

Naga Villages Attacked, Pastor Injured

Guwahati, Sep 01: In restive Manipur, four Naga villages came under attack on Tuesday, while normal life was disrupted in five Imphal Valley districts during a shut-down called over the demand for implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The Working Committee of the Naga organisation Tangkhul Naga Long said several houses were burnt and a pastor, Luithuibou Newmai, sustained grievous bullet injuries in attacks carried out at Makui Pipuram, Lower Tapon, Middle Tapon and Upper Tapon villages in Kangpokpi district.

The committee alleged that some Kuki insurgent groups, which signed the Suspension of Operation agreement with the central government, carried out the attacks. It urged the Nagas to shed their temporal and ideological differences and stand together to protect their land, identity and people. "The Nagas are closely watching the unprovoked and relentless offences being carried out against us in our land," the committee said, warning that state and central governments would be held solely responsible the day the situation escalated beyond control. Meanwhile, the shut-down was called by the Meitei

civil society and student-led movement 'Campaign for Just and Free Delimitation', demanding the NRC before the census. Given the prevailing situation arising from the NRC demand, the central government on Monday deferred the census operations. The Manipur High Court had also issued an order directing the deferment of the census exercise until further orders.

However, Imphal Valley-based organisations demanding the NRC are not satisfied. They are seeking an assurance from the Centre on the issue. The United Naga Council, Manipur's apex Naga organisation, is also demanding that implementation of the NRC precede the census and delimitation exercises. The Imphal Valley wore a deserted look during the shut-down, with shops, markets and other commercial establishments, as well as educational institutions, remaining closed. Attendance in government offices was thin.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh had on Monday appealed to groups and organisations to refrain from calling bandhs, pointing out that such actions would only cause hardship to the common people. He had urged them to continue dialogue.

Security of seafarers key: PM Modi to Iran

New Delhi, Sep 01: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called for safeguarding the freedom of navigation and commerce during his meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Kyrgyzstan's Bishkek. He also emphasised that civilians

and civilian infrastructure, including commercial shipping and seafarers, "must not be harmed under any circumstances". An Iranian read-out of the meeting said Pezeshkian told Modi that the US had chosen "war over diplomacy" and urged India to use its influence to help restore peace. The two leaders also discussed the Chabahar Port and the Strait of Hormuz, according to the read-out. Pezeshkian said Modi could use India's "extensive contacts with various parties" to help them move away from the "path of war and bloodshed" and "return to the path of dialogue and agreement".

Modi, meanwhile, reiterated the need for continued efforts to ensure "lasting peace and stability" in the region, as the two leaders discussed the escalating West Asia conflict,

and seafarers. In a social media post following the meeting, Modi said India remained committed to strengthening its "long standing friendship with Iran across diverse sectors" and expressed an intention to "expand and diversify our trade basket in the times to come". "We had a discussion

and seafarers. In a social media post following the meeting, Modi said India remained committed to strengthening its "long standing friendship with Iran across diverse sectors" and expressed an intention to "expand and diversify our trade basket in the times to come". "We had a discussion



The PM also stressed the importance of sustained efforts to restore peace and stability in West Asia, a region home to millions of Indian citizens and critical to India's energy and maritime interests.

His emphasis on freedom of navigation and the protection of commercial shipping comes amid heightened regional tensions following the US-Israel war on Iran, raising concerns over the safety of maritime trade, civilian infrastructure

on the prevailing situation in the region. India will continue to support all efforts aimed at ensuring lasting peace," Modi said.

Modi also reiterated India's readiness to closely cooperate with Tehran in multilateral organisations including BRICS and the SCO. The prime minister said he looked forward to welcoming Pezeshkian to India for the BRICS Summit on September 12 and 13 in New Delhi.

NEET stir: SC quashes all FIRs against CJP protesters



New Delhi, Sep 01: In a major relief to students who participated in the recent protests over the NEET examination controversy, the Supreme Court on Tuesday invoked its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and quashed the FIRs registered across the country against them. "Participating in a protest per se would not constitute an offence," observed a bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joy-malya Bagchi and V Mohana.

The bench also, while preserving the State's liberty to proceed against persons allegedly involved in bodily harm or destruction of property, said that its directions would be without prejudice to the pending constitutional challenge concerning facial recognition technology. At the outset, the Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, assured the top court that it would not pursue FIRs linked to the specified protest incidents and no fresh FIRs would be registered for the same incidents.

He further added that the Government stood by its assurance on compensation and modalities would be finalised in consultation with States and other stakeholders. Hearing these submissions from the Centre, the bench of the apex court, safeguarded the rights of those who participated in the protests across the country against NEET, and quashed the proceedings against these students. The Centre has on Monday moved the apex court seeking quashing of these FIRs registered over protests that took place across the country on July 2026. In the hearing on Tuesday, Senior Advocates Vrinda Grover and Hariharan, appearing for many protesters, sought transparency with regard to the FIRs and the list of about 2,873 persons identified by authorities.

Tripura: Surrendered Militants Meet Minister Bikash Debbarma, Seek Speedy Resolution of Demands

Agartala, September 01: A delegation of surrendered militants from the NLFT and ATTF met Tripura Tribal Welfare Minister Bikash Debbarma at the Civil Secretariat on Tuesday and held detailed discussions on their longstanding demands. The delegation, led by Kokla Joy Tripura, met the minister following a road blockade staged by surrendered militants on August 28 in the Khatayaktar area of Baramura. The protesters had raised several demands concerning the welfare and rehabilitation of surrendered members. Minister Bikash Debbarma had visited the blockade site on August 28 and assured the protesters that their concerns would be discussed constructively with the government. During Tuesday's meeting, senior police officials, the concerned department secretary and other government officials were present. The delegation placed its demands before the minister,



who, according to the representatives, assured them that the issues would be examined positively.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Kokla Joy Tripura said the minis-

ter listened to their demands positively and discussed possible ways to resolve the issues. "The Minister listened to our demands very positively. We discussed how the issues could be resolved. We are optimistic that the gov-

ernment will take the necessary steps to address our demands," he said. Minister Bikash Debbarma said the government was taking the demands of the surrendered militants seriously. He pointed out that several matters were already being addressed under the supervision of the Central Government, while the state government was working to fulfil the remaining demands. "The government is viewing their demands with a positive outlook. Several matters are already in the process of being resolved under the supervision of the Central Government. The state government is also working towards fulfilling the remaining demands," Debbarma said. The meeting has opened a fresh channel of dialogue between the surrendered militants and the state government, with both sides expressing optimism that the outstanding issues will be resolved through discussions and administrative measures.



TVS iQube hits one million customers, launches MillionR special edition

Guwahati: TVS Motor Company has launched the TVS iQubeMillionR Special Edition, marking the electric scooter's milestone of crossing one million customers and strengthening the company's push in India's fast-growing electric two-wheeler market.

