

Arunachal Congress Slams Centre Over Gandhi Siblings' Detention

Itanagar, July 21: The Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), led by its president Bosiram Siram, on Tuesday strongly condemned the detention of Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and several senior Congress leaders during a protest in New Delhi. In a statement, the APCC described the detentions as "illegal, arbitrary and undemocratic," alleging that the BJP-led Union Government had sought to suppress peaceful democratic dissent instead of addressing concerns raised by protesting students. The party accused the Centre of misusing law enforcement agencies and said the detention of opposition leaders represented an attack on parliamentary democracy, the Constitution and citizens' fundamental rights.

The APCC further alleged that, rather than addressing examination-related concerns affecting students, the government had chosen to silence those demanding accountability. It asserted that democratic values are upheld through dialogue, dissent and accountability, not through intimidation or police action. Expressing solidarity with Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, detained Congress leaders, student organisations and party workers, the APCC demanded their immediate and unconditional release.

The party also called for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, holding him morally and politically accountable for repeated examination irregularities. It further sought a comprehensive discussion in Parliament on the issue, withdrawal of FIRs and criminal cases registered against students in connection with the Delhi protest, and an end to the alleged misuse of police and investigative agencies against opposition leaders.



BJP Calls Rahul Protest 'Politics of Anarchy'



New Delhi, July 21: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) National President Nitin Nabin on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other Opposition leaders over their sit-in protest on Lok Kalyan Marg. Condemning the Congress and its leadership, Nabin took a swipe at Rahul Gandhi, saying, "The conduct displayed on Tuesday by LoP Rahul Gandhi is entirely unbecoming and condemnable. His behaviour clearly demonstrates that he does not take the dignity of the Leader of the Opposition's office seriously." He also described Rahul Gandhi as consistently emerging as a symbol of anarchy. "Certain parliamentary offices do not belong to any single party; the Prime Minister is not merely the leader of one party but the elected representative of 1.4 billion citizens. The behaviour exhibited by Rahul Gandhi and his team and their attempt to incite anarchy during their visit to the Prime Minister's residence today clearly indicates that this is not the politics of dissent, but rather the politics of anarchy," the BJP chief remarked.

Nabin further said, "It is particularly concerning that a senior leader like Mallikarjun Kharge accompanied Rahul Gandhi... Today's incident is undoubtedly unfortunate and a dark day in India's political history." Continuing his criticism of the Congress leader, he added, "We, too, have served in the Opposition for long periods, yet we never breached such boundaries... When Rahul Gandhi set conditions, they were accepted. Yet, it is unfortunate that a person holding the office of LoP backs out once the process moves forward." He also said the government is always ready for any form of dialogue on the floor of Parliament. "However, the emerging trend of breaching decorum and the anarchic mindset developing within your ranks are certainly distressing the nation; the country stands firmly with its Prime Minister," he asserted.

Shah Reviews Sikkim Tunnel Rescue, Assures Central Support

Sikkim, July 21: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Tuesday said Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to him to review the rescue operations following the incident at the under-construction tunnel of the NHPC Teesta Stage VI Hydroelectric Project at Samardung in Jholungey, Namchi district. In a statement, the Chief Minister said he apprised the Union Home Minister of the ongoing rescue efforts being carried out by the State Government in coordination with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and



other agencies. According to the Chief Minister, Amit Shah expressed concern over the incident and assured all possible assistance from the Government of India for the ongoing

rescue operation.

Prem Singh Tamang also expressed gratitude to the Union Home Minister for his support and concern during the rescue efforts.

Manipur Congress Leader Meghachandra Condemns Rahul Gandhi's Detention

Imphal, July 21: Manipur Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Keisham Meghachandra Singh on Tuesday strongly condemned the detention of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi following a protest outside Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence in New Delhi, alleging that the move was an attempt to suppress democratic dissent. Rahul Gandhi, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and several other opposition leaders were

detained by Delhi Police after staging a dharna demanding the Prime Minister's resignation. Before the detention, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh and Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan visited the protest site and held discussions with the opposition leaders in an effort to persuade them to call off the demonstration. However, the talks remained inconclusive, after which police removed and detained the protesters.

Reacting to the development

in a post on X, Meghachandra described Rahul Gandhi as "the voice of India's youth, students, farmers, workers and the marginalised." "Attempts to suppress democratic dissent and silence opposition leaders strike at the very foundations of our democracy," he said. He further stated that India's democracy thrives on debate, accountability and the freedom to speak truth to power, adding that the people of the country would continue to stand against every attempt to undermine these democratic values.

BKTC to Install AI-Enabled CCTV Storage After Temple Offerings Theft

SIT found only 13 days of footage available despite BKTC's claim of a 45-day CCTV retention period

Dehradun, July 21: Following the alleged theft of temple offerings at Badrinath, the Shri Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) has begun overhauling its surveillance and donation-counting systems to ensure greater security, accountability and transparency. As part of the initiative, the Badrinath and Kedarnath shrines are proposed to be linked to an AI-enabled cloud and satellite storage system. The technology will securely preserve CCTV recordings and allow authorised BKTC officials to monitor live and archived footage remotely from any location. The alleged irregularities in the handling of donations and offerings have caused considerable embarrassment to the temple administration. They have also exposed serious gaps in the surveillance infrastructure at two of the country's most revered Himalayan shrines.

Despite BKTC's claim that CCTV footage was preserved for 45 days, the Special Investigation Team probing the Badrinath theft case could obtain recordings for only 13 days. Officials



attributed the shortfall to the limited storage capacity of the cameras currently installed at the shrines. Taking note of the lapse, BKTC chairman Hemant Dwivedi directed officials to strengthen CCTV coverage at Badrinath, Kedarnath and other prominent temples managed by the committee. "The comprehensive CCTV plan is

being implemented with a firm resolve to make the management of Badrinath and Kedarnath more systematic, transparent and robust," Dwivedi told TNIE. "It will facilitate close and continuous monitoring of arrangements for pilgrims, temple committee offices, the counting of offerings and donation boxes. Most

importantly, all CCTV footage will be stored with complete confidentiality and security," he said.

The upgraded platform is expected to allow senior officials to supervise sensitive operations in real time and review stored footage whenever required. Similar security arrangements will subsequently be extended to other temples under BKTC's administrative control. Apart from Badrinath and Kedarnath, the committee currently manages 47 other temples. However, CCTV cameras have so far been installed only at Badrinath, Kedarnath, the Narsingh Temple in Jyotirmath and the Triyuginarayan Temple in Rudraprayag district.

Officials acknowledged that the cameras at these locations also have limited storage capacity. The proposed technology-driven revamp is therefore expected to establish a uniform surveillance framework, strengthen the chain of custody for recordings and reduce the possibility of tampering or financial irregularities across BKTC-managed shrines.



Tata AIA strengthens leadership with fourth consecutive top MDRT ranking in India

Aizawl: Tata AIA Life Insurance Company has retained its position as India's No. 1 insurer in the Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT) rankings for the fourth consecutive year, reinforcing its leadership in professional financial advisory services. The company ranked 13th globally with 1,397 MDRT-qualified advisors, including 695 women, underscoring its focus on building an inclusive, high-performing agency network.

MDRT, regarded as the global benchmark for excellence in life insurance and financial services, recognises advisors for professional expertise, ethical conduct and superior customer service. Tata AIA also emerged as India's leading insurer in the category of advisors with five to nine years of MDRT qualification, with 207 members. The company said its Aura platform continues to strengthen advisor capabilities through structured learning, mentorship, digital enablement and continuous skill development, supporting full-time careers in financial advisory.

