the defence ministry said Tuesday. The choice of platform was significant. The frigate is the first Mogami-class frigate built with the Mk 41 vertical launching system from the outset and the first of the class to be based at Kure, one of Japan's five principal naval bases overlooking the East China Sea.

The visit comes as India evaluates Japan's proposal to manufacture the Mogami-class frigates domestically under the 'Make in India' initiative. Sources in the know told TNIE that Tokyo has offered to transfer the design and production rights for the warships, along with critical technologies, marking a significant departure from Japan's traditionally restrictive defence export policy. The proposal is also understood to include integration of Indian systems such as the BrahMos supersonic cruise

missile, with construction likely to be undertaken by either Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders or Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers. If it materialises, it will be Japan's first major defence platform export to India.

The Japanese offer comes after Australia selected an upgraded Mogami-class design under Australia's SEA 3000 General Purpose Frigate programme, giving Tokyo its biggest overseas naval export opportunity to date. The 3,900-tonne frigates, with a full-load displacement of about 5,500 tonnes, are designed for multi-role operations with a crew of around 90 because of extensive automation. They are equipped with a 127 mm Mk 45 gun, Type 17 anti-ship missiles, a SeaRAM close-in weapon system and a 16-cell Mk 41 vertical launching system, while propulsion is provided by a combined diesel-and-gas arrangement centred on a Rolls-Royce MT30 gas turbine.

The proposal will also be weighed against the Navy's indigenous warship-building plans. With the seven Project 17 Alpha frigates nearly completing commissioning and a follow-on Project 17 Bravo programme under consideration, introducing a new foreign design would create a parallel logistics and maintenance chain, despite Japan's reported offer of full technology transfer. The stop at Kure followed Singh's meetings in Tokyo with Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and Vice Minister Kano Koji, during which the two sides reviewed regional security, maritime cooperation, defence industrial collaboration, cyber security and space cooperation. The visit also built on Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takachi's visit to India earlier this month, during which Bharat Electronics Limited signed an agreement for the co-development of the UNICORN integrated mast system already fitted on the Mogami-class frigates amid China's growing maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific.



## India Responds to US Bishnoi Gang Indictment

**New Delhi, July 14:** India on Tuesday issued its first official response after the United States indicted jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and several associates in connection with the 2023 killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada. The Ministry of External Affairs said India had taken note of the US Department of Justice's action and reaffirmed its commitment to combating transnational organised crime and terrorism.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said criminal networks involved in terrorism, narco-trafficking, human trafficking, illegal firearms trade and other activities pose a major threat to societies worldwide. He highlighted the growing security cooperation between India and the United States, stating that

agencies from both countries have worked closely to counter such threats.

The US Department of Justice recently unsealed indictments against 37 people allegedly linked to India-based organised crime syndicates, including the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. American prosecutors accused the group of operating a transnational network involved in targeted killings, extortion, drug trafficking and intimidation campaigns across multiple countries. The allegations relate to the June 2023 assassination of Nijjar outside a gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia, which led to a diplomatic crisis between India and Canada. Bishnoi, who has been in an Indian prison since 2015, remains in custody, while his alleged associate Goldy Brar is reportedly a fugitive.

## Assam BJP MLA Alleges USTM Behind Flooding



**Guwahati, July 13:** Assam BJP MLA Manab Deka on Monday accused the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) of creating a "water bomb" and engaging in "flood terrorism," alleging that the institution's activities could pose a threat to Guwahati. Speaking to reporters, the Lakhimpur legislator said, "USTM is preparing a water bomb and doing flood terrorism. That water bomb will destroy Guwahati," without providing evidence to support the allegation.

His remarks came a day after heavy rainfall caused widespread waterlogging across Guwahati, disrupting normal life in several parts of the city. Jorabat was among the worst-affected areas, witnessing severe flooding and massive traffic congestion.

## IIT Study Finds E20 Safe for Engines

**Kanpur, July 14:** Researchers at IIT Kanpur have said their studies found no significant drop in fuel efficiency and no evidence of engine damage from using E20 (20% ethanol-blended) petrol in either new or older vehicles. Project Scientist Dhruv Raj Karana said any minor mileage variation is below 5% and can result from driving conditions, vehicle maintenance or normal testing differences rather than the fuel itself. The findings come after the Oil Ministry clarified that E20 may reduce mileage by up to 5% in some vehicles but offers benefits such as lower lifecycle carbon emissions. IIT Kanpur urged motorists to follow vehicle manufacturer guidelines and official government advisories instead of unverified social media claims.



## CM Saha Unveils ₹93.24 Crore Development Projects

**Agartala, July 14:** In a significant boost to Tripura's infrastructure and public service delivery, Chief Minister Prof. Dr. Manik Saha on Tuesday inaugurated, launched and virtually laid the foundation stones for a series of development projects worth ₹93.24 crore in Udaipur, Gomati district. The projects span the health, education, connectivity, sports and administrative sectors, marking a major step in the state's development journey.

During the programme, the Chief Minister formally launched the second phase of the Mukhyamantri Niramay Arogya Abhiyan, along with the Niramay Lab Network and a special diarrhoea prevention initiative aimed at strengthening healthcare delivery, particularly in rural areas. Highlighting the government's commitment to quality education, Dr. Saha inaugurated the new permanent building of Udaipur English Medium School, constructed at a cost of ₹7.82 crore, and virtually inaugurated the Bhagini Nivedita English Medium School



building built at ₹1.48 crore. He also laid the foundation stone for infrastructure development at Hariyananda English Medium Higher Secondary School, a project worth ₹14.74 crore.

To promote sports among youth, the Chief Minister virtually inaugurated a synthetic football turf at the Ramesh English Medium School ground, developed at a cost of ₹5.80 crore. On the infrastructure front, Dr. Saha inaugurated Type-III staff quarters at

the SDM office complex in Udaipur, built at ₹2.23 crore. He also laid the foundation stone for the ₹43.16 crore expansion of Udaipur Sub-divisional Hospital, which includes the construction of a new five-storey (G+4) hospital building expected to significantly strengthen healthcare services across Gomati district. Additional projects include the construction of office buildings for the Superintending Engineer (2nd Circle) and Executive

Engineer (Udaipur Division) of the Rural Development Department at an estimated cost of around ₹10 crore, widening and strengthening of Dak Bungalow Road connecting Gomati Yatri Niwas to NH-08 at ₹4.71 crore, and the construction of a new District Labour Office along with a Digital Labour Chowk in Udaipur at ₹3.30 crore.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha said the present government is committed to taking development to the doorstep of every citizen. He stated that the large-scale investments in healthcare, education and connectivity would transform Udaipur's infrastructure while accelerating Tripura's overall economic growth and improving the quality of life for its people. The programme was attended by Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy, Labour Minister Tinku Roy, Gomati Zilla Parishad Sabhadhipati Debal Deb Roy, Matabari MLA Abhishek Deb Roy, senior government officials and a large number of local residents.



# Assam Budget: Polygamy practitioners to get no govt benefits

**Guwahati, July 11:** The Assam government has proposed in its budget that government employees found practising polygamy will be dismissed from service. The budget 2026-27 presented on Friday also proposed denial of benefits under government welfare schemes to men found guilty of the practice. "In order to promote women's empowerment and gender justice, any male practising polygamy shall not be eligible to avail of benefits under any government welfare scheme," Finance Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah said in his budget speech. A person convicted of an offence under any criminal law would also be denied benefits under welfare schemes. The government proposed to amend the Assam Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1964 to provide that any government servant found practising polygamy would be liable for dismissal from service.