Based on the TVS iQube 3.5 kWh variant, the MillionR edition offers an IDC range of 145 km and is priced at ₹1,40,138, effective ex-showroom in Karnataka. The special edition features an exclusive Aurora Green Dual Tone colour inspired by the Northern Lights, premium seat upholstery, new graphics and exclusive MillionR badging.

The scooter also gets a front utility storage compartment, increasing total storage capacity from 32 litres to 35.5 litres, along with a USB Type-C charging port and more than



118 connected technology features.

TVS Motor said the iQube has been instrumental in strengthening its presence in the electric two-wheeler segment. The MillionR badge also carries forward the legacy of TVS Jupiter, which received a MillionR edition in 2016 after crossing one million customers. TVS Jupiter has now reached nine million customers, according to the company.

In Guwahati, the new edition could target the city's growing base of EV buyers seeking family-oriented, technology-equipped scooters. However, local pricing, dealership availability and the effective on-road cost in Guwahati will be key factors influencing demand.

The wider TVS iQube portfolio starts at ₹1,11,310, effective ex-showroom in Karnataka, while Battery-as-a-Service prices start at ₹59,999.

Sigma's ₹1,600 crore Rolls-Royce deal boosts aerospace ambitions

Guwahati: Defence and aerospace major Sigma Advanced Systems has secured an additional long-term agreement worth nearly £125 million, or approximately ₹1,600 crore, with Rolls-Royce, strengthening its presence in the global aerospace supply chain following the acquisition of UK-based Bromford Precision Solutions.

The latest deal comes on top of a recently secured long-term agreement worth around £300 million, or approximately ₹3,800 crore, significantly expanding Sigma's relationship with the global aerospace engine manufacturer and boosting long-term revenue visibility.

Through Bromford Precision Solutions, based in Leicester, Sigma will manufacture aero-engine rings, casings, lock plates and other critical engine structures across its manufacturing facilities in India and the UK.

The agreement will provide Rolls-Royce with a broader dual-source manufacturing solution.

Sigma said the Bromford acquisition has added complementary capabilities in aero-engine rings, casings and advanced precision manufacturing, allowing the group to expand its portfolio of complex engine components and deepen its engagement with existing customers.



Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Sunil Kalidindi said the agreement reflected growing confidence among global OEMs in In-

dia's engineering depth, quality and manufacturing scale.

With Bromford and Nasmyth operating as complementary businesses under its UK aerospace platform, Sigma is pursuing targeted acquisitions to broaden technical capabilities, strengthening customer relationships and increase participation in high-value, long-duration aerospace programmes. The agreement is also expected to secure Bromford's long-term future as a key UK manufacturing site, safeguarding skilled engineering and manufacturing jobs.

Claims settlement becomes the new currency of trust for life insurers

Guwahati: Claims settlement is emerging as a critical measure of trust and performance in India's life insurance industry, as customers increasingly evaluate insurers on their ability to deliver financial support when it matters most.

The life insurance industry collected premiums worth ₹8.86 lakh crore in FY2024-25, registering growth of 6.73% over the previous year. However, insurance penetration declined to 2.7% of GDP, underlining the need for insurers to strengthen customer confidence and expand protection.

Axis Max Life said claims

settlement should be viewed as a key indicator of an insurer's commitment to policyholders. The company's individual death claims paid ratio remained above 99% for five consecutive years, improving from 99.34% in FY2021-22 to 99.8% in FY2025-26. During FY2025-26, it settled 20,529 individual death claims worth ₹1,641 crore.

The company said a strong claims experience depends on responsible underwriting, robust technology, accurate documentation, fraud controls, clear communication and timely support for families.

In Guwahati, efficient claims settlement could become an increasingly important factor in driving insurance adoption across Assam and the Northeast. In a market where financial decisions are often influenced by trust, personal experience and recommendations, a consistent claims record can strengthen an insurer's credibility and brand recall.

As competition intensifies, claims settlement is likely to remain a key differentiator, moving beyond an operational metric to become a defining measure of customer trust and long-term business strength.

Gen Z hosts fuel Airbnb's growth as Guwahati joins India's emerging hospitality markets

Guwahati: India's Gen Z is emerging as a significant force in the country's travel and hospitality economy, with the number of Airbnb hosts aged 18-29 growing nearly 40 per cent year-on-year in the first half of 2026, according to the company's latest internal data.

Nearly two in five new Airbnb hosts in India now belong to the Gen Z demographic, while earnings generated by Gen Z hosts through the platform rose by more than 60 per cent year-on-year during January-June 2026. The growth highlights increasing participation by young Indians in the platform-led hospitality and short-term accommodation

economy.

Bengaluru, Delhi, Gurugram, Indore, Mumbai and Noida recorded sharp growth in young hosts, with Indore registering more than 120 per cent year-on-year growth. Emerging destinations such as Dehradun, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kochi, Lucknow and Mathura also saw increased participation.

In Guwahati, the trend could strengthen the city's position as a gateway to Northeast India. A growing pool of young hosts may diversify accommodation options, support local tourism spending and create entrepreneurial opportunities for residents catering to domestic and international

travellers exploring Assam and the wider Northeast.

Airbnb said Gen Z hosting in rural destinations grew 60 per cent year-on-year, while low-density urban destinations recorded nearly 70 per cent growth. Nearly one in seven Gen Z hosts has achieved Superhost status, indicating that growth has been accompanied by consistent hospitality standards.

Airbnb India and Southeast Asia Country Head Amanpreet Singh Bajaj said Gen Z is increasingly participating in travel not only as travellers but also as hosts and entrepreneurs, creating new economic opportunities through local hospitality.

Chola Foundation extends flood relief to 1,250 families across Assam

Guwahati: Chola Foundation has partnered with Smile Foundation to provide flood relief assistance to more than 1,250 families across 10 flood-affected regions of Assam, as the company steps up its corporate social responsibility response to communities hit by the recent floods.

The intervention included the distribution of dry rations, hygiene kits and other essential supplies, with particular focus on supporting women, children, elderly people and persons with disabilities.

The relief programme was imple-

mented in coordination with local authorities and community leaders to ensure assistance reached the worst-affected communities. Employees of Chola in Assam also volunteered in the on-ground distribution of relief materials while adhering to safety protocols and guidelines issued by district authorities.

Ravindra Kumar Kundu, Managing Director and CEO of Chola-mandalam Investment and Finance Company, said the floods had severely disrupted the lives and livelihoods of thousands of families.

"Assam has been severely affected

by floods, disrupting the lives and livelihoods of thousands of families," Kundu said, adding that the partnership with Smile Foundation aimed to provide timely and essential support to affected communities.