Chief Distribution Officer – Proprietary Business Rakesh Sharma said the fourth



consecutive leadership position reflects the consistency, quality and commitment of Tata AIA's advisors. He added that the company remains focused on building a future-ready advisor community capable of delivering trusted, needs-based financial guidance to consumers across India.

The company also highlighted its strong customer retention credentials, ranking No. 1 in four of five persistency cohorts in FY26, an indicator of policy continuation and long-term consumer trust. Tata AIA reported total premium income of ₹38,164 crore in FY26, up 21 per cent year-on-year, assets under management of ₹1,45,589 crore as of March 31, 2026, an individual death claim settlement ratio

of 99.45 per cent and protection extended to over 98 lakh families.

In Aizawl, Tata AIA's sustained emphasis on professionally trained advisors and digital capability development could support the growing demand for life insurance and financial planning services in Mizoram. As awareness of long-term savings, retirement planning and protection products increases, the company's strong advisor network, including significant women representation, may help improve insurance penetration, create employment opportunities in financial advisory and strengthen consumer confidence in the organised insurance sector across Aizawl.

IOB net profit soars 49.3% on higher recoveries, core income

Chennai: Chennai-based public sector lender Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) posted a robust 49.3% year-on-year increase in net profit to ₹1,659 crore for the June quarter, supported by higher net interest income (NII), improved asset quality and strong recoveries. Core NII rose 34.2% to ₹3,688 crore, while the domestic net interest margin expanded to 3.48% from 3.17% a year ago. The bank's total business grew 17.7% to ₹6.98 lakh crore, with deposits rising 13.7% to ₹3.76 lakh crore and advanc-

es increasing 22.8% to ₹3.22 lakh crore. Asset quality improved significantly, with gross non-performing assets (NPAs) declining to 1.33% and net NPAs remaining low at 0.18%. Fresh slippages stood at just ₹195 crore, while recoveries reached ₹654 crore, more than three times the slippages. Profitability also strengthened, with return on equity rising to 22.69% and return on assets improving to 1.41%, reflecting the bank's sustained operational and financial performance.



Guwahati strengthens healthcare market with Manipal's specialised cancer OPD

Guwahati: HCMCT Manipal Hospital, Dwarka, has expanded its oncology outreach into the Northeast by launching a Special Oncology OPD in Guwahati, signalling growing investment in India's regional healthcare market amid a rising demand for specialised cancer services. The

cancer cases in India are expected to double by 2050, with gastrointestinal, breast, lung, oral and cervical cancers remaining among the most commonly diagnosed. The hospital said the initiative is intended to improve access to timely specialist consultations, early diagnosis and

benefit from minimally invasive and robotic-assisted surgeries that offer greater precision, quicker recovery and better clinical outcomes.

The launch reflects the city's emergence as a key healthcare investment destination for Northeast India. Rising demand for specialised medical services, improving healthcare infrastructure and increasing patient inflow from neighbouring states are encouraging leading hospital chains to expand their regional footprint. Industry observers believe such initiatives will strengthen Guwahati's position as a tertiary healthcare hub, boost demand for diagnostics and allied medical services, reduce outbound medical travel and contribute to the city's expanding healthcare economy.

HCMCT Manipal Hospital said the Guwahati OPD aligns with its strategy of bringing advanced oncology expertise closer to patients. The Manipal Hospitals network currently operates 49 hospitals across 24 Indian cities with over 12,600 licensed beds, serving more than eight million patients annually through a workforce of over 11,000 doctors and 34,000 employees.

advanced treatment, while reducing the need for patients to travel outside the region for expert oncology care.

Dr. Deka said the steady rise in suspected and diagnosed cancer cases underscores the need for regular screening and faster access to specialist services. He added that while early detection significantly improves treatment outcomes, patients with advanced or complex cancers can now



OPD, to be held every second Sunday from 10 am to 12 noon at UHS, Vista Super Specialty Clinic, Lachit Nagar, will be led by Dr. Bikram Kumar Deka, Consultant – Surgical Oncology, HCMCT Manipal Hospital, Dwarka.

The expansion comes as India's oncology care market continues to grow alongside an increasing cancer burden. According to the World Health Organization (WHO),

ICICI Prudential Life reports 27.8% rise in Q1 profit, term business surges

Imphal: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Ltd. reported a 27.8 per cent year-on-year increase in profit after tax (PAT) to ₹386 crore for the quarter ended June 2026, supported by strong growth in its retail protection business and operational efficiencies. The insurer's term insurance (retail protection) business grew 60.4 per cent year-on-year during the first quarter of FY2027, while total benefits paid to customers stood at ₹4,666 crore. The company's Board also approved a proposal to rename the insurer as ICICI Life Insurance Limited, subject to statutory and regulatory approvals.

The insurer settled ₹1,306 crore in death claims and disbursed ₹3,360 crore as maturity and survival benefits during the quarter, taking the total customer payouts to

₹4,666 crore. It maintained an industry-leading claim settlement ratio of 99.3 per cent in Q1-FY2027, with an average turnaround time of just one day for non-investigative claims. In FY2026, the company settled ₹5,149 crore in death claims and paid ₹15,363 crore as maturity and survival benefits.

Managing Director and CEO Anup Bagchi said the company remains focused on a customer-first strategy while leveraging technology, artificial intelligence to enhance efficiency and customer experience. He added that the savings cost-to-premium ratio improved by 50 basis points to 13.6 per cent, enabling greater investment in innovation and future growth. Bagchi said the proposed name change reflects

the strength, trust and legacy associated with the ICICI franchise while reaffirming the company's focus on expanding its reach in India's growing life insurance market.

In Imphal, the insurer's strong financial performance, high claim settlement ratio and growing protection business are expected to reinforce confidence among policyholders and first-time insurance buyers in Manipur. With increasing awareness of financial planning and life protection in Imphal, faster claim settlements and expanding digital services could accelerate demand for term insurance and long-term savings products, creating new opportunities for insurers in the state's evolving financial services market.



NIESBUD alumni network launched to strengthen India's startup ecosystem



Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) on Wednesday launched the NIESBUD Alumni Network, a long-term initiative aimed at strengthening India's entrepreneurial ecosystem through mentoring, collaboration and business networking, with Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Shri Jayant Chaudhary urging successful entrepreneurs to become "champions for the next generation of founders."

Addressing the first Alumni Connect 2026 at the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) campus in Noida, Chaudhary said entrepreneurship requires lifelong learning and that alumni should mentor aspiring founders, share industry experience and create pathways for future innovators. He also launched two publications—*सुवावलंबनकीओर-4*, highlighting entrepreneurial success stories and institutional initiatives, and *Alumni Connect Volume-1*, featuring entrepreneurs trained under NIESBUD's Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP), Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programme (ESDP), Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP) and other flagship initiatives.

MSDE Secretary Debashree Mukherjee said India needs millions of entrepreneurs to drive innovation, create jobs and realise the vision of Viksit Bharat, while NIESBUD Director General Dr Poonam Sinha said the institute remains committed to supporting entrepreneurs throughout their entrepreneurial lifecycle through continuous engagement and learning opportunities. The event featured a knowledge-sharing session by mentors from NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), focusing on mentoring, enterprise scaling, business resilience and market access. A panel discussion on "Digital Growth Strategies: Leveraging ONDC, Meta and GeM for Market Expansion" explored opportunities in digital commerce, government procurement, branding, social commerce and online market-places for business expansion.

