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NATION PAGE

TRUMP MADE MORE THAN \$1BN FROM CRYPTO IN FIRST YEAR BACK IN OFFICE

WORLD | NEWS

THE WORLD OF TOXIC GETS WILDER WITH 'LADIES & LADIES': POWERFUL WOMEN OWN THE SPOTLIGHT AS YASH RETURNS IN A HIGH-IMPACT ACTION AVATAR

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SCAN FOR E-PAPER

**OM NAMO VENKATESAYA**30-06-2026
Total pilgrims : 80,167
Tonsures : 28,270
Hundi kankaku : 4,96 CR
Laddu sale : 410 Lac
Annaspradams : 197 Lac
Medical treatment : 2,716
Waiting Compartments : 15

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens) : 8 H.

Shardul Thakur rues not being "utilised properly" on England tour

Sports News

Centre flags security concerns over WhatsApp's upcoming username feature

New Delhi (TSIT)

The Government on Wednesday expressed concern over the new username feature introduced by social messaging platform WhatsApp, with highly placed sources indicating that the issue is being monitored closely as it poses possible risks to digital security and the company could be sent a notice on the matter.



Sources said that social media platforms must ensure that their products are not misused for impersonation, scams or misinformation, while adding that misuse through usernames, edited messages, fake

WhatsApp is expected to roll out the username feature later this year, which will allow users to communicate without sharing their phone numbers

groups or impersonation could invite regulatory action similar to the measures taken against Telegram during the NEET examination controversy. "Platforms must ensure their architecture is not used to create mischief. If it is, the response will be calibrated but firm," an official said.

Features like username registration may pose risks to digital security as it could be misused by creating usernames in anyone's name, therefore the ministry is looking into the issue and will discuss the matter with the relevant departments and every legal aspect of the issue will be examined.

WhatsApp is expected to roll out the username feature later this year, which will allow users to communicate without sharing their phone numbers. While privacy advocates say the move could reduce exposure to risks such as contact scraping and SIM-swapping attacks, as experts have raised concerns about identity fraud, impersonation and data-sharing implications.

Hero Motors launches Global Parts Centre 2.0 in AP

Visakhapatnam (TSIT)

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu laid the foundation stone for Hero Motors' Global Parts Centre 2.0 and reaffirmed the state's commitment to promoting industrial growth by extending all necessary support for the project.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said Hero Motors, a partner in the State Government's flagship P4 (Public-Private-People Partnership) initiative, has not only contributed to industrial development but has also supported social welfare by mentoring underprivileged families and launching scholarships under the "Dr Brij Mohan Lall Munjal Heroes of Tomorrow" programme through the Swarna Andhra Foundation.

Naidu paid rich tributes to Hero founder Dr Brij Mohan Lall Munjal, describing him as a nation builder who went beyond entrepreneurship. He recalled that the government



had persuaded Hero Motors to establish its manufacturing facility in Andhra Pradesh instead of another state and noted that the plant, inaugurated in Tirupati in 2018, is now producing electric two-wheelers under the Vida brand. He urged the company to develop the Sri City facility into Hero's largest global centre and commence work on its proposed Rs.3,200-crore investment at the earliest.

Assuring complete government support, he said the plant should be completed quickly and commercial production started without delay. Stating that the future

belongs to electric mobility, the Chief Minister called upon Hero Motors to scale up EV production in line with growing demand.

He said Andhra Pradesh has drawn up plans to generate 160 GW of green energy, with agreements already in place for nearly 100 GW of power generation. Highlighting the state's investor-friendly ecosystem, Naidu said Andhra Pradesh has moved beyond "Ease of Doing Business" to "Speed of Doing Business", backed by excellent road, rail, air and port connectivity, reliable water resources, and robust infrastructure for industries. He said the government is ensuring that farmers benefit from the state's development, recalling that 29,000 farmers voluntarily pooled land for the construction of Amaravati and have been made stakeholders in the capital city's growth. The Chief Minister also highlighted several major investment initiatives, including the proposed Google Data Centre in Visakhapatnam, additional data centre projects.

PM hails 11-yr of digital India, says initiative has transformed governance and empowered citizens

New Delhi (TSIT):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday marked the 11th anniversary of the Digital India initiative, describing it as a transformative programme that has reshaped governance, empowered citizens and laid a strong foundation for a developed and self-reliant India. In a series of posts on social media platform X, the Prime Minister said the flagship initiative has revolutionised public ser-

8 killed, 24 injured as bus catches fire after ramming truck in Dausa



JAIPUR (TSIT):

Eight people were killed and 24 injured after a bus rammed into a truck and caught fire on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway in Rajasthan's Dausa district early Wednesday, police said. The accident occurred near Dhanawda in the Kolwa police station area.

Dausa SP Piyush Dixit told PTI that five persons were burnt alive, two died on the spot due to severe head injuries, while one succumbed to burn injuries at a hospital. "The bus belonging to Hans Travels was heading to Indore from Rishikesh when it

collided with a truck moving ahead of it on the expressway," the SP said.

A bus stands gutted in fire after it collided with a truck on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, in Dausa, Rajasthan, early Wednesday, July 1, 2026.

Eight people were killed A bus stands gutted in fire after it collided with a truck on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, in Dausa, Rajasthan, early Wednesday, July 1, 2026. Eight people were killed PTI The impact of the collision triggered a fire in both vehicles, causing panic among the passengers.

Chartered accountants are custodians of trust in financial system: Vice Prez

NEW DELHI (TSIT)

Chartered accountants are the custodians of trust in the financial system and their standards should not be diluted, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan said on Wednesday. Emphasising the importance of ethical practices, he also said that economic growth without ethics would not serve any purpose.

Speaking at the function to mark the 78th Chartered Accountants' Day in the national capital, Radhakrishnan said the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) should not dilute the examination standards as chartered accountants safeguard the financial system. "Chartered accountants are the custodians of trust in the financial system...", Radhakrishnan said and highlighted the ICAI's tradition of integrity, excellence, accountability and



service to the nation.

ICAI has more than five lakh members. It conducts the qualifying examinations for individuals to become chartered accountants.

Radhakrishnan urged chartered accountants to ensure fair competition by protecting honest enterprises and acting firmly against unethical practices. The ease of doing business must always operate within the framework of law and chartered accountants have a vital responsibility in ensuring that balance. Saving money at the cost of quality would be disastrous, the vice president said.

India slams targeted demolition of 125-yr-old Gurdwara in Pakistan

New Delhi (TSIT):

India on Wednesday strongly condemned the "highly deplorable" and "targeted act of vandalism" against a revered Sikh shrine in Pakistan while once again highlighting the systemic targeting of religious minorities and their places of worship across the border which continues unabated. Responding to media queries, the spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Randhir Jaiswal stated that India has taken note of the "deeply distressing" reports regarding the demolition of the historic 125-year-old sacred Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Sahib in Farooqabad, Pakistan. "We



strongly condemn this highly deplorable and targeted act of vandalism against a revered Sikh shrine. Its destruction, along with reports of no meaningful action being taken by local authorities or the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), is a matter of grave concern," he said.