The initiative forms part of Chola Foundation's broader CSR mandate, which covers poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, environmental preservation and community development. Chola, the financial services arm of the Murugappa Group, operates through 2,508 touchpoints across India and manages assets exceeding Rs 2.54 lakh crore.



Tilaknagar Industries targets Meghalaya's premium whisky market with Imperial Black launch



Shillong: Tilaknagar Industries Limited has launched

its Imperial Black Master's Select Whisky in Meghalaya, expanding its presence in the Northeast and strengthening its push towards premiumisation in India's evolving IMFL market.

The company said Imperial Black is crafted through a blend of select Indian grain spirits and Scotch malts, targeting consumers seeking a more refined whisky experience. The blend features notes of malt sweetness and oak, followed by a rounded, mellow palate and a long fin-

ish.

Ahmed Ibrahim Rahimtoola, Chief Marketing Officer at Tilaknagar Industries, said the Meghalaya launch marks an important milestone in the company's strategy to offer premium experiences to quality-conscious consumers and strengthen the Imperial portfolio in the region.

Imperial Black Exclusive Collection Whisky had received the Gold Quality Award from the Monde Selection Quality Institute in 2022, a recognition the company

said reinforces its focus on blending and craftsmanship.

In Shillong, the launch comes as the city continues to offer opportunities for premium spirits brands targeting consumers seeking greater variety and upgraded offerings. The entry of Imperial Black could add competition to the premium whisky segment while expanding choices across retail outlets.

Imperial Black will be available in 180 ml, 375 ml and 750 ml formats across Meghalaya from August 2026.

Bajaj General Insurance unveils ProShield and VPAY 2.0 to expand motor insurance protection

Guwahati: Bajaj General Insurance Limited, formerly Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company Limited, has announced the launch of ProShield, a packaged motor insurance solution for defence personnel, and the enhanced VPAY 2.0, a next-generation offering designed for connected vehicles and evolving mobility risks.

ProShield has been developed around the specific requirements of defence personnel, including frequent relocations, operational commitments and vehicle movement across postings. The offering provides vehicle relocation protection, policy extensions for vehicles transported through licensed carriers and No Claim Bonus protection for eligible ac-

cidents during transit where the insured is not at fault. It also includes travel emergency protection for missed flights and hotel expenses following vehicle accidents, document-loss protection for replacement of driving licences and registration certificates, priority assistance, personalised claims support and access to a nationwide network of more than 7,300 garages. The product further incorporates zero depreciation with unlimited claims, waiver of deductible, roadside assistance, tyre and rim cover, rodent damage, towing, geographical extension, rally and accessories cover.

VPAY 2.0 is available in Prime, Classic and Elite variants and brings multiple protections under a single solution. Fea-

tures include cyber-incident protection for connected vehicles, theft of funds arising from covered cyber events, fuel adulteration, mechanical and electrical breakdown, Smart Repair, smart-system restoration and ADAS recalibration.

It also provides comprehensive protection for electric and hybrid vehicles, including traction battery replacement benefits, along with vehicle replacement, theft of parts, consequential loss, legal defence costs and integrated 360-degree protection.

Dr Tapan Singhel, MD & CEO, Bajaj General Insurance, said the launches reflect the company's focus on designing motor insurance products around changing mobility and customer requirements.

From Imphal to the skies: Air India siblings turn family inspiration into a shared aviation career

Imphal: For siblings Wahengbam Sureiya and Rohit Singh from Manipur, a career in aviation has become more than a professional pursuit—it has evolved into a shared journey at Air India.

Sureiya, who began her aviation career in 2014, was the first in her family to enter the sector. Attracted by opportunities to travel, meet people from different backgrounds and work in a dynamic profession, she became cabin crew and brought home stories of her experiences around the world.

Those experiences later inspired her younger brother Rohit to pursue the same career. He eventually joined Air India, following the path his sister had taken nearly a decade earlier.

Today, the siblings operate as Air India cabin crew, navigating long-haul flights, changing rosters and airport standby duties. Working for the same airline, they say, has strengthened their bond by giving them a shared understanding of the demands of aviation.

Their experiences range from exchange-



ing advice and flight stories to coinciding on airport standby. On one occasion, they were assigned the same cab home, prompting the driver to jokingly ask when Air India had started "hiring family packages".

Despite travelling to destinations such as Bali and Dubai, the siblings say simple gestures keep them connected. For Rohit, it is his sister's calls, while Sureiya finds comfort in a warm meal prepared by her brother after a long flight.

When pets become family, insurance follows suit



GENERAL

CARINGLY YOURS

Guwahati: As more Indian households increasingly treat pets as members of the family, Bajaj General Insurance Limited has launched "My Family Complete", a health insurance product that brings pet dogs and cats under the same protection framework as human family members.

The plan offers sum insured options from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 5 crore and policy tenures of up to five years. Eligible adults, dependent children and pets can be covered under one policy, combining indemnity and benefit-based payouts.

Coverage includes in-patient hospitalisation, room rent, road and pet ambulance services, pre- and post-hospitalisation expenses, domiciliary care, modern treatment methods, AYUSH hospitalisation for humans, organ donor expenses and family visit reimbursements. The policy also

provides unlimited reinstatement of the sum insured, cumulative bonuses of up to 100 per cent and convalescence benefits. For pet parents, the plan includes Finding Your Pet cover, emergency pet accommodation and third-party liability protection. Optional benefits include air ambulance, Double Sum Insured, Major Illness and Accident Multiplier, Global Cover, NR-Insure, Health Limitless and the Bundle of Joy benefit for the birth of a child or pet litter.

Paw Promise, Extended Pet Stay and Long-Term Care add further pet-focused protection, while family, long-term, loyalty, fitness and Walk to Win discounts aim to make the plan more accessible.

Dr Tapan Singhel, MD and CEO of Bajaj General Insurance, said the product reflects the changing way families live and care for their pets.

ICICI Prudential targets women's financial security with new term insurance plan



Imphal: Women balancing careers, families and long-term financial responsibilities now have another insurance option designed around their changing needs. ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched ICICI Pru iProtect Smart Her, a term insurance product combining life protection with health and wellness benefits.

The plan offers women a 15% lifetime premium discount and a pregnancy break benefit, providing greater flexibility in managing premium commitments during pregnancy.

It also includes women-specific health management and wellness services worth up to ₹25,000. These cover teleconsultations across multiple specialties, annual health check-ups, health risk assess-

ments, wellness content and pharmacy and diagnostic discounts. Overall benefits are valued at up to ₹92,100.

For parents concerned about their children's future, the plan offers Child Education Care through an increasing income payout option for 10 years. The death benefit is paid as income to the nominee and increases by 10% every year for 10 years.

Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer, said women's financial planning needs change across different stages of life.

The insurer said digital capabilities will support purchase, self-service and claims. Its Q1 FY2027 claims settlement ratio stood at 99.3%, with non-investigative individual death claims settled in an average of one day.