In Guwahati, the initiative is expected to provide a significant boost to Assam's startup and MSME ecosystem by improving access to national mentorship networks, digital market-places and government procurement platforms. Entrepreneurs in Guwahati could benefit from stronger institutional linkages, knowledge exchange and business networking opportunities, helping local enterprises expand beyond regional markets and enhance their competitiveness in the digital economy.

The event brought together nearly 200 entrepreneurs from 19 states, along with mentors, industry leaders, policymakers and senior officials from MSDE, NITI Aayog, NIESBUD, ONDC, GeM and Meta, marking the beginning of a structured alumni engagement programme designed to foster enterprise growth, innovation, employment generation and India's journey towards Viksit Bharat@2047.

India unveils ₹530-crore skills fund to strengthen future-ready workforce

Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) on Wednesday announced a series of policy initiatives, including a proposed ₹530-crore Skills Outcomes Fund, as part of its efforts to strengthen India's workforce and improve industry-aligned skilling during the World Youth Skills Day 2026 celebrations at Kaushal Bhawan in New Delhi. Addressing the event, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education Shri Jayant Chaudhary said India must prepare its youth not only for today's jobs but also for future opportunities through continuous learning, innovation and stronger industry partnerships. He launched the IndiaSkills Competition 2026–27 Guidelines, opening registrations across 63 skill categories, and inaugurated the WorldSkills India Champions Club to mentor future competitors.

The Ministry also released guidelines for establishing Centres of Excellence under Skill India, announced a PMKVY programme to train 1.3 lakh multi-skilled caregivers as part of the Union Budget target of 1.5 lakh professionals, and extended the NAPS apprenticeship pilot project in the North Eastern Region to boost workplace-based learning.

To promote inclusive growth, MSDE consti-



tuted a Committee on Gender Mainstreaming and announced a Best Practices Compendium on Skilling and Employment for Women, with entries opening on July 20. Two MoUs were signed to operationalise the proposed Skills Outcomes Fund, which will combine government, CSR and philanthropic capital to support more than two lakh youth, with funding linked to verified outcomes such as certification, placement and retention. India also honoured its medal winners from the Global Skills Challenge Australia 2026 and Taipei Capital Cup 2026, while unveiling the design of the proposed "Skilled India, Empowered India – A Collective Growth Story" sculpture and felicitating women trainees from the Chaudhary Ajit Singh Centre of Excellence for Design and Fashion Technology in Uttar Pradesh.

TVS VENU to acquire Varthana Finance, strengthens education lending portfolio

Guwahati: Home Credit India, a part of TVS VENU, has signed an agreement to acquire a 100 per cent stake in Varthana Finance Private Limited through an all-cash transaction, marking a strategic move to strengthen its presence in India's financial services sector. The acquisition is subject to regulatory approvals, including clearance from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and the fulfilment of customary closing conditions.

The proposed acquisition will add Varthana's specialised education-finance franchise to TVS VENU's growing financial services platform, enabling the Group to expand into the complementary secured and longer-tenure lending segment. TVS VENU said the transaction is in line with its long-term strategy of building scalable financial services businesses that cater to India's evolving credit needs while creating opportunities for Varthana's next phase of

growth through technology, governance, distribution and risk-management synergies.

TVS Motor Company Chairman Sudarshan Venu said India's financial services sector offers significant long-term growth opportunities driven by rising formalisation, expanding credit access and increasing demand for specialised lending solutions. He said Varthana has built a differentiated education-finance franchise and that the acquisition would broaden the Group's participation in secured lending while complementing its existing strengths. Varthana Whole-time Director and Executive Vice Chairman Steve Hardgrave said joining the TVS ecosystem would help strengthen the company's platform, expand its reach and accelerate growth while continuing to support private schools across the country.

TVS VENU currently operates in consumer, retail and commercial finance through TVS Credit Services and

Home Credit India. The company said the acquisition will diversify its lending portfolio and enhance operating, distribution, technology and customer-focused capabilities across its financial services ecosystem. The transaction is expected to be completed after receiving RBI and other applicable regulatory approvals.

In Guwahati, the proposed acquisition reflects the growing focus of major lenders on specialised financing segments beyond traditional retail credit. With private educational institutions expanding across Assam and the Northeast, a stronger education-finance platform could improve access to institutional funding and create new lending opportunities in the region. The move also underscores increasing interest among large financial services groups in tapping emerging markets where demand for education-related credit continues to rise.

Skill development push lifts outlook for North East employment ecosystem

Guwahati: The Centre's decision to expand the Special Intervention for Promotion of Apprenticeship in the North-Eastern Region (NER) under the Prime Minister's National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS) is expected to strengthen the region's employment ecosystem, with higher government spending and industry participation set to support workforce development during FY 2026–27.

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has earmarked ₹57.58 crore for the initiative, to be implemented by the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati, while increasing the apprenticeship target to 30,000, around 15 per cent higher than the pilot phase launched in May 2025.

Half of the apprentices will be placed outside the North East, including in Central government departments and public sector undertakings, while the remaining 15,000 will be engaged within the region, including in their domicile states.

The revised intervention also extends an additional financial incentive of ₹1,500

per month to apprentices training within their home states, alongside existing PM-NAPS benefits, and will continue employer outreach, awareness campaigns, workshops and collaborations with educational institutions to strengthen the apprenticeship ecosystem.

Union Minister of State

target are expected to benefit the North East's labour market by improving the availability of industry-ready talent, supporting employer hiring requirements and strengthening the long-term skills pipeline. The initiative is also likely to encourage greater participation by both public and private sector



(Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary said the expanded programme would improve access to quality apprenticeship opportunities, encourage industry participation and equip youth with workplace skills across sectors.

The enhanced allocation and expanded apprenticeship

employers, contributing to regional economic growth and improving workforce competitiveness. The pilot programme had achieved over 90 per cent of its target by engaging 23,470 apprentices, while apprenticeship participation in the region rose 51 per cent, with Meghalaya registering the highest growth of 95 per cent.

Amway India expands premium skincare portfolio with new UV protection product

Imphal: Amway India has strengthened its premium skincare portfolio with the launch of Artistry Skin Nutrition Multi-Defense UV Protect, a new daily skincare solution aimed at addressing rising consumer demand for science-backed, plant-based products offering protection beyond conventional sunscreens. The launch reinforces the company's focus on the growing premium skincare segment by combining advanced skin science with Nutrilite-powered botanicals.

The new product delivers broad-spectrum SPF 50+ and PA++++ protection against UVA and UVB rays while helping defend the skin from visible light, including blue light, infrared light and free radicals. Its formulation features a mineral sunscreen blend of Zinc Oxide and Titanium Dioxide, along with Nutrilite-grown Pomegranate, Chrysanthemum Morifolium



Flower Extract and Carnosine. The lightweight tinted formula is water resistant for up to 80 minutes, leaves no white cast and is vegan, non-comedogenic and free from parabens, mineral oil and sulfate surfactants.

Amway India Managing Director Rajneesh Chopra said the Indian skincare market is witnessing a shift towards ingredient transparency, effective formulations and natural, plant-based ingredients as consumers increasingly align beauty choices with holistic

wellbeing. He said the launch reflects the company's commitment to delivering trusted, purpose-led skincare innovations backed by Artistry's skin science and Nutrilite's 90-year legacy.