"This is unfortunately not an isolated incident, as we have also seen similar reports earlier. The systemic target-

ing of religious minorities and their places of worship in Pakistan continues unabated. We call upon the Government of Pakistan to expeditiously investigate this matter and bring the perpetrators of this despicable act to justice," Jaiswal added.

India urged that the demolished portions of the Gurdwara Sahib should be restored and reconstructed at the earliest. "Further, we urge the Government of Pakistan to discharge its obligations to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of its minority communities and their places of worship, and put a decisive end to the prevailing environment of sectarian violence and religious intolerance in Pakistan," the MEA spokesperson stated.

Last month, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) had strongly condemned the killing of a Sikh couple who were reportedly serving as caretakers of a gurdwara in Mardan city of the country's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, saying that the incident has intensified concerns over the safety and security of religious minorities and their places of worship. The remarks came after unidentified assailants reportedly opened fire inside the gurdwara in the Babu Mohalla Khawaja Ganj Bazaar area in Mardan, killing 70-year-old Jagannath and his wife before fleeing from the spot. Expressing grave concern, the HRCP said, "This incident raises serious concerns not only for the safety and security of religious minorities and places of worship but also regarding the circumstances in which the attack occurred.

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EDITORIAL

The Jewar Effect: How Noida International Airport Is Reshaping NCR's Real Estate Map

The Noida International Airport at Jewar is not just another addition to the NCR's aviation infrastructure. It marks a pivotal point and is already recalibrating demand across asset classes, reshaping investor sentiment, and redefining the long-term growth trajectory of a corridor that, until recently, was considered peripheral to the region's real estate story.

At CBRE, we have tracked how large-scale infrastructure projects influence markets. The pattern is consistent: airports generate not only passenger traffic but build economic ecosystems. They attract industry, create employment, and progressively draw in every category of real estate demand. Jewar is now at the beginning of that curve.

Built for Scale

At launch, the Phase 1 of the airport is expected to deliver 12 million passengers per annum (MPPA) capacity, one runway, a terminal of approximately 1.1 million sq. ft., and a cargo terminal handling 2.5 lakh metric tonnes annually. By 2040-50, there is a plan to build a full aeropolis capable of handling 70-120 MPPA across five to six runways, positioning Jewar to function as a complementary aviation node to IGI Airport, rather than merely a relief valve. That distinction signals long-term institutional confidence in the corridor's economic potential.

Connectivity: The Multiplier

The airport's impact is likely to be amplified by a dense multi-modal connectivity programme. The Jewar-Faridabad Expressway, a 31.42-km, six-lane road linking the airport to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, is targeted for completion in 2027. The Palwal-Noida Airport Rail Line, a 31-km connection, is also expected by the same year. Another rail line, the Ghaziabad-Jewar RRTS, a 72-km Regional Rapid Transit System with 22 stations and a projected travel time of 37-72 minutes from Ghaziabad, is further planned for 2031.

Together, these corridors will extend the airport's effective catchment area significantly and draw passengers, businesses, workers, and investors, across a much wider radius. The Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) Master Plan 2041 provides the statutory framework within which this development will unfold.

Residential: Demand Already There

The residential story in Greater Noida and the Yamuna Expressway corridor shows that the micro-market did not need the airport's inauguration to validate demand. The demand was already present; the airport has now accelerated supply. According to our research, the residential launches in Greater Noida increased from ~2,900 units in 2021 to over 15,200 units in 2025, a near five-fold increase over four years. The steepest rise occurred between 2023 and 2024, when launches nearly tripled in a single year. This coincides with the period when construction momentum at Jewar became credible.

4

Edit

Pakistan Might Just Be Getting A Bit Too Confident - This Time, With Afghanistan

Last night, Afghanistan struck alleged ISIS strongholds in Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces in Pakistan. The Taliban Ministry of Defense posted on X that the Afghan air force had carried out strikes on a joint ISIS and "mischief and corruption" centre in the Saranan area of Pishin District, Balochistan". The facility, the post said, "had been used to organise sabotage operations and attacks inside Afghanistan" and "also served as a coordination center for the bombardments in which Afghan civilians were targeted". It further said that the air force had also "struck an ISIS centre in the Qamber Khel area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as another joint ISIS and "mischief and corruption" centre in the Garm Chashma area of the Shah Salim Valley in Chitral". These sites "were likewise being used to plan sabotage operations and attacks against civilians", the post said, adding, "the Afghan Air Defence Forces will continue to target any location used to threaten Afghanistan's security, Insha'Allah". One can only guess who the words "mischief and corruption centre" alluded to, but on Sunday, Pakistan had carried out strikes in the Afghan provinces of Paktia, Paktika, and Kunar. It confirmed the operation, with Information Minister Attaullah Tarar describing it as an "intelligence-based" and "precise" strike targeting hideouts of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants and its break-away faction Jamaat-ul-Ahrar. He said 25 militants were killed and large quantities of weapons and ammunition destroyed in response to recent terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, including a deadly assault in Karachi on Saturday. A Bloody, Invisible War Pakistan's attacks were strongly condemned by international organisations. The Taliban said the attacks had,



instead, struck civilian homes, killing 36 people and injuring another 163. The UN mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) confirmed at least 28 civilians were killed and 49 wounded in Pakistan's strikes. UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan Richard Bennett expressed concern over the casualties. "Disturbed by civilian casualties, including women and children, in Pakistan's airstrikes in Paktia, Paktika & Kunar provinces in Afghanistan," he said on X. UNICEF said it was deeply alarmed that children were among those killed and injured. Away from the eyes of the world, currently focused on the Middle East, a war is being waged in India's neighborhood, which is getting vicious with each escalation. The immediate trigger for Pakistan's strikes was the deadly attack in Karachi last week on the paramilitary Pakistani Ranger's headquarters, which killed three

Rangers and wounded four others. The militant group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a break-away faction of the Pakistani Taliban, had claimed the attack. Pakistan had vowed to avenge the attacks. However, since October last year, Pakistan has been waging a low kinetic war on Afghanistan, repeatedly attacking its border provinces, but also beyond. In February the vicious bombing of a drug rehabilitation centre in Kabul had killed hundreds of inmates. Pakistan's longtime allegations have been that the Taliban were sheltering the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) leaders and militants, who, it says, use Afghan territory to plan and launch attacks inside Pakistan. The Taliban has repeatedly denied these charges. The border crossings between the two neighbors have remained largely closed since October, disrupting trade, cross-border travel, and humanitarian operations that rely on access

through Pakistan. 'Proxy Policies' Following Sunday's strikes, the Taliban's Foreign Ministry, announced that they were a clear violation of Afghanistan's airspace and a crime against humanity. It released a statement where it warned Islamabad to address its own internal problems instead of pursuing what it called "proxy policies". It added that this was not the first time the Pakistani military regime had blamed Afghanistan for incidents that occurred in heavily secured cities and areas hundreds of kilometres from the Afghan border, without presenting "credible evidence". Taliban sources have often said that Pakistan attributes bombings and attacks inside its territory to Afghanistan to conceal and divert attention from its security and political failures. Yet, it has shunned the Taliban's offers for joint investigation into these attacks. This is a policy pursued by Pakistan that we in India are all too familiar

with. Now, this policy is being directed against Pakistan's western neighbor, where ironically it's enemy now was once its protege. India has strongly condemned Sunday's attacks by Pakistan. Interestingly, however, India alone has criticised the attacks. None of the Taliban's other friends have done so. Pakistan also blames India for these attacks, alleging that New Delhi aids the Taliban. Accusations against India have swung wildly, from arming the Taliban to sending drones packaged as humanitarian aid. Following the attack on the Rangers headquarters, Pakistan's presidential spokesman, Murtaza Solangi, said the "illegitimate Afghan Taliban regime" is trying to damage Pakistan's image as a supporter of global peace by backing terrorism from its territory to win the favour of India and Israel. A Confused Nation This reveals the confusion in Pakistan's thinking.