The budget also proposed intro-



duction of a "green cess" on identified polluting activities and assets. Baruah proposed to levy the green cess on stone crushers, coke-based industries, brick kilns, transfer of

second-hand vehicles, commercial extraction of groundwater and such other environmentally sensitive industries and activities. "The proceeds from this cess will be utilised

for afforestation, pollution control, biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, green energy, water resource management and other environmentally sustainable infrastruc-

ture," Baruah said. The government will launch an "aerial seeding initiative" using drones to disperse seed balls over inaccessible forest areas, hill slopes and riverine tracts to accelerate afforestation and restore degraded landscapes. The government will also launch "Assam tea and golf trail", a tourism initiative that brings Assam's tea heritage and golf courses into a world-class tourism circuit. The government will introduce proton beam therapy for advanced cancer care with an investment of Rs 550 crore.

Baruah said over the past 10 years, Assam's budget size expanded threefold to Rs 2,00,782 crore. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma called it a revenue-neutral budget that placed no burden on people. "Since 2015-16, Assam's budget size, per capita income and own tax revenue have grown by 300%, capital expenditure by 900% and budget utilisation has risen from 58% to 85%," Sarma said.

## Meghalaya CM Reviews Progress Of Unity Mall Project In New Shillong



**Shillong, July 14:** Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Tuesday visited the construction site of the upcoming Unity Mall in New Shillong to review the progress of the project. Geographic Reference The Unity Mall is being developed as a dedicated platform for the state's artisans, weavers, entrepreneurs and local producers to showcase and market Meghalaya's unique handicrafts, handloom products and other indigenous goods.

During the inspection, the Chief Minister said the project would celebrate Meghalaya's rich cultural heritage while creating new opportunities for livelihoods, tourism and local entrepreneurship. "We are committed to completing this important project on schedule so that it becomes a vibrant destination for both residents and visitors," Sangma said. Once completed, the Unity Mall is expected to serve as a major hub for promoting locally made products, supporting small businesses and enhancing the state's tourism appeal.

## Mizoram Hit By Massive Landslide, 2 Houses And Shop Washed Away

**Aizawl, July 14:** A massive landslide struck Tawipui South village in Mizoram's Lunglei district early Tuesday morning, sweeping away two houses, a roadside eatery, and a shop. The incident occurred around 5 a.m. and also disrupted traffic along National Highway 2, which connects Lunglei with Lawngtlai district.

Fortunately, no casualties were reported as residents had evacuated with their belongings before the landslide hit. Officials confirmed that the structures destroyed were located on the opposite side of the road, directly in



the path of the sliding earth. The swift evacuation ensured that lives were spared, though the damage to property and infrastructure remains significant.

Authorities are monitoring the situation closely, as

landslides are a recurring hazard in the hilly terrain of Mizoram, particularly during the monsoon season. Efforts are underway to restore traffic movement and assess the extent of damage caused by the incident.

## Security Intensified In Nagaland After Deadly IED Blast



**Kohima, July 14:** Security forces have intensified search and area domination operations in Nagaland following the deadly improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Sukhovi, Chümoukedima district, that claimed the life of an Assam Rifles personnel and injured four others. According to PRO Defence Nagaland, additional columns of the Assam Rifles and Nagaland Police have been deployed to strengthen security operations and track down

those responsible for the attack. The soldier killed in the blast has been identified as Havildar Mohd Iqbal of the 28 Assam Rifles. The four injured personnel are reported to be in stable condition and are undergoing medical treatment. Meanwhile, a wreath-laying ceremony was held on Tuesday afternoon at the Assam Rifles Training Centre and School in Sukhovi to pay tribute to the fallen soldier.

Director General of Assam Rifles Lieutenant General Vikas Lakhera led senior Army and Assam Rifles officers in laying floral wreaths and honouring Havildar Mohd Iqbal for his supreme sacrifice in the line of duty.

The IED explosion occurred during an operational movement near Sukhovi on Monday, triggering a large-scale security response across the area. Authorities have stepped up search operations as the investigation into the attack continues.

## Sikkim, Bengal Sign Pact to Boost Connectivity

**Sikkim, July 11:** The Governments of Sikkim and West Bengal on Friday signed a Reciprocal Transport Agreement in Kolkata to strengthen interstate transport connectivity and introduce measures aimed at benefiting transport operators and drivers in Sikkim. Government The agreement was signed at Paribahan Bhavan by Ravinder Singh, Principal Secretary of the Transport Department, Government of West Bengal; Manish Pradhan, Secretary, Transport Department, Government of Sikkim; and Roshan Pradhan, ATC-cum-Secretary, State Transport Authority, Government of Sikkim. West Bengal Transport Minister Arjun Singh was present during the signing ceremony. According to the agreement, the quota of countersignature permits for Sikkim taxi vehicles has been increased from 3,000 to 6,000. Taxi vehicles operating under Special Permits will also be allowed to pick up passengers on their return journey from Siliguri and other areas. The agreement further provides that Sikkim-based transport vehicles travelling between Rangpo and Melli will no longer require countersignature permits under a newly introduced corridor facility. The measures are intended to improve transport operations and facilitate interstate movement. The agreement follows discussions between the two state governments on enhancing transport connectivity between Sikkim and West Bengal.

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang welcomed the agreement, describing it as a significant development for the state's transport sector. He thanked the Government of West Bengal for its cooperation in finalising the agreement. The Chief Minister said the agreement is expected to benefit transport operators, improve regional connectivity, and further strengthen cooperation between the neighbouring states of Sikkim and West Bengal.



## TVS Apache crosses 7 million global riders, accelerates premium motorcycle growth

**Guwahati:** TVS Motor Company has achieved a major milestone with its premium motorcycle brand, TVS Apache, surpassing seven million customers across 90 countries while unveiling its new brand campaign, 'Tu Race Laga', aimed at strengthening the brand's performance-oriented identity.



and global presence. The campaign film, directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Ram Madhvan, celebrates the brand's 'Track to Road' philosophy that has defined TVS Apache since its launch in 2005.

Backed by more than four decades of TVS Racing heritage, TVS Apache has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing performance motorcycle brands. The company said the brand

has consistently introduced segment-first technologies, including roto-petal disc brakes, fuel injection, dual-channel ABS, multiple ride modes, TVS SmartXconnect, Glide Through Technology, Built-To-Order factory customisation, keyless ride systems, traction control and dynamic stability systems. The brand

also has a community of over 500,000 registered riders participating in curated rides, track experiences and brand engagement initiatives.

Thanking customers for their continued support, Gaurav Gupta, President, India 2W Business, TVS Motor Company, said the milestone reflects two decades of customer trust and the company's commitment to innovation, global expansion and rider communities. Vimal Sumbly,

Head Business – Premium, said the new campaign pays tribute to riders who embrace performance and underlines the company's focus on redefining premium motorcycling through race-bred technology and immersive ownership experiences.

The TVS Apache portfolio currently spans the Street/Naked, Supersport and Adventure Rally Tourer segments with engine capacities ranging from 160cc to 310cc. The lineup includes the RTR 160, RTR 160 4V, RTR 180, RTR 200 4V, RTR 310, RR 310 and the RTX, catering to a broad spectrum of performance motorcycle enthusiasts.