Priced at Rs 3,399, the product is available through Amway Business Owners, distributors, Amway stores and the company's online platform.

In Imphal, the expansion of premium skincare offerings is expected to complement rising consumer interest in wellness and personal care products across the Northeast. Increasing digital adoption, improving access to premium brands through direct-selling and e-commerce channels, and growing awareness of year-round UV protection are creating opportunities for companies such as Amway to strengthen their presence in Imphal's evolving beauty and skincare market.

Sunrise Pure strengthens Northeast presence through Ambubachi Mela outreach

Guwahati: ITC Ltd.'s Sunrise Pure Masala has reinforced its consumer engagement strategy in Northeast India through its flagship Shuddhotsav initiative at the Ambubachi Mela 2026, leveraging one of the region's largest religious gatherings to strengthen brand visibility and community connect.

Held at the Kamakhya Temple from June 21 to 26, the initiative saw Sunrise Pure serve freshly prepared khichdi to more than 500 devotees daily while engaging with over 3,000 visitors during the six-day festival. The company said the programme blended community service with consumer interaction, reflecting its long-term focus on deepening its presence in Eastern and Northeast India.



"At Sunrise, we believe the strongest relationships are built through the moments we share with our consumers. Through Shuddhotsav, we had the opportunity to serve devotees with humility while celebrating traditions that are integral to the region's cultural fabric," said Piyush Mishra, Business Head, Spices, ITC Ltd. He added that the initiative strengthened the brand's bond with consumers through meaningful acts of service and community en-

agement. Sunrise Pure said the outreach reaffirms its commitment to participating in culturally significant events that resonate with consumers. Acquired by ITC Ltd. in 2020, Sunrise Pure Masalas has a heritage of over 100 years and remains a leading spice brand across Eastern and Northeast India, offering a wide portfolio of basic, blended and whole spices through an extensive retail network.

Renault bets on SUV demand with Duster Adventure Edition launch

Guwahati: Renault India has expanded its premium SUV portfolio with the launch of the Duster Adventure Edition, a special edition of its flagship SUV, priced from ₹12.99 lakh (ex-showroom), as the automaker seeks to strengthen its presence in India's fast-growing SUV segment. Unveiled on Bastille Day by French Ambassador to India Thierry Mathou and Renault Group India CEO Stéphane Deblaise, the limited edition celebrates the Duster's legacy in India while reinforcing Renault's French engineering heritage. Available in Turbo TCe 100 MT, Turbo TCe 160 MT and Turbo TCe 160 DCT variants, the Adventure Edition is priced at ₹12.99 lakh, ₹13.99 lakh and ₹15.39 lakh (ex-showroom), respectively.



alloy wheels. Commenting on the launch, Stéphane Deblaise said the Duster had become an iconic vehicle that created lasting memories for customers across India, adding that the Adventure Edition celebrates the strong emotional connection associated with the SUV.

Renault manufactures its vehicles at its Oragadam facility in Chennai, which has an annual production capacity of 4.8 lakh units, and operates nearly 638 sales and service touchpoints across India, including more than 200 Workshop on Wheels locations.

The launch is expected to support Renault's growth strategy in Guwahati and the Northeast, where SUVs continue to witness healthy demand due to varied terrain and improving road infrastructure. With buyers increasingly preferring feature-rich and adventure-focused vehicles, the Duster Adventure Edition is likely to strengthen Renault's competitiveness in the region's mid-size SUV market while enhancing dealership traffic and customer interest.

Royal Stag becomes world's largest-selling whisky brand in 2025

Guwahati: Pernod Ricard India has announced that its flagship brand, Royal Stag, has been ranked the world's largest-selling whisky brand for calendar year 2025, according to the latest IWSR 2025 rankings. The brand recorded annual sales of 32.6 million cases, marking a significant milestone in its 30-year journey and reinforcing the company's leadership in the global spirits industry.

Pernod Ricard India CEO Jean Touboul said the recognition reflects the trust consumers have placed in Royal Stag over three decades. He noted that the brand's continued focus on innovation, authenticity and evolving consumer aspirations has enabled it to emerge as a global category leader.

Since its launch in 1995, Royal Stag

has introduced grain whisky to a wider Indian audience and expanded its premium portfolio with offerings such as Royal Stag Barrel Select and Royal Stag Double Dark. The company said quality initiatives including its Mark of Purity programme and Double Tamper-Evident Technology (DTET) closures have further strengthened consumer confidence. The brand is now available in 33 countries. Chief Marketing Officer Debasree Dasgupta said Royal Stag's global leadership has been built through sustained innovation, premiumisation and strong consumer engagement across cricket, music and youth culture, including Royal Stag Boombox and the ICC T20 World Cup. Pernod Ricard India said the milestone reinforces its ambition to build globally admired brands



from India with enduring cultural relevance and commercial scale.

IDBI Bank posts resilient first-quarter performance with higher profit and stronger asset quality

Guwahati: IDBI Bank Ltd. began FY2026-27 on a strong note, reporting a 5 per cent year-on-year rise in net profit to ₹2,115 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2026, reflecting steady business expansion, improved asset quality and lower funding costs. The Board of Directors approved the financial results at its meeting held in Mumbai on Saturday.

The bank's Net Interest Income (NII) grew 10 per cent to ₹3,486 crore, while operating profit stood at ₹2,168 crore. Total deposits increased 10 per cent year-on-year to ₹3.26 lakh crore and net advances rose 22 per cent to ₹2.59 lakh crore, with the corporate-to-retail advances mix maintained at 30:70. The CASA ratio stood at 43.64 per cent, Net Interest Margin (NIM) at 3.61 per cent and Return on Assets (ROA) improved to 1.89 per cent. Cost of deposits declined to 4.59 per cent and cost of funds eased to 4.68 per cent, highlighting improving operational efficiency. Asset quality remained robust, with Gross NPA improving to 2.30 per cent, Net NPA at 0.16 per cent and the Provision Coverage Ratio staying above 99 per cent at 99.31 per cent. The Capital Adequacy Ratio strengthened to 26.92 per cent. During the quarter, IDBI Bank was honoured with the APY Annual Award of Ultimate Achiever by the Department of Financial Services for achieving Atal Pension Yojana enrolment targets for FY2025-26. It also launched the nationwide IDBI Innovate 2026 hackathon to drive technology-led banking innovation and received recognition at the Internal Audit Excellence Awards 2026 for its AI-enabled i Netra audit platform. In Guwahati, IDBI Bank's improving profitability, healthy capital buffers and sustained credit growth are positive indicators for the banking sector. The bank's emphasis on digital transformation, fintech collaboration and financial inclusion is expected to support increasing banking activity among retail customers, tea traders, small businesses and MSMEs in the Northeast, while its stronger balance sheet could enhance lending opportunities and strengthen investor confidence in the region's financial services market.

Generali Central Life launches Sunehra Pension Plan to strengthen retirement planning

Guwahati: Generali Central Life Insurance Co. Ltd. (GCLICL), a joint venture between global insurer Generali and Central Bank of India, has launched the Sunehra Pension Plan, a participating, non-linked pension and savings-oriented life insurance product aimed at helping individuals build a long-term retirement corpus while offering complimentary wellness services. The launch comes amid growing concerns over India's ageing population, which is expected to rise from 10.5 per cent in 2022 to around 20.8 per cent by 2050, while pension assets remain at only 17 per cent of GDP compared with nearly 80 per cent in developed markets.