Are the Taliban to blame or India? Perhaps, because Pakistan once used the Taliban against India, it believes that India may be paying back in the same currency. In any case, Pakistan began launching attacks on Afghanistan around the same time as India's ties with the Taliban deepened and a number of Taliban ministers visited Delhi. India has continued to dispatch humanitarian aid to Afghanistan; in fact, it continued to do so even before ties with the Taliban had warmed. As Pakistan weaponised trade and borders with Pakistan, India stepped in filling the gap by sending essential commodities. But nothing had forced Pakistan to cede such space to India. From its vantage point now, Pakistan, which is currently the world's favourite as peacemaker in the Middle East, being courted by the US and stitching up partnerships and alliances, may think that it can easily manage the Taliban and act with impunity against its population. The silence of the world over Sunday's brutality certainly shores up this perception. Yet, Pakistan is finding itself increasingly at odds with the regional consensus that has been built up to accept Taliban as the legitimate rulers in Kabul. China was the first country technically to recognise the legitimacy of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Russia became the first officially to recognise the Taliban government. While China has been active in Afghanistan's mining sector, Russia has been supplying much-needed food and energy products to it. More recently, Russia also finalised a defence agreement with the Taliban. While not much is known about it, one aspect of it is crucial - it will help repair and restore Afghanistan's Russian-made military equipment, which includes battered helicopters.

Insecurity at the threshold of faith



India's cultural identity is shaped not only by its history, languages, and traditions, but also by the places of worship that have, for centuries, imparted to society the message of morality, coexistence, and community unity. Temples are not merely places of worship; they are vibrant centers of faith, culture, folk life, and social participation. People come here not only to seek the presence of God, but also to share their joys and sorrows, find peace of mind, and find hope in life's struggles. This is why, when a temple is burgled, its impact is not limited to mere financial loss. It is a direct blow to the faith, social beliefs, and cultural consciousness of millions of people. In the past few years, incidents such as breaking donation boxes in temples, stealing cash, vandalizing precious jewelry, smuggling ancient idols, and stealing religious materials have been reported in various parts of the country. In many cases, criminals used modern technology, while in several incidents, internal collusion has also been suspected. This situation is not only a law and order issue, but also indicates a serious lack of moral values in society and the security of religious institutions. If a place considered safe and sacred by people becomes an easy target for criminals, it is a matter of concern for the entire

society. Theft in temples cannot be downplayed by categorizing it as a common property crime. While theft in a shop, house, or office causes financial loss, theft in a temple also undermines the very foundations of faith. Devotees donate a portion of their earnings out of gratitude, service, and a sense of social well-being to God. They believe that their offerings will be used for charitable purposes, social service, and the temple system. When that money is stolen, not only does the donation box become empty, but it also creates doubt and anguish in the minds of devotees. This is why incidents of theft in temples evoke a far more emotional response in society than ordinary crimes. There are many reasons behind such incidents. The most significant reason is the tradition of cash donations. Even today, most temples in the country receive large sums of cash donations. Many small and medium-sized temples lack a scientific system for counting, safely storing, and depositing donations in banks. Donation boxes are often left unopened for long periods, allowing large sums of cash to accumulate. This situation becomes a magnet for criminals. Where security is weak and large sums of cash are available, the likelihood of crime naturally increases. Another important reason is the inadequacy of security arrangements. With the exception of a few prominent temples in metropolitan areas, most religious sites lack CCTV cameras, modern alarm systems, night security, trained security personnel, and digital surveillance, or have only formalized systems in place. Many cameras remain out of order, record-

ings are not backed up, and regular monitoring is not performed. Criminals exploit these shortcomings and systematically carry out crimes. Management weaknesses also contribute to such incidents. Many temples operate in a traditional manner, lacking clear standards for financial accountability and administrative transparency. The processes for counting, accounting, spending, and storing donations are often not systematic. Where accountability is weak, the potential for misappropriation and corruption increases. In some cases, theft is not perpetrated by external perpetrators, but by internal collusion. This situation is even more concerning because it erodes trust within the institution. Social and economic conditions are also linked to this problem. Unemployment, drug addiction, debt burden, a mentality of quick money, and a decline in moral values push some people to crime. However, these factors alone cannot justify any crime. Thefts at temples are not simply the result of economic compulsion; in many cases, they are the result of organized crime, idol smuggling, and the deliberate activities of professional gangs. International illegal demand, particularly for ancient idols and rare religious artifacts, also fuels such crimes. Theft at a temple has the most profound impact on the emotions of devotees. When a person makes a devout donation for the well-being of their family, the future of their children, their health, or the fulfillment of a wish, they are not just giving money but also dedicating their faith. If that faith feels insecure, suspicion of religious institu-

tions grows in society. Many people become hesitant to donate, questions are raised about temple committees, and an atmosphere of recrimination and counter-recrimination develops at the local level. Thus, a theft not only results in a loss of money but also impacts social harmony and community unity. It is not enough to consider the security of religious places merely a religious matter. It is a question of public policy, administrative efficiency, and social responsibility. Just as security standards are set for banks, museums, schools, and public institutions, minimum security standards should also be established for temples. Security arrangements can be developed based on the income, size, and sensitivity of each temple. Large temples require sophisticated surveillance systems, controlled entry, deployment of security personnel, and digital management, while smaller temples can develop effective security mechanisms through collaboration with local police, village committees, and citizens. In today's digital age, technology can play a vital role in this regard. High-quality CCTV cameras, cloud-based recording, motion-sensing alarms, biometric entry systems, smart locks, and emergency notification systems can strengthen temple security. Donation boxes should be opened only at designated times, and the process should be conducted with complete transparency in the presence of at least two or three responsible persons. Video recording of cash counting, signed registers, and immediate bank deposit arrangements can significantly reduce the likelihood of irregularities.

THE RS 661 CRORE QUESTION: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?