Godrej targets ₹50 crore from fast-growing data centre security market

Guwahati: Godrej Enterprises Group (GEG) is expanding into India's rapidly growing digital infrastructure security market after securing a mandate from Yotta and NTT Data Center to deploy its integrated Key Management Solution with seamless integration into the Genetec security platform. The mandate, initially awarded for a single data centre, was subsequently expanded to multiple facilities following a live demonstration that showcased centralised key management, enhanced security, operational efficiency and compatibility with current and future versions of Genetec software. The opportunity was facilitated through Godrej's technology partnership with Genetec, which recommended the company based on its integration capabilities and experience in securing critical infrastructure. Godrej said it is currently the only organisation in India integrated with the Genetec platform, giving it an early-mover advantage in the segment. With India's data centre capacity expected to exceed 3 GW



by 2028, growth in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, digital payments, enterprise digitisation, e-governance and data localisation is driving demand for resilient, compliant and integrated infrastructure security systems.

Godrej's Security Solutions business, which serves sectors including banking, government, manufacturing and infrastructure and exports to over 60 countries, is targeting ₹50 crore in revenue from the data centre segment over the next two years. In Guwahati, the development could be relevant as the Northeast's digital economy expands. Growing adoption of cloud services, digital payments, government digitisation and enterprise technology could strengthen the case for advanced data infrastructure and integrated security solutions in Guwahati, which is emerging as an important connectivity and commercial hub for the region. Pushkar Gokhale, Business Head of Security Solutions at Godrej Enterprises Group, said the company sees growing convergence between physical security, digital infrastructure and intelligent technology platforms as India builds its next generation of critical infrastructure.

Barbeque Nation bets on Silchar to deepen Assam market presence



Silchar: Barbeque Nation Hospitality Limited has expanded its presence in Assam with the launch of its third outlet in the state, strengthening the casual dining chain's footprint in the Northeast market. The new outlet, located at Pramila Square, 3rd Floor,

Block A, N.S. Avenue, Kanakpur, near RD Automobiles in Silchar, spans 3,079 square feet and has a seating capacity of 98 guests. The company said the outlet, featuring vibrant and contemporary interiors, is positioned to cater to family gatherings, corporate lunch-

es and group dining. Suman Mukherjee, Regional Manager (East), Barbeque Nation Hospitality Limited, said the Silchar launch reflects the company's continued expansion in Assam and its focus on offering hospitality and service excellence to customers

in the region. The outlet will serve the brand's all-you-can-eat buffet, offering vegetarian and non-vegetarian starters, main courses, desserts and live counters. The menu includes paneer preparations, Cajun-spiced potatoes, chicken hot in basil sauce, fish fingers, Kolkata chicken biryani, chicken kofta curry, dumka murgh, semiya kheer, pineapple pastry, fruit cake, angoori gulab jamun and ice creams. Live counters will offer panipuri and dahi-puri, alongside local delicacies. Founded in Mumbai in 2006, Barbeque Nation pioneered the live on-the-table grill concept in India. The company has since expanded to over 81 cities with more than 200 outlets in India and abroad, while also developing interactive live counters and its "Barbeque-in-a-Box" delivery portfolio.

TVS Motor names Peyman Kargar as next CEO, succeeding Radhakrishnan in 2027



Guwahati: TVS Motor Company has appointed Peyman Kargar as its Director and Chief Executive Officer, effective January 27, 2027, marking a key leadership transition as the two- and three-wheeler manufacturer prepares for its next phase of global growth and innovation. Kargar, currently President of International Business, will succeed K. N. Radhakrishnan, who will continue as Director and CEO until January 27, 2027, ensuring a smooth transition. Radhakrishnan will subsequently serve as a Non-Executive Director until the company's ensuing Annual General Meeting scheduled for July 2027.

The appointment comes after a strong FY2025-26 for TVS Motor, during which the company sold a record 5.9 million vehicles globally and posted 30 per cent revenue growth.

Kargar brings more than three decades of automotive industry experience across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, with expertise spanning product development, R&D, manufacturing, quality, sales and marketing. Under his leadership, TVS Motor's international business has emerged as a major growth driver, contributing 29 per cent of total sales volume and growing at 33 per cent. In his new role, Kargar will lead the company's expansion in India and global markets, with a focus on product innovation, premiumisation, technology and AI capabilities, quality, customer-centricity and entry into developed markets. Chairman Sudarshan Venu said Kargar's global experience and strategic vision made him well-positioned to lead TVS Motor into its next phase of growth.

ICICI Prudential Life launches BSE 500 Momentum Value 50 Index Fund

Imphal: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched the BSE 500 Momentum Value 50 Index Fund, introducing a rules-based value-plus-momentum strategy through select unit-linked insurance plans (ULIPs) to offer customers access to long-term equity opportunities. The fund will invest in a diversified basket of 50 companies selected from the broad BSE 500 universe and follow the ICICI Pru BSE 500 Momentum Value 50 Customized Index. The strategy combines attractive valuations with pos-

itive price momentum, while quarterly portfolio reviews will enable the fund to respond to changing valuations and market trends. Where a stock cannot be selected due to regulatory guidelines, subsequent eligible stocks will be chosen to maintain the 50-stock cohort. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Manish Kumar, Chief Investment Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "The BSE 500 Momentum Value 50 Index Fund has been designed to provide customers with access to

a disciplined and transparent investment strategy that brings together two important investment factors, value and momentum." He added, "While attractive valuations can provide valuation comfort, positive momentum can indicate growing market confidence. Combining these factors enables the strategy to identify companies that demonstrate strength on both parameters." The fund will be available through ICICI Pru SmartKid Assure, ICICI Pru Signature Assure, ICICI Pru Signature

Online and ICICI Pru Smart Insurance Plan Plus. The company reported a 99.3% claim settlement ratio in Q1 FY2027, with a one-day average turnaround for non-investigated individual claims. As of June 30, 2026, its assets under management stood at Rs. 3.34 lakh crore, while total in-force sum assured was Rs. 48.06 lakh crore. The company has reported zero NPAs since inception, while its board has approved a proposal to rename it ICICI Life Insurance Limited, subject to relevant approvals.



MG bets big on multi-energy mobility with Hector Tomahawk launch



Guwahati: JSW MG Motor India has expanded its new-energy vehicle portfolio with the launch of the MG Hector Tomahawk in electric vehicle (EV) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) versions, marking the debut of its ADAPT Multi-New Energy Vehicle platform.

The Hector Tomahawk EV is priced from ₹13.99 lakh under the introductory Battery-as-a-Service (BaaS) model, plus ₹4.90 per km battery rental, while the PHEV starts at ₹21.79 lakh

plus ₹3.20 per km battery rental. Full ownership prices start at ₹19.49 lakh for the EV and ₹25.69 lakh for the PHEV.