The seven-million customer milestone is expected to further strengthen TVS Apache's business prospects in Guwahati and the Northeast, where demand for premium motorcycles continues to grow alongside rising interest in touring and performance riding. Industry observers believe the expanded product portfolio, technology-led features and strong brand community could help TVS Motor enhance its market share in the region's premium two-wheeler segment, supported by increasing consumer preference for feature-rich motorcycles.

## TVS Motor, Indian Oil join hands to drive green LPG distribution

**Guwahati:** TVS Motor Company has partnered with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (Indian Oil) to accelerate sustainable last-mile LPG cylinder distribution across India by deploying its TVS King Kargo HD commercial vehicles through Indian Oil's extensive network of more than 13,000 LPG distributors. The strategic collaboration, formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in Coimbatore, is aimed at advancing cleaner, more efficient and cost-effective commercial mobility while supporting the country's transition to green logistics.

Under the agreement, TVS Motor will supply its King Kargo HD range for doorstep LPG cylinder deliveries, enabling distributors to improve operational efficiency, lower total ownership costs and reduce carbon emissions. The collaboration will begin with the first phase of vehicle deliveries to Indian Oil distributors across the country. TVS Motor said the King Kargo HD platforms offer advanced technology, superior power and segment-leading features designed for reliable last-mile cargo transportation.

TVS Motor Business Head, Commercial Mobility, Rajat Gupta, said the partnership would help businesses improve productivity while making sustainable mobility more practical and accessible. Indian Oil Executive Director, SR



& SH-TNSO, V. C. Asokan, said the induction of electric cargo vehicles would modernise the LPG distribution ecosystem, enhance fleet productivity, reduce operating costs and contribute to India's clean mobility goals.

In Guwahati, the partnership is expected to create new opportunities for LPG distributors and commercial fleet operators looking to adopt cleaner transport solutions. With Assam witnessing rising demand for efficient last-mile logistics, the rollout of TVS King Kargo HD vehicles could support faster adoption of sustainable cargo mobility while helping distributors improve delivery efficiency and reduce long-term operating expenses.

## Nissan targets C-SUV growth with global debut of TEKTON in India

**Mumbai:** Nissan Motor India's global premiere of the all-new TEKTON underscores India's growing significance in the country's automotive manufacturing ecosystem and aligns with the broader policy thrust towards making India a global production and export hub. Developed under Nissan's "One Car, One World" philosophy and manufactured at its Chennai plant, the premium C-SUV will serve both domestic buyers and export markets across the Middle East and Africa, strengthening India's position in the global automotive value chain.

Priced from Rs 10.49 lakh for the T160 Manual Transmission and Rs 14.99 lakh for the T280 Manual Transmission and T280 DCT variants, the TEKTON marks Nissan's second product launch in India in 2026 and forms a key pillar of the company's resurgence strategy. The SUV features a 100% turbocharged engine lineup delivering up to 163 PS and 280 Nm of torque, Google built-in connectivity with access to more than 200 apps, over 55 connected features through the MyNISSAN App, a class-leading 700-litre boot and more



than 17 ADAS technologies.

The launch reflects the increasing confidence of global automakers in India's manufacturing capabilities, skilled workforce and export competitiveness. By positioning Chennai as a production base for international markets, Nissan is supporting industrial growth, technology transfer and value-added manufacturing. The TEKTON's blend of advanced engineering, premium features, safety technologies and export potential highlights how India's automobile sector continues to evolve from a domestic market to a strategic global production hub, contributing to investment, employment and long-term industrial development.

## SBI Funds Management IPO opens July 14 with issue size of up to Rs 11,692 crore

**Guwahati:** Primary market activity is set to gather momentum with SBI Funds Management Ltd announcing the launch of its maiden initial public offering (IPO), scheduled to open for subscription from July 14 to July 16. The company has fixed the price band at Rs 545-574 per equity share, while the anchor investor portion will open on July 13. The IPO is entirely an offer-for-sale of up to 203.71 million equity shares, valuing the issue at around Rs 11,102 crore at the lower price band and Rs 11,692 crore at the upper end. Investors can bid for a minimum of 26 equity shares and in multiples thereafter.

Market participants are closely tracking the offering as SBI Funds Management, incorporated in 1992, is India's largest asset management company by quarterly average assets under management (QAAUM). As of March 31, 2026, it managed mutual fund assets worth Rs 12.51 lakh crore with a 15.3 per cent market share, while its total QAAUM, including portfolio management services and advisory mandates, stood at Rs 29.46 lakh crore. The company also leads India's passive fund segment with ETF and index fund assets of Rs 4.06 lakh crore, accounting for a 27.9 per cent market share. Between March 2024 and March 2026, total QAAUM grew at a CAGR of 14.22



per cent, while mutual fund QAAUM and equity-oriented assets recorded CAGRs of 16.97 per cent and 21.79 per cent, respectively.

The company received SEBI approval to manage SBI Mutual Fund in 1993 and later became a joint venture following Société Générale Asset Management's investment in 2004. After the merger of Crédit Agricole's and Société Générale's asset management businesses in 2011, Amundi India Holding acquired the stake and continues as a promoter alongside State Bank of India and Amundi Asset Management.

In Guwahati, the IPO is expected to draw considerable attention from retail investors, distributors and financial advisors amid rising participation in mutual funds and equity investing across Assam and the Northeast. Brokerage firms believe the strong SBI brand, market leadership and long-term growth profile of

the asset manager could encourage healthy subscription from investors in the region, particularly those seeking exposure to India's expanding asset management industry.

Kotak Mahindra Capital Company, Axis Capital, BofA Securities India, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India), ICICI Securities, Jefferies India, JM Financial, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors and SBI Capital Markets are managing the issue as book-running lead managers, while KFin Technologies is the registrar. The book-built issue reserves up to 50 per cent for qualified institutional buyers, at least 15 per cent for non-institutional investors and at least 35 per cent for retail investors. Reservations have also been made for eligible SBI shareholders, SBI Funds Management employees and SBI employees, with eligible employees receiving a discount of Rs 54 per equity share.

## PM-SETU gets ₹1,237.58 crore boost as Centre clears nationwide ITI expansion

**Guwahati:** The Centre has approved the nationwide rollout of the Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU), alongside Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs) worth ₹1,237.58 crore, paving the way for industry-led modernisation of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) across the country. The decision was taken at the 4th National Steering Committee meeting chaired by Debashree Mukherjee, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, in New Delhi on July 6, in the presence of DG-DGT Dilip Kumar, Joint Secretary Manasi Sahay Thakur, state government officials, industry leaders and development partners.

The committee approved PM-SETU's transition from the pilot phase to implementation across all 200 identified ITI clusters nationwide, while also clearing measures to simplify execution, enhance industry participation, encourage greater involvement of public sector undertakings and strengthen the institutional ecosystem supporting the programme.

As part of the approved SIPs, Jindal Naveen Avsar Limited will invest ₹240.21 crore to anchor the Barbil ITI cluster in Odisha, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India will invest ₹240.18 crore for the Surat cluster in Gujarat, while Telangana secured approvals for three clusters led by Apollo MedSkills (₹241.01

crore), Sri Siddharth Infratech & Services (I) Pvt. Ltd. (₹275.24 crore) and Neuland Foundation (₹240.94 crore). The projects were recommended by the respective State Steering Committees and are aimed at upgrading multiple ITI clusters through industry partnerships.