The alleged ₹661 crore IDFC Bank scandal in Haryana has not only given rise to allegations of financial irregularities, but has also sparked serious debate about administrative accountability, financial discipline, institutional transparency, and the credibility of governance. According to news reports, the names of senior IAS officers have surfaced in the case, investigative agencies are active, some arrests have been made, some officers have been suspended, and others have filed anticipatory bail petitions in court. Consequently, this scandal is not limited to a single bank, a department, or a single official; it calls into question the functioning of the entire administrative structure. First, it's important to clarify that allegations against any individual remain merely allegations until proven by a competent court. The Indian Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to a fair trial and due process. Therefore, presuming any accused guilty would be contrary to the principles of justice. On the other hand, if serious allegations arise involving such a large sum of public money, a fair, transparent, and timely investigation is equally essential. In a democracy, justice must not only be

done, but must also be seen to be done. This alleged scam is considered more serious because it raises questions about the management of government funds. Government funds are, in fact, public money. This is the money citizens contribute to the government through taxes so that it can be used for education, health, environmental protection, rural development, irrigation, roads, employment, and other public welfare schemes. Any suspected irregularity in the use or preservation of such funds has implications not limited to government accounts but also for public trust in governance. According to news reports, several questions are under investigation in this case, including the bank accounts of government departments, the process for depositing funds in private banks, administrative approvals, and the role of senior officials. If the investigation proves that rules were ignored, responsibility will naturally be assigned. Even if the allegations are proven false, it will be essential to understand the circumstances that created such widespread suspicion. In both situations, a review of the system is necessary. The Indian Administrative Service is considered one of the highest civil services in the country. IAS officers are not only the ones who administer the government, but they are also considered guardians of the values of the Constitution. The public trusts their impartiality, honesty, and decisiveness. Therefore, when a senior officer's name surfaces in a financial controversy, the

repercussions resonate throughout the administrative system. Transparency in such matters is essential to protect the reputation of honest officers and ensure that guilty individuals do not escape the law. This case also raises serious questions about administrative decision-making. Is the decision to open a government account in a particular bank or deposit a large sum of money solely the responsibility of a single official? Such decisions typically involve multiple levels of approvals, financial rules, departmental procedures, and accounting systems. If an alleged irregularity is possible despite all these layers, it indicates a weakness in institutional control. Therefore, simply fixing responsibility for individuals will not suffice; a review of the entire system will be necessary. Today, India is rapidly moving towards digital governance. Systems like the Public Finance Management System (PFMS), e-office, digital payments, online accounting, and real-time monitoring are intended to minimize the possibility of financial irregularities. If alleged irregularities of such a large scale emerge, it's natural to question whether available technological systems were properly utilized. Were audits conducted in a timely manner? Did anyone ignore unusual transactions? Were internal alert mechanisms ineffective? The purpose of internal audit systems in government departments is not only to conduct audits, but also to identify potential risks in a timely manner. If transactions involving crores of

rupees continue for a long period without any effective objections, this would be considered not only an individual failure but also an institutional failure. Therefore, learning from this incident, the audit system needs to be made more efficient and technology-based. The role of investigative agencies is crucial in a democracy. When a major case is investigated, the public monitors not only the results but also the entire process. The investigation's greatest credibility lies in its impartiality, its factual basis, and its apparent lack of political or administrative pressure. If trust in investigative agencies is weakened, the credibility of the justice system is also affected. The role of the media is also extremely sensitive in such cases. In a democracy, the media's responsibility is to provide information and ask questions, but declaring someone guilty before a court of law is inappropriate. Media trials often influence the judicial process and create prejudice in society. Therefore, news presentation must be based on facts and responsibly. This incident has also raised questions about the government banking system. Is there a clear national policy governing the operation of government department bank accounts? Under what circumstances can government funds be held in private banks? Is special permission required? Did the relevant departments comply with all financial regulations? If so, those documents should be available for public scrutiny. If not, accountability must be fixed.

Rupee falls 19 paise to 94.75 against US dollar in early trade

Mumbai: The rupee fell 19 paise to 94.75 against the American currency in early trade on Wednesday, July 1, weighed down by the strength of the American currency in the overseas market. Forex traders said whenever fresh foreign inflows enter the country, the central bank is likely to use the opportunity to rebuild its reserve position rather than allowing the rupee to strengthen too much. Moreover, uncertainty prevailed over the progress of US-Iran peace talks keeping a geopolitical risk premium in the market. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.67, then touched 94.75 against the US dollar, registering a loss of 19 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee depreciated by 5 paise to close at 94.56 against the US dollar. "The global dollar is also adding pressure. After the US Federal



Reserve maintained a cautious stance in its latest policy meeting, the Dollar Index has continued to hold above the 101 mark," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said. As long as the dollar stays firm globally, the rupee is likely to remain under pressure, he added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the

greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 101.34, up 0.15 per cent. Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 0.38 per cent at USD 73.23 per barrel in futures trade. According to Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director,

Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP, continued normalisation of oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz following the US-Iran ceasefire and diplomatic engagement kept it at the lower side at USD 73.15 per barrel this morning as uncertainty over the progress of US-Iran peace talks kept a risk premium in the market.

NMDC posts highest-ever Q1 volumes, builds momentum for 60 MT target

Hyderabad, July 1, 2026: NMDC, India largest iron ore producer and Responsible Miner has commenced FY27 by recording its highest-ever first-quarter production and sales since inception, strengthening its position as the backbone of India steel value chain. The company produced 15.10 MT of iron ore during Q1 FY27, registering a 26% year-on-year growth, while sales stood at 11.75 MT, marking a 2% rise over CPLY. The record quarterly performance reflects sustained domestic demand, operational excellence across its mining complexes in Chhattisgarh and Karnataka and the company continued focus on enhancing production capacities. Adding further momentum to the quarter, NMDC recorded its highest-ever June performance with production of 5.15 MT and sales of 3.98 MT, registering an impressive 44% and 11% year-on-year increase respectively. Commenting on the performance, Shri Amitava Mukherjee, CMD, NMDC, said, "India sustained investment in infrastructure and manufacturing continues to strengthen demand for iron ore, and NMDC is well positioned to meet this requirement with scale, efficiency and responsibility. Our strongest-ever



first quarter reflects the resilience of our operations, commitment of our employees and the trust placed in us by the domestic steel industry. As we expand mining capacities, strengthen logistics and modernise our infrastructure, we are steadily advancing towards our long-term aspiration of becoming a global mining powerhouse." Driven by robust domestic steel demand and the government infrastructure push, NMDC is accelerating its capacity expansion roadmap through the phased enhancement of its mining operations, strategic mine

development and investments in modern evacuation infrastructure. These initiatives are steadily augmenting the company production capabilities, keeping it firmly on course towards its ambitious 100 MT capacity vision, while ensuring a reliable and high-quality supply of iron ore to support India long-term steel growth. The record quarterly performance sets strong momentum for FY27, positioning NMDC to achieve its 60 MT production target while advancing steadily towards its long-term 100 MT vision.