The Sunehra Pension Plan offers flexible policy terms ranging from five to 40 years, with bonuses accruing from the

first policy year. Customers can opt for Single Pay, Limited Pay or Regular Pay premium options and access partial withdrawals during financial emergencies. At vesting, policyholders receive the higher of the Sum Assured on Vesting along with accrued bonuses or 105 per cent of total premiums paid. In the event of death during the policy term, nominees receive the higher of the assured death benefit plus bonuses or 105 per cent of premiums paid. The plan also allows customers to purchase immediate or deferred annuities, opt for a mix of lump-sum withdrawal and regular income, or enable full lump-sum payment in case of a death claim. Optional riders further enhance protection. Besides retirement savings, the product offers discounted annual health check-ups, diagnostic lab

tests, teleconsultation-based second medical opinions and online physician consultations. Managing Director and CEO Alok Rungta said the plan has been developed to address the country's growing retirement planning needs by combining long-term savings with the benefits of a participating insurance product.

In Guwahati, the new pension plan is expected to attract salaried professionals, government employees, entrepreneurs and self-employed individuals seeking disciplined retirement solutions. With rising financial awareness and increasing demand for long-term savings products in Assam, insurance offerings that combine retirement planning with wellness benefits are likely to witness stronger adoption, creating new business opportunities for insurers operating in the region.

ICICI Prudential targets retirement market with new Gold Pension Savings plan

Imphal: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings, a bonus-linked pension plan aimed at strengthening long-term retirement planning amid India's rapidly ageing population and rising demand for financial security in post-retirement years. Citing estimates from the National Commission on Population, the insurer said one in every seven Indians is expected to be a senior citizen by 2036, with the elderly population projected to reach 230 million, underscoring the need for structured retirement solutions.

The company said the plan combines capital protection with bonus-linked wealth creation while offering policyholders the flexibility to make partial withdrawals of up to 25% in case of major life events or illnesses. At maturity, customers can withdraw up to 60% of the accumulated corpus as a tax-free lump sum, while the remaining amount can be used to purchase an annuity for guaranteed life-long income. The product also includes complimentary health check-ups and wellness services.

Vikas Gupta, Chief Product



Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Ltd., said the plan has been designed to help customers transition from active earning years to retirement with financial certainty, emergency liquidity and long-term income security. The company illustrated that a 40-year-old investing ₹1.5 lakh annually for 10 years could accumulate a retirement corpus of ₹44 lakh at an assumed 8% annual return, or ₹25 lakh at a 4% annual return by the age of 60.

In Imphal, retirement-focused investment products are gaining traction as more salaried employees, professionals and self-employed individuals seek disciplined long-term savings. With increasing awareness about retirement planning and changing family support structures, products offering capital safety, tax-efficient benefits, emergency liquidity and guaranteed life-long income are expected to witness growing demand in Manipur's evolving financial services market.

Tata AIA strengthens Assam footprint with 21 MDRT advisors, retains India's top ranking

Guwahati: Tata AIA Life Insurance has strengthened its distribution network in Assam by registering 21 Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT)-qualified advisors, reaffirming its focus on expanding professional financial advisory services while retaining its position as India's No. 1 insurer by MDRT-qualified advisors for the fourth consecutive year.

According to the 2026 Global MDRT Ranking, Kamrup Metropolitan and Kokrajhar contributed four MDRT-qualified advisors each, while Cachar accounted for two. Nationwide, Tata AIA regis-

tered 1,397 MDRT-qualified advisors, securing the 13th position globally. Nearly half of the qualifiers—695 advisors—are women, highlighting the company's emphasis on building an inclusive ad-

visors ecosystem. MDRT is regarded as the global benchmark of excellence in life insurance and financial services, recognising advisors for professional expertise, ethical

standards and customer service. Tata AIA also ranked first in India for advisors with five to nine years of MDRT qualification, with 207 members in this category.

Chief Distribution Officer –



Proprietary Business Rakesh Sharma said the recognition reflected the quality, consistency and commitment of the company's advisor network and reaffirmed its strategy of

nurturing full-time financial professionals through learning, mentorship and digital enablement. The insurer said its Aura platform supports advisor development, enabling them to provide long-term financial guidance on protection, retirement, education and wealth creation. Tata AIA also reported industry-leading persistency performance, ranking No. 1 in four of five FY26 cohorts, alongside assets under management of ₹1.46 lakh crore and an individual death claim settlement ratio of 99.45%, reinforcing consumer confidence in its business model.

MG unveils India's first multi-NEV platform to power future electric and hybrid vehicles

Guwahati: JSW MG Motor India on Thursday unveiled MG ADAPT (Advance Drive Architecture Platform Technology), describing it as India's first Multi New Energy Vehicle (NEV) platform capable of supporting Electric Vehicles (EVs), Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) and Range Extender Electric Vehicles (REEVs) on a single modular architecture. The company also announced that one EV and one PHEV based on the platform will be introduced by FY 2026-27.

The new platform has been developed to offer greater flexibility in product development while improving driving range, fast-charging capability, efficiency, safety, performance and driving refinement. MG ADAPT is designed to serve as the technological foundation for the company's future New Energy Vehicle portfolio as it expands its presence in India's fast-growing electrified mobility



segment.

The platform integrates a dedicated hybrid engine, a dedicated battery system, India's first 10-in-1 Intelligent Electric Drive Unit and the world's first Electromagnetic Dedicated Hybrid Transmission. An Intelligent Energy Management System automatically switches between four drive modes—Pure Electric Drive, Series Hybrid Drive, Parallel Hybrid Drive and Engine Direct Drive—to optimise efficiency and performance under varying driving conditions. The archi-

tecture also supports REEV technology, enabling an electric-first driving experience with extended range through an on-board petrol-powered generator.

Speaking at the launch, JSW MG Motor India Managing Director Anurag Mehrotra said the platform reflects the company's strategy of offering multiple clean mobility options while providing customers with greater flexibility, efficiency and performance.

In Guwahati, the introduction of a multi-energy platform could strengthen consumer confidence in electrified vehicles across Assam, where interest in EVs is gradually rising alongside improvements in charging infrastructure. The availability of hybrid and range-extender technologies may also appeal to buyers in Guwahati and the wider Northeast seeking lower running costs without concerns over long-distance range, potentially broadening the region's adoption of new energy vehicles.

Ultraviolette unveils cashback plan as it steps up push for EV adoption

Bengaluru: Bengaluru-based electric mobility startup Ultraviolette has introduced an innovative customer acquisition strategy aimed at accelerating the adoption of electric two-wheelers by converting riders' past petrol usage into cashback benefits, as the company seeks to strengthen its position in India's fast-growing EV market. The startup has launched its nationwide 'Kill the Petrol Bill' programme, under which customers purchasing the Ultraviolette F77 or X-47 electric motorcycles will receive ₹1 cashback for every kilometre covered on their existing petrol-powered two-wheelers over the past two years. The incentive is capped at ₹30,000, meaning a rider who has travelled 20,000 km during the period will be eligible for ₹20,000 in cashback. In addition, the company estimates that switching to its electric motorcycles can help customers save between ₹3,000 and ₹5,000 per month on fuel expenses. Announcing the initiative, Narayan Subramaniam, CEO and Co-founder of Ultraviolette, said the programme addresses one of the biggest barriers to EV adoption by making the transition more affordable while supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of accelerating electric mobility in India. He said customers can benefit from lower running costs without compromising on advanced technology, performance, reliability or the overall ownership experience.