PM-SETU is one of the Centre's flagship skilling initiatives focused on modernising India's ITI ecosystem through upgraded infrastructure, industry-aligned curricula, advanced training facilities and stronger employability outcomes.

The expansion of PM-SETU is expected to create fresh opportunities for industries and training institutions in Guwahati and the wider Northeast. With sectors such as



manufacturing, healthcare, logistics and infrastructure witnessing growing demand for skilled manpower, industry stakeholders believe the initiative could encourage more cor-

porate participation in Assam's ITIs, improve workforce readiness and strengthen the region's attractiveness for future industrial investments and job creation.

## IndusInd Bank strengthens digital payments ecosystem with EPFO integration

**Guwahati:** IndusInd Bank has expanded its digital banking capabilities by integrating with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), a move that is expected to enhance statutory payment services for businesses and strengthen its corporate banking franchise. The integration allows employers and establishments to make Provident Fund (PF) contributions directly through the EPFO portal using the bank's Corporate Internet Banking platform, Indus Direct, and its MSME-focused mobile

banking application, INDIE for Business.

The new facility enables organisations to select IndusInd Bank as the payment option on the EPFO portal and complete PF remittances through a secure and efficient digital process. By bringing one of India's most widely used statutory payment systems onto its digital banking platform, the lender aims to simplify compliance, improve payment efficiency and offer a seamless experience for corporate and MSME customers. The bank said the integration

represents another milestone in its digital growth strategy and reinforces its position as a trusted banking partner for businesses and institutions.

In Guwahati, the integration could be particularly beneficial for Assam's expanding base of MSMEs, tea producers, manufacturing units, educational institutions and service-sector employers. As digital adoption accelerates across the region, the facility is expected to reduce administrative delays in PF payments, improve statutory compliance and encourage

wider use of digital banking channels among enterprises operating in Guwahati and the Northeast.

As of March 31, 2026, IndusInd Bank served around 42 million customers through 3,136 branches and banking outlets, 2,870 ATMs and a network spanning approximately 1.62 lakh villages across India. The bank continues to expand its Digital 2.0 strategy while offering products across retail, corporate, SME, government and institutional banking segments.

## Renault partners IIT Kanpur to strengthen vehicle R&D in India



**Guwahati:** Renault India has partnered with Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur to enhance its vehicle research and development capabilities in India by leveraging the institute's National Wind Tunnel Facility (NWTf) for advanced aerodynamic and wind-noise testing. The collaboration is aimed at supporting the development of next-generation passenger vehicles with improved efficiency, safety and performance, while reinforcing Renault's commitment to innovation and advanced engineering in the country.

The partnership brings together Renault's global engineering expertise and IIT Kanpur's state-of-the-art research infrastructure, enabling the automaker to validate vehicle aerodynamic characteristics and wind-noise performance against defined engineering targets for more precise product development. Dr. Vikraman V, Chief of Engineering, Renault Group India, said the collaboration strengthens Renault's engineering capabilities in India and reflects the country's growing importance in the group's global innovation ecosystem. Prof. Dr. Alakesh Chandra Mandal, Department of Aerospace Engineering and Coordinator of

the NWTf, said the partnership demonstrates the facility's versatility by extending its expertise from aerospace to automotive research.

India's first facility of its kind, the NWTf features a continuous closed-jet test section measuring 3.0 metres by 2.25 metres, enabling aerodynamic evaluations at speeds ranging from 80 kmph to 280 kmph. The facility is being upgraded to support testing at speeds exceeding 400 kmph. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) also establishes a framework for commercial engagement, intellectual property management and confidentiality between the two organisations.

In Guwahati, the partnership is expected to strengthen Renault's long-term product portfolio for customers in the Northeast by accelerating the development of technologically advanced vehicles with better fuel efficiency, reduced wind noise and improved driving dynamics. Industry observers believe such engineering advancements could enhance Renault's competitiveness in Guwahati's growing passenger vehicle market, where buyers are increasingly seeking premium features, comfort and performance in addition to value.

## Johnson's® Baby leadership focuses on innovation with Milk & Rice range launch

**Mumbai:** Johnson's® Baby, the world's No.1 baby and childcare brand, has strengthened its India portfolio with the launch of its new Milk & Rice Range, reflecting the growing importance of emerging markets in the global baby care industry. The launch is accompanied by the 'Poshan Ka Pehla Sparsh' campaign, which adapts the traditional Indian Annaprashan, or Mukhe Bhaat, ceremony into a 'Food for Skin Ritual', combining local cultural relevance with modern skincare innovation.

The Johnson's® Baby Milk & Rice Range is formulated with milk proteins, rice bran protein, Vitamin E, glycerin and a multivitamin complex to nourish and help protect a newborn's delicate skin barrier. The portfolio includes Soap, Wash & Shampoo, Lotion and Face & Body Cream. According to the company, the products are clinically proven mild, pH balanced and hypoallergenic, while the Nourishing Milk & Rice Lotion and Face & Body Cream provide up to 24-hour moisturisation through lightweight, fast-absorbing formulations that help strengthen the skin's natural moisture barrier.



The campaign film depicts a baby's first food ceremony, where family members eagerly await the opportunity to feed the child before the mother reflects on how milk and rice have been part of the baby's nourishment journey since Day 1. Commenting on the launch, Peeyush Unnikat, Group Product Manager – Johnson's® Baby, said the new range extends the trusted nourishment associated with milk and rice beyond a

baby's first foods to skincare, reinforcing the brand's commitment to trusted infant care.

The campaign will be rolled out across digital platforms and social media, supported by influencer partnerships across the country, as Johnson's® Baby seeks to deepen consumer engagement and strengthen its position in one of the world's fastest-growing baby care markets.



# L&T Finance reports record Q1 profit as retail lending and AI push drive growth

**Guwahati:** L&T Finance Ltd. (LTF) reported its highest-ever consolidated quarterly profit after tax (PAT) of ₹902 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2026, registering a 29 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase, supported by strong retail lending and business expansion. The company's consolidated loan book grew 27 per cent YoY to a record ₹1,29,634 crore, while the retail loan book rose 28 per cent to ₹1,27,535 crore. Retail disbursements surged 36 per cent to ₹23,852 crore during the quarter.

The NBFC said it is accelerating technology deployment to transform into an AI-native lender. Its customer-facing PLANET app crossed 2.5 crore downloads, processed collections exceeding ₹11,500 crore, serviced more than 14 crore customer requests and sourced loans



worth around ₹34,462 crore. The Partner PLANET platform onboarded over 4,400 dealers and enabled trade advance withdrawals of more than ₹590 crore. Managing Director and CEO Sudipta Roy said the company's AI ecosystem, including Project Cyclops and Project Nostradamus, is enhancing underwriting, portfolio monitoring, customer experience and operational efficiency under its Lakshya 2031 strategy. He added that improving infrastructure spending, resilient consumption and the re-

covery of the Rural Business Finance vertical continue to support growth. Key business segments posted healthy expansion during the quarter, with Personal Loans leading growth as the loan book jumped 80 per cent and disbursements rose 126 per cent YoY. Gold Finance recorded a 182 per cent increase in its loan book, while Housing Loans, SME Finance, Rural Business Finance, Farmer Finance and Two-wheeler Finance also delivered double-digit growth in assets and disbursements.