Visit Dubai unveils cross-cultural collaboration featuring Anirudh Ravichander and Arqam Al Abri

1st July 2026: Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Visit Dubai), part of the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), has brought together acclaimed Indian composer and performer Anirudh Ravichander, and Emirati singer-musician Arqam Al Abri for a cross-cultural music collaboration filmed across Dubai's heritage districts and contemporary cultural spaces. The partnership builds on Visit Dubai's sustained engagement with Indian audiences and reflects the deep cultural and historical ties that have established India as one of Dubai's leading international tourism source markets. Rooted in the spirit of artistic exchange, the collaboration brings together two distinct musical worlds through a shared creative journey. Through candid conversations, collaborative music sessions, and spontaneous moments of connection, the film reflects Dubai's position as a global crossroads for culture, creativity, and the arts. The video follows Anirudh Ravichander and Arqam Al Abri as they explore Old Dubai and Al Seef, weaving together their distinct musical influences into a modern soundscape. Set against Al Seef's winding lanes, traditional architecture, and



vibrant waterfront setting, the film showcases Dubai as a city where heritage and modern creativity coexist naturally and effortlessly. In 2025, Dubai welcomed 19.59 million international overnight visitors, with India contributing as the city's leading source market. The new campaign is a reflection of a deeper cultural affinity: Dubai is home to one of the world's largest Indian communities, whose presence has shaped the city's food, culture, and creative landscape across generations. As one of India's most influential contemporary musicians, Anirudh Ravichander brings his distinctive sound and widespread popularity to the col-

laboration. Recognised for chart-topping music across blockbuster films including Jawan, Jailer, Leo, Vikram, Beast, Master, and the global viral sensation Why This Kolaveri Di, Anirudh has built a devoted fan following across India and international markets. His ability to blend Indian musical traditions with global sounds has established him as one of the defining voices of modern Indian music. Joining him is Arqam Al Abri, an Emirati singer and musician celebrated for his soulful vocals and contemporary sounds. Known for his performances at leading cultural and entertainment platforms, Arqam has built a celebrated repertoire, having shared the

stage with internationally acclaimed pianist Lang Lang and featured as part of International Jazz Day's global celebrations. Through his performances and creative collaborations, Arqam has emerged as a distinctive voice reflecting the landscape of modern music in the emirates. On his experience of creating music in Dubai, Anirudh Ravichander said, "What makes this project truly special is the opportunity to bring together two unique musical worlds and discover the common ground between them. Collaborating with Arqam was an inspiring experience, and Dubai provided the perfect backdrop for that creative exchange. The city's multi-

cultural foundation, rich heritage, and openness to new ideas naturally shaped the journey and made this creative pursuit feel authentic from start to finish". Speaking about the cross-cultural musical journey, Arqam Al Abri said, "Music has a unique ability to create connections that go beyond language and geography. As an artist, it was incredibly inspiring to collaborate with Anirudh, whose music has resonated with millions across India and around the world. Through this project, we discovered how our different musical traditions could complement one another while creating something entirely new. Dubai made that exchange possible. It is a city where cultures naturally meet and learn from each other, and that spirit is reflected throughout this journey." Bader Ali Habib, Regional Director of Proximity Markets at Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, said: "Music has always had the power to bring people together, and this collaboration reflects the spirit of creative exchange that Dubai stands for. Anirudh Ravichander and Arqam Al Abri bring together two distinct musical voices that reflect the city's multicultural energy and evolving creative landscape.

Ola Electric doubles QoQ growth, registers 16,144 in June

New Delhi: Ola Electric on Wednesday, July 1, said it has registered 43,719 electric two-wheelers in the April-June quarter, nearly doubling from 22,252 vehicles in the previous quarter, aided by improving retail execution, stronger product availability and sustained demand. The company registered 16,144 vehicles in June, its highest monthly registration figure in recent quarters, as improved retail execution, product availability and customer demand supported sequential growth. "Q1 FY27 marks a significant milestone in our growth journey, with registrations doubling sequentially and June registering 16,144 vehicles – our strongest monthly performance in recent quarters. The sustained momentum reflects the success of our operational improvements, strong product portfolio and continued customer preference for Ola Electric. "We remain focused on accelerating EV adoption through technology leadership, manufacturing scale and delivering a differentiated ownership experience," an Ola Electric spokesperson said. The company said it expects to build on the momentum as India's electric two-wheeler market



expands, supported by rising consumer adoption of electric mobility and favourable ownership economics compared with internal combustion engine vehicles. Ola Electric manufactures electric vehicles and battery technologies through its integrated manufacturing and technology platform and sells directly to customers through company-owned stores and online channels. India's electric two-wheeler market continues to witness strong structural growth, driven by increasing consumer preference for electric mobility, favourable economics compared to

ICE vehicles, and growing awareness around energy security and sustainability, the firm said in a statement. As EV adoption accelerates across the country, Ola Electric remains well positioned to lead the transition through its vertically integrated technology and manufacturing platform. The company continues to expand EV penetration through innovative products, advanced battery technology, manufacturing scale and a robust direct-to-customer distribution network across India. India's electric two-wheeler market continues to witness strong structural growth.

SKODA AUTO INDIA RECORDS BEST-EVER FIRST-HALF SALES

New Delhi: Skoda Auto India on Wednesday, July 1, reported a 7.5 per cent year-on-year sales growth in the first half of 2026 at 38,894 units, its best ever half yearly performance in the country. With the H1 2026 performance, the Skoda brand has bettered the record set in the first half of 2025, Skoda Auto India said in a statement. "Our record half-yearly sales reflect the growing confidence and trust customers place in the Skoda brand. In 2026, we have strengthened this connection through a focused product offensive, customer-first initiatives, and an unwavering commitment to excellence." Skoda Auto India Brand Director, Ashish Gupta said. The demand for the new Kushaq, updated Kodiaq, and the all-new Kodiaq RS, highlights strong market momentum, he said, adding the Kylaq continues to drive volumes and the Slavia reinforces the brand's sedan legacy. Car market leader Maruti Suzuki India on Wednesday, July 1, reported a 19.3 per cent rise in total sales at 2,00,390 units in June as com-



pared to 1,67,993 units in the same month last year. Total domestic passenger vehicle sales were at 1,47,187 units last month as compared to 1,18,906 units in June 2025, a growth of 23.8 per cent, Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing. Sales of mini cars, comprising the Alto and S-Presso were at 11,416 units in June as compared to 6,414 units in the year-ago month. Compact cars, including Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, WagonR sales rose at 63,815 units last month as compared to 55,205 units in June 2025. Sales of utility vehicles, consisting of Brezza, Ertiga, e Vitara, Fronx, Grand Vitara, Invicto, Jimny,

Victoris and XL6, rose to 61,726 units in the month under review as compared to 47,947 units in the same month a year ago. The company said sales of van Eco stood at 10,230 units last month as compared to 9,340 units in June 2025. Sales of Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) Super Carry rose to 2,963 units in June from 2,433 units in the same month last year, Maruti Suzuki India said. Skoda Auto India has opened bookings for the all-new Kodiaq RS, further strengthening its performance portfolio in the country. Alongside, the brand introduces its 'Surrender' campaign, inviting enthusiasts to surrender to the

thrilling performance and dynamic capabilities of the Kodiaq RS. The arrival of this high-performance 4x4 luxury SUV coincides with two significant milestones – over 50 years of the iconic RS badge and 125 years of Skoda Auto's motorsport heritage. Surrender to performance At the heart of the Kodiaq RS is a 2.0 TSI engine producing 195 kW (265 PS) and 400 Nm of torque. Power is transmitted to all four wheels via Skoda Auto's signature 7-speed DSG transmission, delivering sharp responsiveness and exceptional control. With a 0-100 km/h time of just 6.3 seconds, the Kodiaq RS stands as the quickest Skoda ever launched in India, reaching a top speed of 231 km/h. The experience is further heightened by Dynamic Sound Boost, delivering a more emotive and engaging engine note. Surrender to experience The Kodiaq RS enhances driver engagement with Progressive Steering, improving agility while reducing steering effort at low speeds.