The EV features a 69.2 kWh MAGIC Battery with a claimed range of 517 km, while the PHEV combines a 1.5-litre petrol engine and a 20.5 kWh battery, offering over 115 km of electric-only range and a combined range exceeding 1,100 km.

MG said the SUV also introduces Vehicle-to-Home capability, allowing the bat-

tery to power household appliances. Other features include a 15.6-inch HD display, Level 2 ADAS, i-SMART 3.0 with over 80 connected features and a GenAI-powered voice assistant supporting 30-plus Hinglish commands.

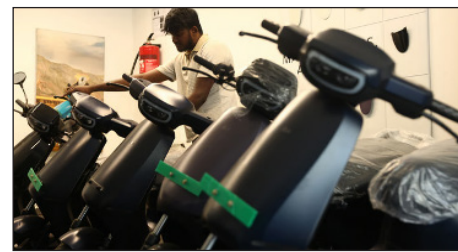
Available in 5- and 7-seater configurations, the Hector Tomahawk comes with a lifetime battery warranty for the first owner. EV deliveries will begin in September 2026, while PHEV test drives and deliveries are scheduled from November.

TVS Motor races past Hero, Honda to top two-wheeler sales in August

Mumbai: TVS Motor Company has overtaken rival firms - Hero MotoCorp and Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) - to emerge as India's largest two-wheeler maker by total sales in August 2026. TVS reported that its total two-wheelers registered a growth of 21% with sales of 591,437 units in August 2026 as against 490,788 units in August 2025. The company's domestic two-wheelers registered a growth of 18% with sales of 433,796 units in August 2026 as against 368,862 units in August 2025. Two-wheeler exports registered a growth of 29% with sales of 157,641 units in August 2026 as against 121,926 units in August 2025. A large chunk of TVS' growth came from electric two-wheelers which registered an exponential growth of 137% with sales of 59,453 units in August 2026 as against 25,138 units in August 2025. The company remains the market leader in the electric two-wheeler (e2W) segment. This is not the first time that TVS has outsold Hero and Honda. The Tamil Nadu-headquartered company became the largest two-wheeler (2W) manufacturer by total sales volume, combining domestic and international business, in the month of June 2026 and in the month of December 2025.

Japanese two-wheeler giant HMSI recorded total sales of 5.79 Lakh units in August 2026, registering 8% year-on-year growth compared to 5.34 Lakh units sold in August 2025. Domestic sales in August 2026 stood at 5.17 Lakh units, registering 8% growth over 4.81 Lakh units sold in August 2025. Exports stood at 0.61 Lakh units in August 2026, recording 15% growth compared to 0.53 Lakh units exported in August 2025.

Hero MotoCorp, the world's largest manu-



facturer of motorcycles and scooters, slipped to the number 3 position in August 2026 when total sales are taken into account. The company reported total dispatches of 5,68,398 units in August 2026, compared to 5,53,727 units during the same period last year.

Hero's domestic internal combustion engine (ICE) business recorded dispatches of 5,16,747 units in August 2026 and 18% VAHAN retail growth. Combined with EV sales, Hero remains the largest player in the domestic market with its sales coming at 542,305 units in August 2026 compared to 519,139 units in August 2025. The company's exports, however, fell 34,588 units in August 2025 to 26,093 units last month. Hero MotoCorp said that the continued retail momentum augurs well for the festive season, supported by a more flexible supply chain ecosystem with its ability to respond quickly to festive demand.

Bajaj Auto's total sales grew by 30% in August 2026 to 443,748 units. The company reported that 2W sales in the domestic market grew by 10% year-on-year to 2,01,898 units in August 2026, from 1,84,109 units in August 2025. Exports of two-wheelers grew 53% to 2,41,850 units last month as compared to 1,57,778 units in the same month a year ago, it said.

TVS Jupiter gets premium dual-tone upgrade with spectral colours

Guwahati: TVS Motor Company has expanded its Jupiter portfolio with the launch of the TVS Jupiter dual-tone spectral range, priced at ₹89,825 (ex-showroom, Delhi), as it looks to strengthen its position in India's competitive 110cc scooter market.

The new range introduces Spectral Blue and Spectral Copper, making TVS Jupiter the first scooter in the 110cc segment to offer distinctive spectral colours in dual-tone styling. The variants feature TVS Spectral Colour Technology with a dynamic colour-shifting finish, colour-coordinated inner panels, a premium seat finish and partial chrome mirrors. The company has also added segment-first Sequential Turn Signal Lamps, along with a USB Type-C charging port, premium long seat with integrated backrest and SmartX-onnect connected technology offering navigation, call and SMS alerts.



The scooter retains its 33-litre under-seat storage, capable of accommodating two helmets, and is powered by a 113.3cc single-cylinder, four-stroke engine producing 5.9 kW of power and up to 9.8 Nm of torque with TVS iGO Assist, aimed at improving acceleration and fuel efficiency.

TVS Motor said the new range builds on Jupiter's 13-year presence in the Indian market and its strategy of offering design, technology and practical features for urban families. The TVS Jupiter dual-tone spectral range will be available soon across authorised dealerships.

Shriram Finance expects overall vehicle finance business to grow by 15-20%

Mumbai: Shriram Finance sees a good traction in its business and expects the overall vehicle finance business to grow by 15-20% compared to last year. The NBFC is currently managing electric vehicle finance business of Rs300 crore a month. During a media interaction on Tuesday, Umesh Revankar, executive vice chairman at Shriram Finance, said, "The exact traction in overall vehicle finance will be known once Ganesh Chaturthi festivity starts. But our assumption is that the segment will grow 15-20% compared to last year. On the EV finance segment, our business has grown from '50 crore per month to '300 crore across two, three-wheeler, commercial vehicle, cars and solar rooftop panels."

He further said there is "absolutely no delinquencies" in the EV business for the NBFC. Shriram Finance's overall growth plan is focused on MSME and vehicle loan financing and expand gold loan

business. India's second-largest NBFC expects the credit growth in India at 14-15% and the growth would be around 18%. "The thumb rule is that the credit growth will grow two-times of GDP. There

"As we have received funding from MUFG, we want to invest that into the business and grow faster. Last year, we were focusing on expanding our digital presence and bring out new products." In Tamil Nadu,



will be bigger opportunity for NBFCs because they are able to innovate. With regard to Shriram Finance, in first quarter we grew at 15% and this quarter also growth will around 15%. Our target for the overall credit business growth is 18%." The Mumbai-based NBFC is planning to open nearly 100 new branches and recruit 2,000-3,000 in 2026. Shriram Finance operates 3,225 branches across India.

Shriram Finance has 843 branches, of which 147 are in Chennai and its nearby region. Tamil Nadu handles 15-16% of total AUM of '45,000 crore of the NBFC. Shriram Finance is launching new products such as supply chain financing, bill discounting, inventory financing and term loan for dealers who want expand their businesses. "These products are different from traditional products that we offer."