In Guwahati, L&T Finance's sustained focus on rural finance, MSME lending, housing and digital credit could benefit the Northeast, where demand for retail finance continues to rise alongside infrastructure development. The company's AI-led lending model and expanding digital platforms are expected to improve credit access for borrowers across Assam, supporting financial inclusion and creating opportunities for dealers, entrepreneurs and small businesses in the region.

# Insurance awareness drive signals long-term growth opportunity for life insurance sector

**Guwahati:** India's life insurance sector received a fresh boost after Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) Chairman Shri Ajay Seth unveiled a Consumer Awareness Comic Book Series, reinforcing the regulator's "Insurance for All" vision and highlighting the industry's focus on expanding insurance penetration through financial literacy.

The initiative, launched on National Insurance Awareness Day, brings together IRDAI, the Life Insurance Council and the Insurance Awareness Committee-Life (IAC-Life) to simplify insurance concepts such as the Married Women's Property (MWP) Act, Waiver of Premium (WoP) and Critical Illness riders. Through the story of a young insurance advisor, Supriya, the comic series aims to make life insurance easier to understand and encourage informed financial planning among households.

The initiative reflects the industry's strategic shift from product promotion to consumer education, a move expected to support sustainable business growth over the long term. Kamlesh Rao, Chairperson of IAC-Life, said financial preparedness is central to India's economic resilience and highlighted progress under the 'Sabse Pehle Life Insurance' campaign. Life Insurance Council Secretary General Aditya Gupta said simplifying insurance conversations would strengthen consumer trust and improve adoption.

The launch also featured a panel discussion on the importance of life insurance, with LIC Managing Director Doraiswamy, PNB MetLife MD and CEO Sameer Bansal, IndiaFirst Life Insurance MD and CEO Rushabh Gandhi and Kamlesh Rao, moderated by financial journalist Sonia Shenoy.

The sector continues to post healthy growth, with New Business Premium rising 15.7 per cent year-on-year in FY26 and more than 2.83 crore policies issued. However, industry leaders noted that insurance penetration still lags economic progress. With nearly 87 per cent of Indians facing a life insurance protection gap, including over 90 per cent among those aged 18-35, sustained awareness initiatives are expected to create significant long-term growth opportunities for insurers and strengthen the sector's market outlook.



# Flipkart posts 50% growth in food and nutrition business amid rising health-conscious consumption

**Mumbai:** Flipkart has announced a 50 per cent year-on-year growth in its food and nutrition category, driven by increasing demand from Gen Z consumers and shoppers in Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets, reinforcing the rapid evolution of India's digital food commerce ecosystem. The company said Flipkart Minutes contributed 25 per cent of total category demand, while Tier 2+ markets accounted for 65 per cent of overall demand, reflecting the growing adoption of healthier, premium and discovery-led food choices across Bharat.

According to Flipkart, Gen Z recorded 60 per cent annual growth, with protein

oats, high-protein peanut butter, protein muesli and gourmet chocolates emerging as key demand drivers. Korean-flavoured snacks are also witnessing strong traction in metropolitan markets, while searches for healthier alternatives, including cold-pressed oils, olive oils, authentic ghee, premium dry fruits and dates, have increased by 80 per cent over the past year. The company also observed distinct buying patterns, with men driving purchases of nuts, chocolates and spreads, and women increasingly opting for value-added tea, coffee and edible seeds.

Commenting on the growth, Nishant Dalal, Vice President, Consumables

(FMCG and General Merchandise), Flipkart, said evolving consumer preferences towards wellness, identity and discovery are creating new opportunities for brands while making healthier food choices more accessible through digital commerce.

The announcement coincided with Flipkart Food Fest 3.0, which brought together more than 50 leading brands, over 1,000 creators and influencers, celebrity chefs including Farah Khan, Chef Kunal Kapur and Chef Ranveer Brar, over 10 product launches, immersive brand experiences and an in-app sale running from July 7 to 15 for shoppers across Bharat.

# Industree Foundation, NSRLM partner to scale women-led bamboo economy in Nagaland

**Kohima:** Industree Foundation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Nagaland State Rural Livelihoods Mission (NSRLM) to integrate 30,000 smallholder women farmers into the bamboo value chain, marking a significant step towards expanding regenerative, women-led livelihoods in Nagaland. The collaboration, formalised in Kohima, forms part of the Bamboo Sub-Sector Initiative under the DAY-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) of the Ministry of Rural Development, which aims to empower one million rural women through bamboo-based enterprises over the next four to five years.

Under the partnership, NSRLM and Industree Foundation will promote bamboo cultivation on fallow and underutilised land, establish



women-led collective enterprises, strengthen processing infrastructure, develop new bamboo products and improve access to domestic and international markets. Speaking on the occasion, Industree Foundation CEO Neju George Abraham said Naga-

land's rich bamboo diversity offers immense commercial potential and added that the initiative will also focus on certified plantations, carbon credit accreditation and building a traceable seed-to-market supply chain.

The MoU was signed by Shri Moa Sangtam, Joint Secretary, Rural Development and Mission Director, NSRLM, in the presence of Additional Mission Director Shri Theose Thongsar, COO Shri M Rollan Lotha, SPM Farm Dr. Sokishumo Kithan, and Industree Foundation representatives including Remya Devan. The foundation said bamboo cultivation can provide women farmers with stable incomes from the fourth year of harvest, with productivity extending beyond four decades, ensuring long-term livelihood security. In Kohima, the initiative is expected to stimulate investment in the state's bamboo ecosystem by encouraging value-added manufacturing, local processing units and women-led enterprises. Improved market linkages and globally rec-

ognised certification standards could enhance the competitiveness of Nagaland's bamboo products, create employment opportunities and position Kohima as an emerging hub for sustainable bamboo-based businesses and green rural entrepreneurship.

Headquartered in Bengaluru, Industree Foundation has undertaken similar bamboo livelihood partnerships with State Rural Livelihood Missions in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Telangana and Tripura. The organisation also recently secured India's first FSC® Forest Management certification covering 6,671 women bamboo farmers in Karnataka and Maharashtra, opening new export opportunities through responsibly sourced and traceable bamboo products.



## Soft, juicy & delicious: Traditional Bengali Rasgulla making process

To make rasgulla, full-fat milk is curdled to extract fresh chenna (milk solids), kneaded into a smooth dough, and then rolled into tiny balls. After that, these balls are fried in a boiling sugar syrup until they are spongy, light, and airy.

The method for making it at home is as follows:

**Curdle the Milk:** Boil one to two liters of full-cream milk to curdle it. After turning off the heat, add a solution of water and vinegar or lemon juice until the milk separates into soft white curds and greenish whey.

**Drain and Wash:** Transfer the curds to a muslin cloth, wring out any extra moisture, and thoroughly rinse with cold water to eliminate the sourness. To drain the remaining water, hang it for 30 to 60 minutes.

**Knead the Chenna:** After the chenna has been drained, place it on a level surface and knead it

for 8 to 10 minutes with the heel of your palm until it is soft, smooth, and somewhat oily.

**Form Balls:** Roll the dough into smooth, crack-free balls after dividing it into small, equal-sized pieces.

**Prepare the Syrup:** To make the syrup, put one cup of sugar and four to five cups of water in a broad pan and bring it to a rolling boil. For flavor, you can add rose water or cardamom pods.