ANTHROPIC SAYS US LIFTS EXPORT BAN ON ITS ADVANCED AI TOOLS

Highlights

- The US government has lifted an export ban on Anthropic's most advanced artificial intelligence (AI) tools, just weeks after ordering it to restrict access to them over national security concerns, the company has said.
- Anthropic said in a statement that it will begin restoring access to Claude Fable 5 and Mythos 5 on Wednesday after being notified that the US Department of Commerce has lifted restrictions on the two models.
- They are the firm's most advanced AI tools, which were abruptly suspended on 12 June over concerns that they could be used by hackers to exploit weaknesses in computer systems.

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has agreed to proactively detect and address security risks associated with the models," Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick wrote in a letter to the tech company. The firm has also agreed to collaborate on future releases of its AI models and alert the government of any malicious activity, Lutnick wrote. The Commerce Department reserves the right to reconsider its decision to lift export restrictions if necessary, he added. The BBC has contacted the Department of Commerce for further information. Mythos and Fable are two of Anthropic's AI models built on its Claude platform - a rival to the likes of OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini. Fable 5 is a version of the AI model for the consumer mar-



ket, capable of deep reasoning and can perform complex tasks independently. Mythos 5 is a version of the platform designed for businesses and cybersecurity experts. It is said to be able to identify vulnerabilities in computer code and exploit them. Both models were released on 9 June. The firm previously said that US authorities had not pinpointed specific concerns about its technology even as it ordered both platforms to be suspended around the world. "Our understanding is that the government believes it has become aware of a method of bypassing, or 'jailbreaking' Fable 5," the company said at the time, referring to a process of slipping past software safety restrictions to unblock features.

Three-year-old rescued and taken to hospital six days after Venezuela quake



A three-year-old boy has been pulled alive from the rubble six days after the devastating earthquakes in Venezuela, a Jordanian rescue team has said. The child, named as Klieber Morán, was pulled from wreckage in La Guaira state, interim President Delcy Rodríguez said. Rodríguez described the child's rescue as a "source of hope for our people". It comes as UN warned that tens of thousands of people were urgently in need of food and shelter. The death toll from last week's quakes - with magnitudes of 7.2 and 7.5 - has risen to 1,943 with more than 10,000 people injured and tens of thousands more unaccounted for. The massive tremors probably damaged or destroyed 58,870 buildings, according to an initial assessment of satellite data from Nasa. The Jordanian civil defence said Klieber had been given first aid treatment, taken to a hospital and his vital signs were good. He was being treated in the capital Caracas, Venezuelan Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez said. The rescue comes well after the initial three-day period immediately

after the quake during which experts say people trapped under debris have the best chance of being found alive. La Guaira is one of the hardest hit areas, with many local people trying to carry out rescue efforts themselves. The UN's refugee agency said on Tuesday that food shortages were widespread, basic services had broken down and communications had been largely severed in La Guaira. "Community tensions are rising as access to assistance remains constrained," the UNHCR said in a statement on its website. Daniela Armas, an 18-year-old vendor in La Guaira who was injured falling from a motorbike when the quakes struck, told AFP that some supplies were being distributed "but sometimes people nearly kill each other for food... it's like a cockfight." The UNHCR said that it needed an initial \$15m to "scale up protection, core relief items, and temporary shelter support for 30,000 earthquake-affected people over six months". Meanwhile the World Health Organization (WHO) said health services were under "extreme pressure."



■ Aftershock frays nerves as many Venezuelans left to fend for themselves

CANADA TO MAKE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST DEBUT IN 2027

Canada will take part in the Eurovision Song Contest for the first time in 2027, organisers have announced. It becomes the first new country to join since Australia in 2015, and follows a turbulent year where long-standing competitors such as Ireland and Spain pulled out over Israel's participation. The path for Canada to compete was cleared last week, when the country's public broadcaster CBC/Radio-Canada became a full member of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which stages the annual competition. The country can already claim one winner. Quebec-born Celine Dion represented Switzerland in the 1988 contest, and took the trophy with her song Ne Partez Pas Sans Moi. Other Canadians have



since competed, including Natasha St-Pier, an Acadian New Brunswicker who represented France in 2001, and La Zarra, a singer from Montreal who represented France in 2023. According to organisers, Canada will debut at next year's semi-finals in Bulgaria. CBC/Radio-Canada will unveil details of how Canada's entry will be selected later this year. Canada is

far from the first non-European country to join the contest. Israel and Australia regularly compete, and Morocco took part in 1980. The Carney government said in November that it was working with the CBC, Canada's public broadcaster, "to explore participation in Eurovision". His government's budget included C\$150m (£80m) in funding for

the broadcaster. Eurovision's rules state that participation in the contest is open to countries with broadcasting organisations that are members of the EBU. Before Thursday, the CBC had been an "associate member". "Canada's voice in this community makes us stronger," Noel Curran, director general of the EBU, said. It is still uncertain whether members who boycotted the 2026 contest will participate next year. Ireland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain all withdrew over the European Broadcasting Union's (EBU's) decision to allow Israel to participate. Speaking ahead of this year's contest in Vienna, Eurovision director Martin Green said the door was open for broadcasters to return.

Sudan's RSF committed crimes against humanity in el-Fasher, Amnesty says



Sudanese paramilitaries committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing during their campaign to seize the city of el-Fasher last year, a rights group report says. The siege and takeover of the city in the western region of Darfur marked one of the bloodiest episodes in Sudan's civil war between Sudan's army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). "The RSF's crimes included murder, forcible transfer, imprisonment, torture, rape, sexual slavery, other forms of sexual violence, enslavement, extermination and persecution," said an Amnesty investigation released on Wednesday. The RSF has not commented on the Amnesty report but has denied previous such accusations. Sudan remains locked in a three-year power struggle between the regular army and the RSF paramilitaries. The ongoing civil war has killed hundreds of thousands of people, and forced more than 14 million people from their homes. Widespread sexual violence against men, women and children is being used as a weapon of war, the UN says. Both the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have been accused of war crimes, which they deny. After being forced out of the capital, Khartoum, in March last year, the RSF shifted its focus to consolidating its control of the western Darfur region by capturing el-Fasher, and extending its reach into the Kordofan states in the south of the country. Amnesty

believes RSF fighters committed grave human rights violations in and around el-Fasher during its 18-month siege of the city. "Children were not collateral damage of this violence - often, they were deliberately targeted and have suffered immensely. They have been killed, injured, raped, abducted, and forcibly recruited on a massive scale," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary general. In its report that details dozens of accounts of more than 200 survivors, Amnesty said evidence gathered "may be relevant to the crime of genocide". "They tied me up and beat me with sticks and the back of an AK-47. Then one of them approached on a camel and... just shot me in the leg," said a 17-year-old who was attacked in Abu Zerega, a town south of el-Fasher. The teenage boy, who now uses crutches to walk, said eight of his cousins, including four boys aged between 11 and 17, were killed in the same attack. Amnesty researchers, who reviewed 89 open-source videos and carried out extensive analysis of satellite imagery from North Darfur, say many victims were targeted and killed because of their ethnic identity. Arab fighters from the RSF went after members of local non-Arab communities, according to the rights group, often using ethnic slurs translated as "slave" or "servant". Arab militias associated with the RSF have a long history of violence against black African groups in Darfur. I