An In-Depth Tutorial on How to Create Chilli Paneer at Home



Chilli Paneer is a cherished Indo-Chinese dish that seamlessly combines soft, succulent paneer cubes with a spicy, tangy sauce. **Ingredients:** 250 grams of paneer (cubed), 3 tablespoons of all-purpose flour (maida), ½ teaspoon of black pepper powder, salt to taste, ½ teaspoon of red chili powder, 4 tablespoons of oil (for shallow frying), 1 onion (cubed), 1 green capsicum (cubed), 2 green chillies, 1 tablespoon of garlic (finely chopped), 1 tablespoon of ginger (chopped), 1 tablespoon of red chili sauce, 1 tablespoon of tomato ketchup, 1 teaspoon of vinegar, ½ teaspoon of sugar (optional), 2 tablespoons of spring onions (chopped), ¼ cup of water, and 1 teaspoon of cornflour mixed with 2 tablespoons of water. Take a bowl and mix cornflour, maida, salt, pepper, and chilli powder to make a smooth paste. Coat the paneer cubes in the paste evenly. Now, shallow-fry the coated paneer cubes over medium heat until golden and crisp on all sides. In a pan, heat a little oil and saute chopped garlic, ginger, green chillies, onion, and capsicum until they turn a bit crunchy and are half cooked through. Now, add soy sauce, chilli sauce, tomato ketchup, vinegar, sugar, and water. Mix everything well and then pour in the cornflour slurry and mix again. Next, add the fried paneer, spring onions and toss everything so that each piece is coated in gravy. Serve while hot and enjoy.

Mango-Orange-Vanilla Ice Cream Cake

Combining mango ice cream with vanilla and orange in this ice cream cake creates a delightful tropical essence within a traditional flavor mix. The process of assembling is quite straightforward; however, ensure you allocate ample time for freezing as you construct it to maintain distinct layers. Grease an 8-inch springform pan with butter. Take a piece of parchment paper measuring 7 by 26 inches; fit the strip around the inner side of the pan so that it rises above the edge. Secure the paper in place by locking the ring of the pan. Pulse the graham crackers in a food processor until finely ground. Add the melted butter and pulse until combined. Press the mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan and freeze until firm, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, cut the carton of mango ice cream in half with a serrated knife. Return one

half to the freezer. Transfer the other half to a stand mixer and let soften slightly, then beat with the paddle attachment on medium speed until spreadable but not melted. Spread the ice cream evenly onto the crust with an offset spatula. Freeze until firm, 30 minutes to 1 hour. Rinse out the bowl, then repeat step 3 with the vanilla ice cream, using half of the carton. Freeze the cake. When firm, repeat with the orange-vanilla ice cream, using half of the carton. Return to the freezer. Repeat the layers with the remaining mango, vanilla and orange-vanilla ice cream, making sure each layer is firm before adding the next. Freeze the ice cream cake until completely firm, at least 1 hour. Remove the springform ring and parchment. Cover the cake with whipped cream and freeze at least 10 minutes more.

How To Make Traditional Kashmiri Rogan Josh At Home

One of the most famous mutton curries in India is Kashmiri Rogan Josh, which is rich, fragrant, and full of comforting spices. The traditional recipe, in contrast to many restaurant variations, uses slow cooking and aromatic spices to create its distinctive rich red hue and flavour.

Ingredients: 1 kg mutton (bone-in pieces), 4 tbsp mustard oil, 2 bay leaves, 4 green cardamoms, 2 black cardamoms, 4 cloves, 1-inch cinnamon stick, 2 tsp fennel powder, 1 tsp dry ginger powder (saunth), 2 tbsp Kashmiri red chilli powder, ½ tsp turmeric, 1 cup whisked curd, Salt to taste, 2 cups warm water

Method: Mustard oil should be heated to the smoking point. Before adding the whole spices, let it cool a little. This gives the curry a fragrant basis while reducing the oil's pungency. Sear the mutton chunks over medi-



um-high heat until they are browned all over. This enhances the curry's depth and preserves its flavour. Reduce the heat and mix in the turmeric, fennel, dry ginger, and Kashmiri red chilli powders. Stir thoroughly to coat each piece of meat with the spices

without burning it. To keep the whipped curd from separating, add it gradually while stirring constantly. The curd balances the warmth of the spices and produces a thick, velvety gravy. After adding the warm water and adding salt, cover the saucepan.

Simmer the curry over low heat for 60 to 90 minutes, or until the gravy has thickened beautifully and the mutton is tender. For an authentic dish, serve over steamed basmati rice, Kashmiri naan, roomali roti, or tandoori roti. Garnish lightly.

Crispy, soft & traditional: Authentic Nepali Sel Roti Recipe

Made with soaked rice, sugar, and ghee, sel roti is a classic sweet, ring-shaped fried rice bread from Nepal. Soaking raw rice, mixing it with sugar and ghee to make a thick batter, and properly frying the rings in hot oil are

melted ghee, Half a teaspoon of cardamom powder, Water: When blending, oil or ghee: When deep-frying.

Detailed Instructions:
Immerse and Drain: After giving the rice a thorough wash, immerse it in water



important procedures. **Components:** Two cups of raw rice (soaked for four to six hours or overnight), 1/2 cup sugar (to taste), 1/4 to 1/2 cup of

for four to six hours, or overnight. Empty all of the extra water.

Blend the Batter: Put the soaking rice in a blend-



er to make the batter. Add the cardamom powder, sugar, and melted butter. Blend, adding 2 to 3 teaspoons of water at a time, until the batter is pourable, thick, and smooth—slightly thicker than pancake batter. **Rest the Batter:** To make the batter light and fluffy, move it to a basin and whisk or rapidly whip it with a ladle. Let it sit for one to two hours while covered.

Heat the Oil: Over medium

heat, add oil or ghee to a deep, heavy-bottomed frying pan.

Shape and Fry: Using a piping tool, a squeeze bottle, or your hand or ladle, pour the batter into the hot oil in a circular motion to form a ring.

Cook and Turn: Carefully flip with thin wooden sticks or chopsticks after frying for about a minute till light golden brown. Cook until crisp and golden on the opposite side. Drain and remove any extra oil.

India has always believed humanity fundamentally united, says Bhagwat

New Delhi, Sep 01: RSS chief Dr Mohan Bhagwat, who arrived in Canada on Monday as part of his three-nation global outreach, said Indians travelling abroad had never sought to convert local populations but instead shared India's ancient traditions of the Vedas, Yoga and Ayurveda. Addressing more than 2,000 delegates from 175 host organisations at 'Hindu Vishwa Bandhu: Embrace the World in Friendship' in Toronto, Bhagwat said India's outlook was rooted in the belief that humanity is fundamentally united despite differences in physical appearance, complexion and other external characteristics. "The entire earth is one family and, in essence, we are all one," he said, adding that those who are open-minded and knowledgeable embrace Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Bhagwat said serving others was a fundamental duty and said, "One may call



Bharat a superpower, but it was not one. It served the world and, by its own character, became Vishwaguru, not Mahashakti."