**Simmer:** Place the chenna balls gently in the boiling syrup, cover the saucepan, and simmer for 10 to 12 minutes over medium-high heat. The size of the balls will double.

**Cool:** To keep the cooked rasgullas from shrinking, place them in ice-cold water for a few minutes. Then, return them to the sugar syrup and let them soak for a few hours before serving.



## Quick & Crispy Corn Pakodas for Every Occasion

Crispy golden corn pakodas are the perfect accompaniment to a warm cup of chai.

**Ingredients:** 1.5 cups fresh sweet corn kernels, ¼ cup besan, ¼ cup rice flour, 1 tablespoon finely chopped ginger, 2 green chillies, ½ cup finely chopped coriander leaves, ½ teaspoon carom seeds (ajwain), ¼ salt to taste, oil for frying.

**Method :** First, pulse half of the corn kernels in a blender until they are coarsely crushed, then mix them with the remaining intact kernels in a bowl. Add the besan, rice flour, coriander, carom seeds, ginger, chillies, and salt after that. To bind everything into a thick paste, thoroughly mix with just



a tablespoon of water. Now, carefully drop a spoonful of the corn mixture into the oil that has been heated in a deep pan until it shimmers. Fry until the pakodas are incredibly crispy and have a deep, consistent golden brown colour. Serve hot after draining on paper towels.

## Quick Hack for Soft Idlis & Crispy Dosas

Have a craving for crispy dosas or soft idlis but neglected to ferment the batter? Baking soda and Eno are not necessary to expedite the procedure. When you're short on time, a straightforward pressure cooker method produces a heated atmosphere that speeds up the batter's fermentation.

After the batter is ready, transfer it to a bowl and season with salt. Place the batter container inside a pressure cooker that has been lightly heated, close the lid while the whistle is on, and cook over low heat for approximately five minutes. Turn off the heat and let the batter sit in the cooker for about an hour. Faster fermentation is encouraged by the retained heat. Your choice of container can have an impact. Because they assist maintain a more suitable environment for fermentation, containers made of clay or stainless steel

are preferable to those made of plastic. It is especially advised to store idli and dosa batter in stainless steel. Add a small amount of rock salt, half a teaspoon yoghurt, a quarter teaspoon sugar, and a quarter teaspoon lemon juice if you need the batter ready sooner. To promote quicker



fermentation, cover the container, give it a good stir, and put it somewhere warm, like next to a gas stove.

It's advisable to save these rapid fermentation techniques for situations where time is of the essence. After resting for four to seven hours, naturally fermented batter still has superior flavour, texture, and digestion. For the best outcomes, plan ahead wherever you can.

## How to Make Soft and Crispy Lotus Stem Shammi Kebabs

One of the most underappreciated ingredients in Indian cooking is lotus stem. It can be mashed, thinly sliced, stewed, or fried. It is the ideal vehicle to transport all the desi deliciousness because it has no flavour of its own.

**Ingredients :** Lotus stem / nadru, cleaned and sliced, Chana dal, Ginger-garlic paste, Green chillies, Fresh coriander, Mint leaves, Fried onions, Whole spices such as cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and bay leaf, Garam masala, Red chilli powder, Salt, Ghee or oil for cooking, Chilli-mint chutney, to serve, Laccha onion, to serve

**Method :** After thoroughly cleaning the lotus stem, also called nadru, it is cooked with chana dal, whole spices, ginger-garlic, green chillies, and seasoning until the lotus stem and dal are both mushy. The lotus stem adds a subtle bite and earthiness to the dish, while the dal gives the kebab body and that traditional shammi-style softness. After cooking, the mixture is thoroughly filtered to remove any remaining liquid. After that, it is ground with fried onions, fresh coriander, mint, and a faint hint of cardamom to create a smooth but slightly textured mixture. Just



enough cardamom is used to enhance the flavour of the kebab without making it overly sweet. The mixture is formed into little shammi-style kebabs and fried on a flat pan with a little oil or ghee until the inside remains mushy and the outside develops a light crust. The goal is to keep the comfort and mouthwatering texture of a traditional shammi kebab while adding lotus stem to give it a distinct vegetarian flavour. After that, it is ground with

fried onions, fresh coriander, mint, and a faint hint of cardamom to create a smooth but slightly textured mixture.

The Lotus Stem Shammi Kebab is intriguing because it adds an unexpected vegetarian base to the traditional comfort of a shammi. When combined with dal, lotus stem, or nadru, retains the delicate, nearly melt-in-your-mouth feel that people associate with shammi kebabs. It also has a lovely taste and earthiness.

## From milk to magic: Easy homemade custard recipe



A mixture of milk or cream, egg yolks (or entire eggs), and sugar is slowly heated to make custard. The thick, velvety texture is produced

when the eggs boil and coagulate. In order to keep pastry cream from curdling and to make it more stable, starches like cornstarch are frequently added.

**Here's how to prepare a traditional homemade vanilla custard:**

Two cups whole milk, half a cup white sugar, one teaspoon vanilla extract, three egg yolks, and three teaspoons cornstarch are the ingredients.

**Guidelines:** Heat the Milk: Put

the milk, sugar, and vanilla essence in a saucepan. Don't let the mixture boil; instead, heat it over medium until it's hot and the sugar melts. Whisk Eggs and Starch: In a different medium dish, whisk the cornstarch and egg yolks until they are smooth.

**Temper the Eggs:** While whisking constantly, gradually add a small bit of the heated milk mixture to the egg yolks. This keeps the eggs from scrambling and is known as temper-

ing.

**Thicken:** Pour the entire mixture back into the saucepan with the remaining milk after incorporating about half of the hot milk into the eggs. Stirring continuously, cook over medium heat until the mixture thickens and bubbles, about 5 to 8 minutes.

**Cool:** Once the custard is cool, pour it into bowls. If you want it cold, let it cool for ten minutes, then cover and refrigerate.

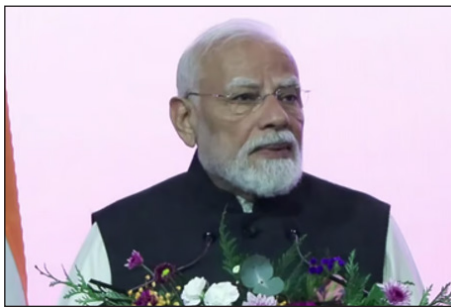


## Modi to Flag Off Hydrogen Train

**Chandigarh, July 13:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Haryana, Punjab and the Union Territory of Chandigarh on July 17 to inaugurate a series of infrastructure and development projects, including India's first hydrogen-powered train.

The hydrogen-powered train, to be flagged off from Jind, will operate between Jind and Sonipat. Running entirely on hydrogen fuel, the train is expected to promote clean mobility, reduce pollution and mark a major step towards sustainable rail transport in the country.