TRUMP MADE MORE THAN \$1BN FROM CRYPTO IN FIRST YEAR BACK IN OFFICE

US President Donald Trump made more than \$1bn (£750m) last year from business dealings in cryptocurrency, according to his mandatory financial report for 2025. In a 927-page disclosure, he reported \$835m in royalties from an entity called Celebration Coins, thought to be behind the \$TRUMP meme coin which has plunged in value since he launched it days before taking office. He also reported over \$500m in income from World Liberty Financial, a cryptocurrency firm founded by his own sons and the children of his special envoy, Steve Witkoff. The White House denied he was profiting from the presidency. Trump said on Wednesday that "everybody" was profiting from rising stock markets, and that he doesn't get involved with his personal finances. The earnings from his latest financial disclosure - which come to at least \$2.2bn - far outpace the previous ones for 2024, when Trump disclosed over \$600m of income. But the White

House, which has repeatedly emphasised that Trump has placed his businesses in a trust managed by his sons, again denied any conflict of interest. White House deputy press secretary Anna Kelly said the president had proudly made the US "the crypto capital of the world". "Neither the President nor his family has ever engaged - or will ever engage - in conflicts of interest," she said in a statement. She added: "All actions by President Trump and his administration are taken in the best interest of the American people - and any so-called 'reporters' pushing otherwise are recycling the same, tired, false narrative that Democrats and the legacy media have been pushing for a decade." The president himself has also highlighted that he is not subject to federal conflict of interest laws. Trump told reporters on Wednesday: "You know why I'm profiting, because the stock market's going up, everybody's profiting." He said: "I don't get involved in



my personal [finances], we have funds that run my money. 'Tve made a lot of money before I became president, and they invest my money, and I don't talk to them.' Trump once criticised cryptocurrency, famously calling Bitcoin a "scam" in 2021 and a "disaster waiting to happen". But, during his presidential campaign three years later, Trump said he wanted to make the US the "crypto capital of the planet". One of

his first actions when he returned to the White House last year was an executive order to "support the responsible growth" of the crypto industry. Richard Painter, the former chief White House ethics lawyer under George W Bush, told the BBC it was "extraordinary", that Trump had made \$1bn from crypto. "Of course it's a conflict of interest," he said. Will Walker-Arnott, director of private clients at Raymond

James Wealth Management, said: "His approach, I suppose, is in contrast to previous presidents in terms of money making. 'Jimmy Carter put his peanut farm into a blind trust and George W Bush sold his interest in the Texas Rangers before becoming president, but Trump seems to be operating in a very different manner and seems to be making a lot of money through this family crypto company.' Trump Bibles, watches and fragrance Tuesday's disclosure shows his crypto earnings far overshadow income from his real estate business, which first catapulted him to fame. Trump earned around \$77m from his Mar-a-Lago club and \$122m from his golf club in Doral, Florida. He also earned more than \$30m each from golf clubs in Bedminster, New Jersey, and Jupiter, Florida, and Turnberry, Scotland. Trump also earned millions from other business ventures, according to the financial disclosure. These included \$4.7m in royalties from Trump-

branded watches, along with Trump-branded Bibles, trainers, fragrances and guitars. First Lady Melania Trump also listed her income from 2025 in the disclosure. She made \$10.7m from a "license agreement" related to the documentary about her that was released last year. Another \$6m in income is listed for her from the sale of NFTs, which are digital images sold online. The president listed some \$86.5m of income in settlements from various legal actions. These included \$16m from a lawsuit against ABC, \$16m from CBS Broadcasting and CBS Interactive, \$24.5m from Meta, \$22m from YouTube and \$8m from X. But the White House has said most of that money went towards Trump's future presidential library or a nonprofit dedicated to the upkeep of park sites in the Washington DC area. According to a list of the world's richest people compiled by Forbes magazine, Trump has an estimated fortune of \$6bn - up from \$2.3bn in 2024.



Fire at Antwerp apartment block kills at least six

Afghan Taliban launch strikes on border with Pakistan as tensions escalate

Afghanistan's Taliban regime said they have carried out strikes on targets along the border with Pakistan, injuring several people in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province. Pakistan's military said it had shot down four rudimentary drones and warned any further provocation "would receive a befitting response". The BBC has been unable to independently confirm the attack. The strikes come after Pakistan launched its own air strikes on Afghanistan on Sunday, killing 28 civilians, according to the UN. Tensions have reignited in the region after months of relative calm. The two countries had agreed to a ceasefire in October following weeks of



deadly clashes. Pakistan has long accused Afghanistan of harbouring terrorists who carry out attacks on its soil, a claim the Taliban government rejects. Kabul in turn has accused Islamabad of carrying out unprovoked attacks which kill civilians. Pakistan says it only targets militants. Afghanistan said Pakistan's attack on Sunday hit civilian homes and put

the civilian death toll at 36, with more than 160 injured. It described the attack as a "cowardly act" and an "atrocious". Pakistan said it had carried out a ground operation along the border and air strikes targeting militant hideouts in Afghanistan's Paktia, Paktika and Kunar provinces. The country's information minister,

Attaullah Tarar, said 29 militants had been killed in an operation responding to "recent terrorist attacks against innocent people". The BBC has not independently confirmed figures from either side. Intermittent border clashes and air strikes in the area have killed dozens of people in recent months, according to officials in both countries. In February, clashes between the two countries left dozens of people dead. In March, a Pakistani strike on a drug rehabilitation centre in Kabul killed hundreds. Earlier in June, Pakistan launched deadly air strikes that killed 26 militants. Afghanistan's Taliban government said 13 people, mostly children, were also killed in the strikes.