Ultraviolette said it continues to expand its footprint through sustained product innovation, a growing retail network, increasing customer adoption and progress in international markets, underscoring its ambition to emerge as a leading technology-driven electric mobility company.

Sunfeast Marie Light expands Vitamin D awareness drive with Surya Vardaan at Puri Rath Yatra



Guwahati: ITC Ltd's Sunfeast Marie Light has strengthened its health and consumer engagement strategy with the launch of the second edition of its 'Surya Vardaan' initiative at the Puri Rath Yatra, leveraging one of Odisha's largest cultural gatherings to promote awareness about Vitamin D deficiency. The campaign builds on the brand's long-standing proposition of the "Goodness of Vitamin D" and aims to encourage healthier lifestyle choices through education and digital engagement.

Carrying the message "Har Kiran Mein Chhupa Hai Vitamin D Ka Vardaan," the initiative featured Surya Sahayaks at the Rath Yatra who helped devotees complete a two-minute Vitamin D requirement check, distributed educational material and facilitated free Vitamin D medical tests for select participants. The awareness drive was also extended digitally through a WhatsApp-based assessment, where consumers answer simple behavioural questions on sunlight exposure, outdoor routines and Vitamin D awareness.

Suraj Kathuria, VP and Head of Marketing – Biscuits, Foods Division, ITC Ltd, said Odisha's enduring relationship with the Sun provided a meaningful platform to make Vitamin D awareness simple and relevant. He said the campaign combines technology, community engagement and the scale of Rath Yatra to encourage people to understand their Vitamin D needs, spend more time in the Sun and include Sunfeast Marie Light with Vitamin D in their everyday tea-time.

Renowned Odia actress and the brand's ambassador in Odisha, Archita Sahu, said Rath Yatra holds a special place in her heart and urged people to take the two-minute Vitamin D requirement check as part of the awareness initiative. Guwahati is witnessing rising demand for health-oriented packaged foods as consumers increasingly prioritise nutrition and preventive wellness. Awareness-led campaigns such as Surya Vardaan, supported by digital tools like WhatsApp-based assessments, are expected to find traction in the city, where brands are increasingly blending health education with consumer engagement to strengthen market presence and expand the fortified foods segment.

With the latest edition of Surya Vardaan, Sunfeast Marie Light continues to position itself beyond a conventional biscuit brand by transforming a major cultural event into a platform for public health awareness while reinforcing its association with Odisha. Consumers can also take the two-minute Vitamin D requirement check through the campaign's dedicated WhatsApp platform.

Alife brings everyday luxury to Indian consumers with revamped bathing soap range

Mumbai: For millions of Indian consumers, a daily bath is more than a routine—it is a moment of refreshment and self-care. Tapping into this evolving consumer mindset, AWL Agri Business Ltd. (formerly Adani Wilmar Limited) has relaunched the bathing soap portfolio of its Alife brand with four upgraded variants aimed at making everyday personal care more enjoyable and rewarding.

The refreshed portfolio, launched on July 15 at the company's Mundra manufacturing facility in the presence of 50 of Alife's top distributors from across the country, introduces Active Nimboo, Haldi Chandan, Rozy Glow and Fresh Lily. The soaps feature upgraded formulations, skincare-inspired ingredients,

signature fragrances and contemporary packaging under the new brand promise, "Khubsurati Kuchh Khaas."

According to the company, each variant has been crafted with thoughtfully selected ingredients to offer a richer bathing experience while the redesigned packaging enhances shelf appeal and clearly communicates the products' unique benefits.

Mukesh Mishra, Joint President, Sales & Marketing, AWL Agri Business Ltd., said the relaunch reflects the company's commitment to evolving with changing consumer preferences by combining trusted care with skincare-inspired benefits. He said the new brand proposition seeks to make everyday beauty routines more meaningful



through enhanced formulations and a refreshed visual identity.

The relaunched range will be available through retail outlets and leading distribution channels across the country. Backed by AWL Agri Business' network of over 80 manufacturing facilities, 98 stock points, more

than 10,000 distributors and sub-distributors, and a retail reach spanning 2.6 million outlets, the rollout highlights the company's growing ambition to build a stronger presence in India's expanding home and personal care market while bringing premium everyday care closer to consumers nationwide.

New study flags heat risks for pregnant women, underscores need for climate-resilient maternal healthcare

Guwahati: A new nationwide study has highlighted the growing public health and economic implications of rising temperatures, finding that prolonged exposure to extreme heat during pregnancy increases the risk of adverse birth outcomes, with women in India's mountainous regions—including Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland—among the most vulnerable. Published in the peer-reviewed Environmental Research Communications, the research analysed 209,266 births between 2015 and 2020 and linked each pregnancy to local heat conditions using the India Heat Index.

The study found that every additional consecutive "sweltering" day during pregnancy increased the likelihood of a low-birth-weight baby by around one per cent after adjusting for other factors. Heat exposure during the first trimester was associated with preterm birth, while exposure during the second trimester raised the

risk of low birth weight. Researchers attributed the higher vulnerability in mountainous regions to lower acclimatisation to prolonged heat. The study was led by the University of Queensland—IIT Delhi Academy of Research (UQIDAR), IIT Delhi and the University of Queensland,

is a significant pregnancy risk rather than merely a background environmental condition. Co-author Nicholas J. Osborne said India's heat action plans should explicitly identify pregnant women as a priority group, ensuring access to cooling facilities, hydration support and targeted antenatal care as climate change intensifies heatwaves.

For Guwahati, where prolonged heat and humidity have become increasingly frequent, the findings are expected to strengthen demand for climate-resilient healthcare services, maternal wellness products, cooling technologies and public health awareness initiatives. The study could also encourage greater investments by hospitals, diagnostic centres, healthcare startups and insurance providers in maternal care, while opening opportunities for businesses offering hydration, nutrition and home cooling solutions tailored to vulnerable groups, particularly expectant mothers.



Robotic cancer surgery strengthens advanced healthcare access for Mizoram patients

Aizawl: Manipal Hospital, EM Bypass, Kolkata, has reinforced its presence in the Northeast's advanced healthcare segment after successfully treating a 68-year-old woman from Aizawl, Mizoram, diagnosed with early-stage uterine (endometrial) cancer through robotic-assisted surgery. The case highlights the growing adoption of minimally invasive robotic technology for complex cancer procedures and the increasing movement of patients from the Northeast to specialised tertiary care centres.

The patient, Lalhlupuii, was initially diagnosed with FIGO Grade I endometrial cancer following abnormal uterine bleeding at a hos-

pital in Aizawl before being referred to Manipal Hospital for specialised treatment. After detailed MRI and CT scan assessments, a multidisciplinary team led by Dr. Arunava Roy, Head – Gynaecology Oncology & Robotic Surgery (Gynaecology), performed a four-hour robotic-assisted hysterectomy with removal of both ovaries, fallopian tubes and pelvic lymph nodes. The patient resumed oral intake the same day, recovered without major complications and was discharged within 24 hours. Final histopathology confirmed the cancer was confined to the uterus, eliminating the need for chemotherapy or radiation therapy. She returned to her

daily routine within a week and is scheduled for a routine follow-up after six months.