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said the selection of Haryana for the launch reflects the state's leadership in innovation and modern infrastructure. He added that the Prime Minister will also dedicate several development projects aimed at boosting the state's growth and improving public services. During a public gathering in Jind, Modi will virtually inaugurate two Ram Medical Colleges in Bhiwani and Narnaul, the 10-km Kurukshetra Elevated Railway Track, the Ambala-Kala Amb Greenfield Four-Lane Corridor, the Haryana stretch of the Delhi-Katra Expressway and the Jind-Gohana NH-352A project. He will also



launch the expansion of the Hisar-Barwala Four-Lane Road and the Bikaner-Siwani-Sonipat Road Project, besides laying the foundation stone for a Sikh Museum in Kurukshetra. Union Minister of State for Railways Ravneet Singh Bittu said Modi will also inaugurate railway projects in Punjab, including at Jalandhar.

In Chandigarh, the Prime Minister will inaugurate the Advanced Neurosciences Centre and the Mother and Child Health Centre at PGIMER, along with a 2,400-seat multi-purpose auditorium at Panjab University's South Campus. The new facilities are expected to strengthen healthcare, education and public infrastructure across the region.

## Rahul Launches 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' Uttarakhand Outreach

**Dehradun, July 14:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will visit Dehradun on July 17 to interact with students and competitive examination aspirants at the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme, an outreach initiative aimed at engaging young people ahead of the 2027 Uttarakhand Assembly elections. According to the state Congress, more than 2.54 lakh students had registered online for the event by Tuesday. State Congress spokesperson Garima Mehra Dasouni said arrangements have been made for over 20,000 participants, with students expected to attend from across Uttarakhand and other states. Gandhi is likely to focus on issues affecting the youth, including unemployment, examination paper leaks, delays in government recruitment, inflation and shortcomings in the education system. Political observers believe the programme will serve as a key test of the Congress's ability to connect with young voters. Analysts say unemployment and recruitment-related controversies remain major concerns in Uttarakhand, and the party hopes to channel growing youth discontent into political support ahead of the next Assembly elections.



## Prashant Kishor Declares ₹198 Crore Assets



**Patna, July 13:** Former political strategist and Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor has declared movable and immovable assets worth Rs 198 crore in his election affidavit. Kishor, who is making his electoral debut, filed his nomination papers on Monday for the Bankipur Assembly bypoll, scheduled for July 30. His declared net worth includes assets owned by his wife, Jahnavi Das, a medical practitioner, and a dependent. In his election affidavit, Kishor declared movable family assets worth Rs 111.78 crore and immovable assets worth Rs 86.29 crore. The combined wealth includes fixed deposits, mutual funds, bonds, a dismantled rice mill and 475 grams of gold. Kishor is locked in a three-cornered contest against BJP's Neeraj Kumar Sinha and RJD's Rekha Gupta. The bypoll was necessitated after Nitin Nabin vacated the Bankipur seat following his election to the Rajya Sabha after being elevated as the BJP's national president. According to the affidavit, Kishor's movable assets include cash, bank deposits, investments in shares, insurance policies and jewellery. Kishor declared personal movable assets worth Rs 22,19,74,976, while his wife, Jahnavi, declared assets worth Rs 89,51,67,249. Their dependent child, Daibik Bhardwaj, has assets worth Rs 7,19,281.

Kishor holds fixed deposits worth around Rs 7.36 crore with HDFC Bank. His wife has significant investments, including shares in Vedhas Ventures Private Limited with a book value of about Rs 95.26 crore. Kishor owns a gold ring with an emerald valued at Rs 1.35 lakh, while his wife owns gold and silver jewellery worth about Rs 64.58 lakh. Kishor declared immovable assets with a current market value of Rs 73.87 crore, while his wife declared immovable properties worth Rs 12.42 crore. The family's immovable assets also include non-agricultural land and residential properties.

Kishor also owns a dismantled rice mill in Rohtas district valued at Rs 9.75 crore. His self-acquired residential properties are valued at Rs 59.25 crore, while inherited residential properties are valued at Rs 14.62 crore. Kishor also declared eight pending criminal cases against him. The cases include charges such as criminal defamation and unlawful assembly, although he has not been convicted in any of them. According to the affidavit submitted to the Election Commission, the cases are registered at police stations across Bihar, from Patna to Bettiah.

## Jharkhand Police Arrest Top Maoist Leader Ravindra Ganjhu in Operation



**Ranchi, July 13:** Jharkhand Police have arrested CPI (Maoist) Regional Committee Member Ravindra Ganjhu, one of the banned outfit's most wanted leaders, in a major setback to Left-Wing Extremism in the state. Ganjhu was apprehended from Latehar following a joint operation by district police and central forces based on intelligence inputs. Police said an AK-56 rifle, a pistol and a large quantity of ammunition were recovered from him.

Ganjhu was allegedly involved in major attacks, including the Lukaiya ambush that killed four security personnel. He had earlier escaped during Operation Double Bull launched in 2022. Police are now questioning him to gather information about Maoist networks, arms supply routes and other activities.

The Jharkhand government had announced a reward of Rs 15 lakh for information leading to his arrest, while the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had placed an additional Rs 5 lakh bounty on him. He was wanted in several Maoist-related cases.

Ganjhu was allegedly involved in major attacks, including the Lukaiya ambush that killed four security personnel. He had earlier escaped during Operation Double Bull launched in 2022. Police are now questioning him to gather information about Maoist networks, arms supply routes and other activities.

## SC Slams Centre, Sets Deadline Over Aviation Rules Delay

**Petitioner says missing rules stall licensing, permits and penalties implementation process**

**New Delhi, July 13:** The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Centre to submit the rules under the Bharatiya Vayuan Adhiniyam, 2024, within two weeks, warning that any further delay would stall reforms in the aviation sector. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking immediate notification of the rules to operationalise the Bharatiya Vayuan Adhiniyam, 2024, which aims to modernise India's aviation sector. The PIL, filed by social activist S Laxminarayanan, sought directions to the Centre and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to frame guidelines

to curb "unpredictable fluctuations" in domestic airfares and bring greater transparency to airline pricing.

The bench directed the Centre to place the rules before it in a sealed cover within two weeks, irrespective of whether they have been tabled in Parliament. The court posted the matter for hearing after two weeks and directed the Centre to file the rules along with an affidavit. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, informed the court that the draft rules were ready and in the final stage of consultation. He undertook to place them on record within two weeks. Hearing the submissions, the



bench observed, "The law must be brought into force. Place the rules in two weeks." The Adhiniyam proposes the decriminalisation of offences, enhanced powers for the DGCA and the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), simpler norms for air services, and im-

proved financing and leasing of aircraft. The petitioner argued that without the rules, provisions relating to licensing, permits and penalties could not be implemented, leaving airlines and airports in limbo. In the PIL, Laxminarayanan urged the apex court to direct the govern-

ment and the aviation regulator to regulate dynamic pricing by airlines.

The plea sought fare caps by prescribing minimum and maximum limits for each sector to prevent arbitrary increases. It also sought directions to compel airlines to explain to passengers, at the time of booking, the factors and algorithms behind fare changes and to "Create a forum for passengers to challenge exorbitant fares," as stated in the petition. The petition further submitted that sharp fluctuations in airfares infringe the right to travel and disproportionately burden ordinary citizens, particularly during medical emergencies and fes-

tive seasons, when fares often increase three to four times.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has previously told Parliament that airfares are deregulated under the Aircraft Rules, 1937, and are determined by market forces. It said the DGCA's role is limited to monitoring tariffs on select routes to ensure they are not "unreasonable".

Laxminarayanan, however, contended that the absence of regulatory safeguards has led to profiteering and consumer exploitation. He also sought the creation of a robust and independent regulator to ensure transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector.