He said the ancestors of Indians who travelled across the world neither sought to conquer other peoples nor engaged in organised conversion. Instead, they shared

India's knowledge, philosophy and traditions. "Our ancestors moved from Mexico to Siberia. They moved also and crossed Himalayas on foot, went to Southeast Asia through small boats but they conquered no country. They gave knowledge, astronomy, Ayurveda, imparted civilisational values," he said.

Bhagwat highlighted Bharat's tradition of helping others without discrimination, saying Muslims, Christians, Jews and Parsis had found peaceful refuge in the country without fear of persecution. 'Create what world needs' Calling upon Hindus to share what the world needs without coercion, he said, "We have to create what the world needs, and then give it. But how do we give? We don't force. Our ancestors went abroad to every country. They never forced anything. We are the leaders who lead from within and lead by example."

PM Modi urges SCO to confront countries using terrorism as 'instrument of state policy'

New Delhi, Sep 01: Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to unite against countries using terrorism as state policy, calling for an end to "double standards" in tackling terror financing, recruitment and safe havens. Without naming Pakistan, Modi said the SCO must dismantle the entire terror ecosystem and warned that conflicts in West Asia could disrupt global energy security, maritime trade and supply chains. Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated India's call for resolving conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, while stressing the importance of peace and stability in Afghanistan. Addressing the SCO summit, Modi backed greater regional connectivity but said projects must respect



the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, an apparent reference to China's Belt and Road Initiative. He urged the SCO to improve customs, digital documentation and logistics networks. Modi

said cooperation should create tangible opportunities for young people, entrepreneurs and farmers, with people-to-people ties remaining central to the grouping's future.



Bihar, Jharkhand govts sign MoU on water sharing to resolve 25-year-old dispute

New Delhi, Sep 01: Twenty-five years after a dispute over water sharing between Bihar and Jharkhand, the two states on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on sharing the Sone River water in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Shah said the agreement resolved a long-standing water dispute in eastern India and would provide irrigation water to lakhs of farmers across large rural areas of Bihar and Jharkhand, besides ensuring drinking water supplies.

He said the resolution was an excellent example of the 'Team Bharat' vision and co-operative federalism championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Shah added that this was the fourth water-sharing agreement reached between states this

year, which would improve water availability for irrigation, rural development and drinking purposes.

The Union Home Minister said the agreement would ensure adequate water for drinking and irrigation for a large population across Bihar's districts of Bhojpur, Buxar, Rohtas, Kaimur, Aurangabad, Arwal, Gaya and Patna. In Jharkhand, water would also become available for irrigation and drinking in Palamu, Garhwa and other regions.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, Union Minister for Jal Shakti C R Patil, the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, the Union Home Secretary, and senior officials from the Government of India and both states were present on the occasion.

Pakistan-Linked Honey Traps Target Agniveers

New Delhi, Sep 01: Pakistan-linked honey-trapping networks are allegedly targeting young Agniveers posted at sensitive locations, prompting central intelligence and law-enforcement agencies to intensify scrutiny of their social-media accounts, online interactions and financial transactions, sources said. According to the sources, a number of Agniveers posted at sensitive locations, including cities across the northern region, have been identified for scrutiny as part of an ongoing counter-intelligence exercise. Intelligence agencies are examining their digital activity to determine whether any restricted or operationally sensitive information was shared with suspicious social-media accounts, they added. "The personnel under

scrutiny were found interacting with accounts that are now being investigated. Agencies are examining the duration and nature of these conversations, the information exchanged and the circumstances in which the personnel came into contact with the accounts," a source in the intelligence agencies said.

The source said, "The suspected modus operandi involves fake female profiles created on social-media platforms. The profiles allegedly initiate contact with young defence personnel and gradually build familiarity through sustained conversations. After establishing a degree of trust, the targets may be encouraged to share photographs, personal details and information concerning their work." The agencies are particularly



examining conversations in which apparently routine questions allegedly shifted towards deployment areas, locations, movements and other details that could be of interest to an intelligence network, they said. They are also assessing whether such exchanges were isolated interactions or part of a systematic attempt to gather information about military personnel and sensitive instal-

lations.

The financial trail is also under examination, the sources said, adding that monetary transfers have been detected in some cases. The amount, nature and purpose of the transactions differed, however, and attempts are being made to establish whether any payments were connected to attempts to obtain information or were unrelated to the online interac-

tions. A list of suspected cases has reportedly been prepared and is being examined by the concerned agencies. Each case is being assessed separately on the basis of digital evidence, communication records and financial transactions. The agencies are also trying to determine whether the personnel were simply approached by suspicious accounts or knowingly shared sensitive information. "The investigation is extending beyond individual accounts, with agencies attempting to establish links between multiple social-media profiles and identify possible handlers operating from outside India. Communication patterns, account activity and financial transactions are being analysed to determine whether apparently unrelated profiles

form part of a common network," the source said.

The issue has assumed significance because many of the personnel involved are young recruits who are active on social-media platforms. Agencies are therefore examining their broader digital footprints rather than limiting the inquiry to individual conversations. The cases underscore the growing counter-intelligence challenge posed by social-media platforms, where identities can be concealed and relationships established without physical contact. Agencies are examining the cases individually before deciding on further action, including legal proceedings where evidence establishes deliberate sharing of sensitive information or other offences, the sources said.



Ronak Wins 125kg Trials



Chennai, Sep 01: Ronak Dahiya might have missed out on a medal at the U20 World Championships in Bratislava, Slovakia but he will have another chance to vie for the podium finish. This time at the U23 World Championships scheduled in Las Vegas, USA from October 12 to 18. Dahiya, who probably is the only wrestler in the country to compete both in freestyle and Greco-Roman, won the selection trial held in the 125kg FS on Tuesday to book a place in the team. The trials were held at the SAI Centre in Lucknow.

Ronak gave a good account of himself at the U20 Worlds as he won the qualification and 1/8 final by technical superiority. He, however, lost the quarter-final bout 2-3 against Yusif Dursunov of Azerbaijan. The loss proved costly as Dursunov lost the semifinal against American wrestler Dreshan T Ross. The Azerbaijan wrestler's defeat in the semifinal

meant Ronak couldn't make it to the repechage round.