Commenting on the procedure, Dr. Roy said the increasing incidence of uterine cancer, driven by changing lifestyles, obesity, sedentary habits and hormonal factors, has accelerated the adoption of robotic surgery, which offers greater precision, reduced blood loss, smaller incisions, less pain and faster recovery, even for elderly patients with previous surgical histories.

The patient's grandson said the family opted for robotic surgery after doctors explained the available treatment options, adding that the smooth recovery and minimal post-operative

pain reinforced their confidence in the technology and the hospital's specialised cancer care.

In Aizawl, the successful outcome reflects rising demand among Mizoram patients for advanced oncology services unavailable locally, creating stronger referral linkages with tertiary hospitals in eastern India. Healthcare providers say increasing awareness of robotic-assisted surgery and improved treatment outcomes are expected to drive greater patient mobility from the Northeast, strengthening the region's medical value ecosystem while expanding opportunities for specialised healthcare providers catering to complex cancer care.



SC seeks Centre's response on plea to start appeal process on Assam NRC list

New Delhi, July 21: The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought replies from the Centre and other respondents on a petition seeking the commencement of the appeals process for those excluded from the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) published in Assam. The plea filed by the Assam State Jamiat Ulama came up for hearing before a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi. The petitioner's counsel argued that people were suffering. "For those who have been excluded, there is a provision for appeal but nothing is happening," he said, adding that a separate petition raising a similar issue was already pending before the apex court. "Issue notice," the bench said and tagged the plea with the pending petition.

The top court has sought responses from the Centre and others, including the Assam government and the office of the state coordinator. The updated final NRC, which validates bonafide Indian citizens of Assam, was released on August 31, 2019. The exercise shut out the citizenship claims of over 19 lakh applicants.



A total of 3,30,27,661 (3.3 crore) people had applied to be included in the NRC. Of them, 3,11,21,004 (3.1 crore) were included in the document and 19,06,657 (19.06 lakh) excluded, a statement from the NRC State Coordinators office said.

In its plea, the Assam State Jamiat Ulama sought a direction to the concerned authorities to forthwith issue national identity cards under Section 14A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 read with Rule 13 of the 2003 Rules to all persons found included in the final NRC published in Assam. It has also sought a direction to authorities to initiate an appeal process for the persons excluded from final NRC published in Assam.

Air India to shift all New York JFK operations to Terminal 6 from 2028

New Delhi, July 21: Air India on Tuesday announced that it will shift all its operations at New York's John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport to the newly developed Terminal 6 from 2028, aligning with several Star Alliance partner airlines. The airline currently operates daily non-stop flights from Terminal 4 to Delhi and Mumbai using its Airbus A350 and Boeing 777 aircraft. It said existing operations from Terminal 4 will continue without disruption until the transition in 2028. Developed by JFK Millennium Partners (JMP), Terminal 6 is designed to offer a modern travel experience with shorter walking distances, improved passenger navigation, premium shopping and dining options, and sustainable infrastructure. The terminal will



open in phases, with the first gates becoming operational in 2026 and full completion expected by 2028.

Air India said the move will strengthen connectivity with Star Alliance carriers, including Air Canada, Lufthansa, SWISS, ANA, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, Avianca and TAP Air Portugal, while also benefiting passengers through

existing codeshare and interline partnerships. The airline will also open its flagship 9,100-square-foot Maharaja Lounge at Terminal 6, offering premium services to travellers. The new terminal will feature 10 gates, nine capable of handling wide-body aircraft, along with energy-efficient systems, rooftop solar power and seamless connectivity with Terminal 5.

46 KCP (PWG) insurgents surrender before Manipur CM, lay down weapons

Guwahati, July 21: Forty-six insurgents belonging to Manipur's banned outfit Kangleipak Communist Party (People's War Group), or KCP (PWG), surrendered before Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Tuesday. They laid down 28 weapons, including AK-series rifles, pistols, grenades, IEDs, detonators and ammunition. The "homecoming" ceremony was organised at the Mantripukhri Garrison of the Assam Rifles (South) headquarters in Imphal. Senior officials of the Manipur Police and security forces were also present. Speaking at the event, Singh said Manipur had enjoyed a peaceful environment in both the hills and the valley before the ethnic violence. He observed that the violence led to the emergence of an alarming gun



culture, affecting the state.

He said sustained efforts by central and state security forces had resulted in the recovery of more than 8,000 weapons. He further stated that since the formation of the present government on February 4 this year, over 1,200 firearms had been

recovered, including around 600 weapons looted from government armouries. Stating that conflict and gun culture can never bring peace, he welcomed the surrendered rebels for joining the mainstream. The Chief Minister assured full support for implementing the revised "Sur-

render-cum-Rehabilitation of Militants in the North Eastern States, 2018" scheme, including rehabilitation assistance and a stipend for the surrendered cadres.

He also lauded the concerted efforts of the security forces and Manipur Police in maintaining law and order and protecting civilians. State Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam said that under the revised Surrender-cum-Rehabilitation Scheme, the surrendered insurgents would receive a monthly stipend of up to Rs 6,000 for three years and a rehabilitation grant of Rs 4 lakh in the form of a fixed deposit. Defence officials described the surrender as a "turnaround" and expressed confidence that it would usher in a stable and development-oriented era. "This mass transition is highly sig-

nificant as none of these cadres was part of prior peace agreements. It directly addresses the legacy of the KCP, founded on April 14, 1980, by communist ideologues Y Ibohanbi and Ibopishak. Over the decades, ideological decay fractured the group into numerous entities," a Defence Ministry statement said.

It further stated that the PWG faction emerged as a highly disruptive splinter unit, severely impacting the Imphal Valley districts through anti-social and anti-national activities. "While it cannot be definitively stated that this marks the absolute dissolution of the two PWG factions, it represents a severe operational degradation that significantly dismantles their regional anti-social networks and territorial reach," the statement added.

Wangchuk's vital parameters stable, continues to refuse IV fluids: Safdarjung Hospital

New Delhi, July 21: Activist Sonam Wangchuk continued his indefinite hunger strike on Tuesday, with Safdarjung Hospital stating that while his vital parameters remain stable, he is refusing intravenous fluids and glucose despite repeated medical advice. In a health bulletin issued at 9 am, the hospital said Wangchuk remains under the close supervision of a multidisciplinary team from Vardhman Mahavir Medical College (VMMC), Safdarjung Hospital and AIIMS, New Delhi. According to the bulletin, Wangchuk's blood sugar levels continue to remain low, while his serum potassium level stands at 3.2 mEq/L. Doctors also noted persistent pancytopenia, characterised by anaemia

and reduced leukocyte counts, requiring continuous monitoring through serial investigations.

The hospital said Wangchuk is receiving oral rehydration solution (ORS) and oral potassium supplements but continues to decline intravenous fluids and glucose. It added that his ongoing dehydration, laboratory abnormalities and the physiological stress caused by prolonged fasting necessitate sustained medical supervision to promptly identify and manage any complications. On Monday, Wangchuk announced that he would continue his fast in protest against the police action on demonstrators during the Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) "Sansad Chalo" march. In a handwritten statement

from the hospital, he said he would end his fast only after student leaders were allowed to meet Members of Parliament or he was permitted to meet them at the hospital.

He also called on the government to fix accountability for the Education Minister and praised the protesters for maintaining peace despite police action. Wangchuk urged authorities to allow the students to present their grievances before Parliament, expressing confidence that the demonstrations would remain peaceful. Thousands of protesters had gathered near Parliament on the opening day of the Monsoon Session on Monday, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged



irregularities in the NEET examination and reported student deaths linked to the controversy. Police dispersed the crowd using lathis and tear gas.