# Rahul Dravid in Race for England Test Coach Role: Report

Dravid Unlikely to Take England Job



London, July 12: India's great Rahul Dravid has emerged as one of the contenders to succeed Brendon McCullum as England's Test coach after the New Zealander was removed following the team's disappointing run in the longest format. According to a report in the Daily Telegraph, Dravid features among a list of potential candidates including former England coach Andy Flower and ex-England spinner Richard Dawson. McCullum's four-year tenure as Test coach ended after England's 1-2 home series defeat to New Zealand, with the England and Wales Cricket Board deciding that "the time is right to make a change" ahead of next year's Ashes. He will remain in charge of the ODI and T20I sides.

The 53-year-old Dravid, who guided India to the 2024 T20 World Cup title and the 2023 World Test Championship final, is seen as an attractive candidate because of his "meticulous" approach and deep understanding of the game. However, the newspaper did point out that Dravid has "no

desire" to coach full-time. "Dravid has no desire to coach full-time, but the England Test job would allow him extended periods at home and the chance to help keep alive his favourite format of the game. England, at the very least, should gauge his interest," according to the report. Among the leading candidates is Zimbabwe great Andy Flower, England's most successful coach in the modern era, having led the side to three Ashes series victories and the No.1 Test ranking.

Flower has also enjoyed considerable success in franchise cricket, including consecutive IPL titles with Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Dawson, currently head coach of Glamorgan, is also viewed as a serious option after impressing with his tactical acumen and coaching credentials at both county and international levels. Other names mentioned in the report include Sri Lanka legend Kumar Sangakkara, England Lions coach Andrew Flintoff, Pakistan head coach Mike Hesson and former Australia coach Justin Langer.

# Yamal aims to steal Mbappe's World Cup thunder in semi-final showdown

Mbappe's Experience Makes Him Tournament's Global Face

Arlington, July 13: Lamine Yamal is hoping to emulate Kylian Mbappe by winning the World Cup as a teenager, but first his Spain side will have to get the better of France and their superstar captain in Tuesday's semi-final. When Mbappe scored in France's win over Croatia in the deciding match of the 2018 tournament, he was just 19 years and 207 days old. He therefore became only the second teenager to score in a World Cup final after a 17-year-old Pele in 1958. Mbappe's love affair with the World Cup began then, while this is Yamal's first

experience of the competition. He has already had his big breakthrough in a major tournament, however — Yamal's stunning goal in the Euro 2024 semi-final against Mbappe's

France helped Spain to a 2-1 victory. That came four days before he turned 17. His birthday

was the day before the final. Spain beat England, and Yamal was named young player of the tournament. This time his 19th birthday comes on the eve of the semi-final in Arlington.

Such a young player with his best years to come. But he is clearly eager to leave a firm mark on this World Cup. Perhaps too eager, having at one point been a doubt for the tournament after missing the end of the season with Barcelona due to a hamstring injury. "I was afraid it might be serious and, above all, that even if it wasn't serious, I could suffer a setback and end up missing the World Cup," Yamal admitted in late May.



day was the day before the final. Spain beat England, and Yamal was named young player of the

# Zverev Eyes Place Among Tennis Elite



London, July 12: Alexander Zverev believes he is narrowing the gap on Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz after reaching his maiden Wimbledon final, despite losing in four sets to the world No. 1 on Sunday. The 29-year-old German, who claimed his first Grand Slam title at the French Open earlier this year, said he has long been viewed as "the third guy" in men's tennis but now feels he is closer than ever to challenging the sport's dominant pair on the biggest

stages. Sinner and Alcaraz had shared the previous nine Grand Slam titles before Zverev ended that streak with his Roland Garros triumph. Although he has yet to beat either player this season, Zverev believes he has consistently pushed both to their limits, pointing to his five-set Australian Open semifinal defeat to Alcaraz and his competitive Wimbledon final against Sinner. The German's chances in the final suffered a setback when he overextended his right knee while chasing a break point in the third set. Zverev said the injury reduced the pace of his powerful serve, his biggest weapon, but added that he was still able to move well from the baseline and compete until the end. Despite the defeat, Zverev will rise to world No. 2 in the latest ATP rankings, overtaking Alcaraz. Having never advanced beyond the fourth round at Wimbledon before this year, he now believes he has the game to eventually lift the trophy. Sinner also backed Zverev's ambitions, telling him after the match that he was close to becoming world No. 1 and expressing confidence that the German would one day win the Wimbledon title.

# Iyer Seeks Positives After England Tour



Chennai, July 13: India T20 captain Shreyas Iyer remains optimistic despite his side's disappointing tour of England and Ireland, where the team failed to register a win in seven matches and slipped from the top spot in the ICC T20 rankings. Replacing Suryakumar Yadav after India's T20 World Cup triumph, Iyer admitted the series was a tough learning experience but insisted captaincy remains a privilege. He said he enjoys the pressure of leading the national team and is focused on improving rather than worrying about criticism. Iyer stressed that his priority is to build a positive team environment and help younger players adapt to overseas conditions, with the 2028 T20 World Cup in Australia firmly in India's long-term plans. He believes the lessons from the England tour will help the squad become more competitive abroad. The series defeat also saw England overtake India as the world's No. 1 T20 side, a setback that could affect India's qualification prospects for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics if they fail to remain Asia's highest-ranked team. Iyer said the losses hurt but added that learning quickly from setbacks would benefit the team. He will now join the ODI squad as Shubman Gill's deputy before leading India again in the upcoming T20I series in Zimbabwe.

# UTT Season 7: Prithika Powers PBG Pune Jaguars to 9-6 Victory Against UP Prometheans

Panji, July 12: French Olympian and Butterfly UTT debutant Prithika Pavade produced a powerhouse performance as PBG Pune Jaguars defeated UP Prometheans 9-6 at the Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium on Sunday, securing their first victory of Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) Season 7. Pavade capped a memorable outing by toppling two-time UTT MVP Yangzi Liu in the deciding Women's Singles, recovering from a game down before producing a superb display in the decider to seal one of the standout wins of the season so far.

UP made the brighter start through Germany's Ricardo Walther, who overcame Egypt's Omar Assar in three games with an assured display. Pune responded immediately as Diya Chitale fought back

from a game down to edge Sayali Wani in another closely contested battle, before the Jaguars seized control through Snehit SFR and Pavade, who held their nerve to win a pair of dramatic mixed doubles Golden Points. Snehit then maintained his unbeaten start to the season by edging Sudhanshu Grover in another three-game contest, handing Pune a crucial cushion heading into the final match. With the tie still alive, Pavade delivered the performance of the afternoon, bouncing back after dropping the opening game against Liu to take control of the contest and close out a memorable victory over one of the league's most decorated players, sealing Pune's first win of Season 7.

Pavade was named the Foreign Player of the Tie, while Snehit collected the Indi-



an Player of the Tie, as well as the Player of the Tie awards. Omar Assar's scintillating winner in the third game of his singles rubber earned him the Bisleri Shot of the Tie honour. Earlier in the day, Dream UTT Juniors, Butterfly UTT's grassroots

competition running alongside Season 7, saw Dabang Delhi TTC defeat Ahmedabad APL Pipers 6-3, while U Mumbai TT maintained their perfect start with a 5-4 victory over HVR Kolkata Thunder Blades.