Ronak recently won a silver medal at the U20 Asian Championships held in Pattaya, Thailand. He has won a silver (2023) and a bronze (2024) in the U17 World Championships in the GR style. Interestingly, the Wrestling Federation of India also tried to include him in the Asian Games after Deepanshu (130kg) failed the dope test. Ronak has finished second behind him in the selection trials. Ronak, who trains at the iconic Chhatrasal Stadium in the national capital, represents Delhi in the national tournaments. Meanwhile, wrestlers from Maharashtra also made their presence felt as four of them (three in FS and one in GR) won trials in their respective weight categories. The winners in each weight category will compete at the Worlds while the second will also stay in the camp and prepare for the upcoming tournaments.

Four players' availability subject to fitness as Samson returns for Afghan T20Is

Chennai, Sep 01: As the senior men's selection committee announced the squad for the three T20Is against Afghanistan in New Delhi, focus has once again shifted towards India's injury concerns with four out of 15 are subject to clearing fitness tests. The squad named itself is almost similar to that of the original team named for the England series with Sanju Samson making a comeback after missing the Zimbabwe tour. However, availability of four players, including Jasprit Bumrah and Washington Sundar, is subject to fitness. The other two players, who are yet to be fit are Nitish K Reddy and Harshit Rana. While Bumrah and Washington got injured during the ODI series against England, Harshit was ruled out during the T20Is against England. Nitish has been out of action from before.

The aspect of subject to fitness has grabbed limelight once again because Bumrah was named initially for the Sri

Lanka tour before being ruled out. Washington was initially ruled out of the first Test but kept in contention for the second, but he could not get fit in time. This led to a lot of speculation in the lead up to the Test



series, shifting the focus on the BCCI Centre of Excellence and long list of injuries. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia and head of cricket, CoE VVS Laxman had a meeting at the facility and addressed the media. At that time, when asked about the subject to the fitness list in the recent squads, Saikia

had said that the players deserve the time to make the cut in time if that was possible. "Three weeks or four weeks before, we do not know the exact status of the player. Therefore, that asterisk subject to fitness is given because that particular player is under a programme of rehabilitation. If he gets picked within that period of 21 days or 28 days, he will be taken into the team. So that is precisely why we do not outrightly reject him on the date of selection. But by the time it will be effectively required for travel or to play the match, by that time he may be totally picked. It is a human body. It is not a machine. So he may take 14 days, or he may take 28 days, subject to his own body composition," Saikia had said at the time. Now, with less than two weeks to go for the three-match series against Afghanistan, it remains to be seen how many of the four make the final cut by the time the first T20I is played on September 13.

Korean wrestlers promised pork gift sets if they win medals in Asian Games

Chennai, Sep 01: "Desperate times call for desperate measures," goes the adage. For Korean Wrestling Federation (KWF) president Kim Ik-heon, there are no better words to describe the situation he is pitted with. With Korean Wrestling a shadow of its former self, the federation chief is doing everything to avoid the bad run. Korea was shut out of the medals at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics - the first time it had failed to reach the podium since 1972 - and also failed to grab a

medal at Paris 2024. In 2023, Korea managed just two bronze medals at the Hangzhou Asian Games - its worst Asian Games performance in 57 years.

Now ahead of the Asian Games, the KWF has promised gold medal winning wrestlers monthly supply of pork gift sets for two years, according to Korean news agency Yonhap news. Reportedly, the president also owns a pork processing plant called Sankjuyakgan headquartered in Sangju, South Korea.

None of this was pre-planned, interestingly, it came out of the blue when the wrestlers, along with coach and former Olympic gold medalist An Han-bong, were trying to hold back tears as they left for Japan ahead of the Asian Games. "We have our backs against the wall," An said at the Jincheon National Training Center. "I hope our athletes will go out and prove that Korean wrestling is not dead." According to Kim, the wrestling program in Korea has been plagued by corrup-

tion and laid-back approach by wrestlers. "People in the sport have only been worried about their vested interests; instructors have been too casual in their response, and athletes have been a mess mentally," Kim said. "We cannot afford to just keep saying we will get back on our feet. We all have to look at ourselves in the mirror."

Additionally, those winning silver or bronze at the quadrennial bash will be given pork gift sets every month for a year.

'Old-school' pacer Gurnoor making right strides

Bengaluru, Sep 01: Over the last 18-24 months, a number of Indian seamers, new and old, have picked up varying ailments. Some of them have been forced to miss a lot of the action. One of the latest fast-bowling cabs of the ranks, Gurnoor Brar, though isn't overly worried about adding to this statistic. "From the beginning, I have always believed in training my body to high loads," he told journalists after stumps on Day Two of the Duleep Trophy semifinal at the BCCI CoE on Monday. "No matter how much I bowl, it should not matter. I enjoy bowling more. There is a need for breaks, obviously, but it is all planning. And the more we push our bodies, the stronger our body gets. I have an old fast bowler's mindset: the more you bowl, the stronger you become."

It's what has helped the quick — built like a high-class decathlete — wear the India jersey over the last few months (three ODIs each against



Afghanistan and England). It's very clear that the management also rate his red-ball skills; he was in the squad for the lone Test against Afghanistan as well as in the series against Sri Lanka. They rate his skills because of his ability to bowl a heavy ball, move the ball off the seam and keep coming in hard. That he can crank it up also helps

his case. "Pace is very important for me," the 26-year-old said. "But there are advantages and disadvantages. If we don't stick to the right lines and length, the runs can flow." Brar was one of the main difference makers for North Zone on the second day as his four wickets helped put the skids on the scoring before Tilak Varma's cen-

tury put South in command. One of his four wickets, the one where he sent N Jagadeesan's off stump for a small walk, was a dream ball — it pitched on middle before beating the outside edge to slam into the top of off. He may be young at first-class level (this is only his 20th game at this level) but he has already learned the importance of trying to take the pitch out of the game. "It is very important to have a good mindset," the Punjab pacer said. "If we go into the game thinking there is nothing on the surface, then we are already behind before the game starts. I try to not allow that to happen. I try to make the batter feel like I'm always in the game. That's the motive I go into every game, to take the wicket out of the equation."

Already a strength of his, this was reinforced to him over the last few months, when he spent time with the likes of Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah and Morne Morkel inside In-

dia's dressing room. "I was performing well in the Ranji Trophy, I also did well for India A, I was picked on that basis. That is what I have been sticking to. But there have been learnings on how to stay consistent with my lengths, and how to bowl to different batters on different wickets. I've been growing well under Morne sir, Gambhir sir (Gautam), Boom (Bumrah) bhai, Siraj bhai and Prasad (Krishna), so seeing them prepare, I had a lot of fun and I have also developed a lot. The learnings from Bumrah and other seniors was to just stick to my strengths and don't change. But the important thing is to understand bowling in different conditions. And things come along with the experience of playing more matches." With the all important New Zealand away series around the corner, don't be surprised if Brar is a call up to that, especially if he gets added to the shadow A tour beginning in the last week of October.