Wangchuk was taken to Safdarjung Hospital by Delhi Police on Saturday, the 21st day of his hunger strike, which began on June 28 in support of the CJP-led agitation.



'The last of Messi': Argentines mourn loss and end of an era

Buenos Aires, July 20: Nervous excitement and rowdy cheers turned into anguished groans, nailbiting tension and tears, as Argentines' hope of yet another epic comeback led by Lionel Messi in the World Cup fizzled out against Spain. At the Cafe Relax bar in the historic center of Buenos Aires, fans with tears in their eyes after the final whistle blew on the 1-0 defeat said that what saddened them most was that it was almost certainly 39-year-old Messi's last shot at a World Cup. "I feel empty. Empty because of Messi, because I won't see him in a World Cup again. This is the last one," said Camilo Cichero, a 22-year-old architecture student who was comforting his crying friend. "It's not how we expected it to go. At least it gives me peace of mind knowing he's already won everything there was to win."

Composing himself, his friend Juan Saenz, 22, a law student said: "This was the last of Messi ...it was the very end, and it finished this way." "I was born while Messi was playing, and this was the end of that era." But it was not all tears. Around the city fireworks went



off, car horns honked, and thousands of fans still made their way to the iconic Obelisk, the traditional place for football celebrations. Initially crestfallen, they soon began partying again to celebrate their team and many said that despite the defeat, they would take to the streets to welcome the team home on Monday. "Thank you so much, players!!! You fought until the very end. Argentina will always stand tall," President Javier Milei wrote on X.

FIFA probes Argentina players after World Cup final clash with Spain

East Rutherford, July 20: FIFA opened an investigation Monday after Spain's celebrations on beating Argentina in the World Cup final took an ugly turn when players briefly clashed on the field. Video replays showed several players involved in a scuffle, including Argentina midfielder Leandro Paredes. He appeared to shove Spain's Eric Garcia by the throat. When Spain substitute Gavi jumped in to intervene, Paredes pushed him to the ground. Spain captain Rodri also seemed to be hit in the stomach by Argentina defender Nahuel Molina as he ran past to join teammates celebrating the title win. Molina later crowded Rodri, who was the target of a verbal confrontation by his former Manchester City teammate Nicolas Otamendi. Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni and other players rushed in to deescalate the situation.

FIFA said in a statement its "disciplinary committee has appointed a Disciplinary and Ethics Prosecutor to investigate potential breaches of the (FIFA disciplinary code) with regard to the post-match incidents." The brief statement gave no timetable for an investiga-



tion and did not name Paredes, who was not shown a red card after the game yet could face a suspension.

Spain needed extra time to win Sunday's final 1-0 after Argentina was reduced to 10 men. Enzo Fernandez was sent off with a second yellow card in stoppage time at the end of 90 minutes. The Argentina players stood facing their fans, with their backs to the podium, when Spain's squad lifted the trophy. It was an unusual show of disrespect to the new champions, who had given their opponents a guard of honor to collect their medals.

Chennai Grand Masters: Gukesh loses again, Erigaisi prevails decisively

Chennai, July 20: World champion D Gukesh's difficult campaign at the Chennai Grand Masters continued on Monday as he suffered his third defeat of the tournament, losing to India No. 1 Arjun Erigaisi in a gripping fifth-round encounter. Playing with the black pieces, Arjun emerged victorious after navigating a tense tactical battle to register his second win of the event. The result took him to 3.5 points, level with French Grandmaster Alireza Firouzja at the top of the standings with two rounds remaining.

Gukesh opened with the English Opening before the game transposed into a Queen's Gambit Declined. Both players launched aggressive kingside plans, creating a highly complex position with exposed kings. Gukesh appeared to seize the initiative after Arjun's 23...Qxb2 allowed him a strong attacking opportunity. The world

champion responded with 24.Rh8+, putting sustained pressure on Arjun's king. However, the prolonged calculation consumed valuable time, and Gukesh's advantage slipped away after 30.Bg7 enabled Arjun to neutralise the attack. As the game progressed into a rook-and-knight ending, Gukesh's clock dwindled to under a minute while Arjun maintained a comfortable time edge.

The decisive moment arrived with Gukesh's 54.Rf5+, allowing Arjun's king to become active and support a dangerous passed pawn on the d-file. Arjun converted the advantage with precise play, coordinating his two knights before Gukesh resigned after 63.Ne4. Elsewhere, Firouzja was held to a draw by Dmitry Andreikin, missing an opportunity to move clear at the top. Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov defeated Nihal Sarin in 38



moves with the black pieces to claim his first victory of the tournament and move to three points, just half a point behind the leaders. In another game, M Pranesh shared the spoils with Hans Niemann.

Grandmaster Srinath Narayanan said

the event was proving to be valuable preparation for the upcoming Chess Olympiad, describing the tournament as "India versus the world" and praising the strong level of competition that Indian players are facing ahead of the global team event.

Calcutta HC orders Abishek Porel's arrest in rape case

Kolkata, July 21: The Calcutta High Court has ordered the arrest of Delhi Capitals cricketer Abishek Porel after a woman accused him of rape. The court also directed the seizure of his electronic devices to prevent the dissemination of photographs of the complainant, a medical student. Porel has also been charged with criminal intimidation and other offences.

The Calcutta High Court Justice Saugata Bhattacharjee has also directed the police to adopt a more proactive approach in investigating the case. The next hearing has been scheduled for August 11.

A case was registered against Porel last month at Mogra Police Station after the complainant alleged that he established a physical relationship with her on the pretext of marriage and frequently recorded their intimate moments.

The woman further alleged that she later discovered Porel had also been involved in physical relationships with other women.



Rohit Sharma: Noise Will Remain Till I Play

London, July 20: India captain Rohit Sharma brushed aside speculation about his international future, saying "noise" has followed him since his debut and will continue as long as he plays. After scoring a fighting 138 in India's 27-run defeat to England at Lord's, Rohit said his only focus is contributing to the team's success, not responding to outside opinions. "The noise has always been there. Till I am playing, it will remain. If there is no noise, there is no fun," Rohit told BCCI.TV. "My job is to bat, represent my country and help the team." The 39-year-old's 34th ODI century, which made him the oldest Indian to score an ODI hundred, came under pressure in a daunting chase of 388. Rohit stitched a century partnership with Virat Kohli (74), reviving India's hopes before the visitors eventually



fell 27 runs short.

Reflecting on batting with Kohli, Rohit said their long-standing partnership made communication effortless. "We've played together for so

many years and understand each other well. It's always enjoyable batting with him and exchanging ideas in the middle," he said. Despite the loss, Rohit expressed satisfaction with

India's overall performance in the series, while admitting disappointment at not sealing it after an encouraging start in Birmingham. He said the team fell short with the bat in Cardiff and faced a difficult target at Lord's.

Rohit also defended India's inexperienced pace attack, which had just 51 ODIs of combined experience among the four bowlers. He urged patience, saying the young bowlers would learn from such matches and improve with time. "These guys haven't played a lot of ODIs. We need to give them time. We will learn from this experience and come back stronger," Rohit said. India ended the series with a defeat, but Rohit's century and composed response to criticism underlined his determination to remain focused on performance rather than speculation over his future.