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026:

Ronaldo Stand Blasted As 'Embarrassing', Coach Roberto Martinez Called Out: "They Are Being Held Back"

Cristiano Ronaldo has had a blow-hot, blow-cold FIFA World Cup so far. He left almost no impact in Portugal's first Group K match against DR Congo, which ended in a 1-1 draw. Then, he shone brightly with a brace against Uzbekistan in a 5-0 win but again could not score against Colombia in the third match. Portugal finished second in the group and will now face Croatia in the Round of 32. Ronaldo, who is the first man to score in six World Cups, is yet to score in the knockout stage of the marquee event. Portugal's Round of 32 match is on Friday (IST). Commentating on the Portugal vs Croatia match, former England player

Chris Sutton said the reliance on the veteran star is hurting the team. "Cristiano Ronaldo is 41 but has played every minute for Portugal so far, which I think is embarrassing for Roberto Martinez. I've never known a manager to pander to a player as much as he does. Portugal have some incredible players but, as great as Ronaldo once was, they are being held back by having him permanently on the pitch as their centre-forward," he said on BBC Sport. Sutton added that Portugal's rivals, Croatia, are not young either. "But, while he is not the player he was, Croatia are ageing too and are not the team they once were either," he said. "This will be close, but I see

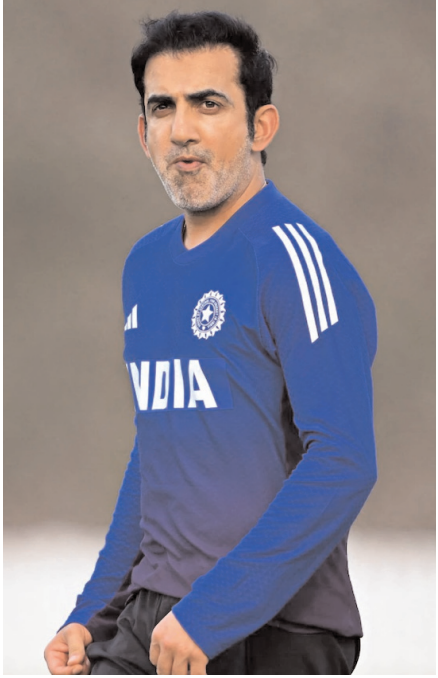
Portugal taking it in normal time. With me writing Ronaldo off, he will probably score the winner." Since making his debut for Portugal in 2003, Ronaldo has consistently delivered at the highest level and also holds the record for the most hat-tricks in international football, with 10 to his name. "Our captain sets an example in everything he does," Martinez said of Ronaldo, as quoted by ESPN. "He gives his all, 24 hours a day, to help the national team. Our captain and the rest of the players are not thinking about the future. We don't know what can happen in the future because they can get injured, and there are decisions that are out of their

hands." "The focus is on training, being the best, putting the concepts into practice and showing pride in wearing the shirt. That's the example he sets. His sole aim is to use today to improve for tomorrow," he added. It isn't just Cristiano Ronaldo's fault. But the reality is very different. At the ongoing World Cup, Ronaldo is once again under scrutiny and fans and former players have also accused Roberto Martinez of his over-reliance on the veteran. Although Ronaldo was Portugal's highest-rated attacking player in the FIFA Power Rankings for



"Personal Things": R Ashwin On 'Misunderstood' Gautam Gambhir After Ireland Fiasco

Former India all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin has come out in support of head coach Gautam Gambhir following the heavy backlash after India's 0-2 T20I series whitewash against Ireland. Led by Shreyas Iyer, India suffered a historic setback as they lost both matches in the two-game series. Ireland not only registered their first-ever win over India in any format but also exposed India's batting frailties, with the visitors collapsing under pressure in both games. In the aftermath of the defeat, Gambhir faced intense criticism from fans across social media. However, Ashwin defended the coach. Calling him a "misunderstood person" and emphasising that his ideas and beliefs are crucial for the progress of Indian cricket, Ashwin urged people to look beyond the immediate results and understand Gambhir's vision. "When there are talks about Gambhir, sometimes it comes out in a manner where we don't get it in a way that he is trying to say it. I think he is a very misunderstood person. There could be personal things. In India and Indian cricket, it will take us time to realise that a difference in view or point of



view does not mean that you don't like the other person. It is okay to disagree. Like and point of view are very different," Ashwin said. "India under Gambhir values someone who can bat and bowl a bit as well, then you will be in. Sometimes I am not okay with this that all of this comes into Test cricket as well.

R Ashwin Hits Back At Critics Over Vaibhav Sooryanvanshi Stance: "Carrying Water Is Not Degrading"

The BCCI named Vaibhav Sooryavanshi in India's T20I squad but the player was kept on the bench during the recently-concluded two-match series against Ireland. The debate over his inclusion in the playing XI continues as India gear up to play against England in a five-match T20I series that begins on Wednesday. After the team management decided to keep Sooryavanshi on the sidelines during the Ireland series, legendary India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin backed their take. The former international spinner highlighted the importance of sitting out and waiting for his turn. "There is value in sitting outside and watching the



game too. Let him serve the team, help out, even bring water. There is a lot to learn from that experience," Ashwin had said in a video earlier on his YouTube channel after the first T20I against Ireland. "If he spends some time outside the playing XI first, he will gain empathy and a better understanding of the team environ-



ment. He has a long and illustrious career ahead of him. Sitting outside is also a role," he had added. Reacting to the remark, some of the fans lashed out at Ashwin on social media. The fans questioned Sooryavanshi's inclusion if the team didn't play him. The former India spinner has now hit back at the critics, point-

ing out that "carrying water is not degrading" for a player. "We need to give Vaibhav Sooryavanshi time. The way he played in the IPL, obviously you will have to play him at some point. He is that special," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel. "What I am saying is that carrying water is not degrading," Ashwin added. "Why do people think carrying water is a bad thing? When did the ethos of cricket change? In the 1990s and 2000s, I was a ball boy in Chennai, and I was so happy to carry water for the cricketers then. When did running into the field and giving a water bottle to Indian players become less?" he concluded.



Ishan Kishan Dethrones Teammate Abhishek Sharma As No. 1 Ranked ICC Batter

India wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan has replaced teammate Abhishek Sharma as the world's No.1 T20I batter in the latest ICC Player Rankings, ending the latter's nearly year-long reign at the top after his prolific run in the shortest format. In another major change, Australia's Travis Head climbed to the No.1 spot among Test batters for the first time in his career. Kishan attained a new career-best rating to move ahead of Abhishek after the latest ICC rankings update released on Wednesday, following India's 2-0 T20I series defeat to Ireland in Belfast. The left-handed batter's rise to the summit has been fuelled by his outstanding performances at the ICC T20 World Cup earlier this year, where he



amassed 317 runs at a strike rate of almost 200. His campaign included a Player of the Match-winning knock against Pakistan in Colombo. Abhishek, who had occupied the No.1 spot for almost 12 months, now trails Kishan by just seven rating points. Kishan also joins an elite list featuring Virat Kohli and

Suryakumar Yadav as only the fourth Indian men's batter to achieve the No.1 ranking in T20I cricket. Among other movers in the T20I batting rankings, Ireland captain Lorcan Tucker jumped four places to equal 77th, while Ross Adair climbed six spots to 84th after impressive performances against India.

Ireland seamer Matthew Humphreys moved up one place to 25th in the T20I bowling rankings after claiming four wickets in the series, earning a career-best rating. In the T20I all-rounders' rankings, India's Shivam Dube rose three places to seventh, while Ireland's Gareth Delany and Harry Tector climbed to 24th and 38th respectively. There were significant changes in the ICC Test rankings as well, with Australia's Travis Head becoming the world's No.1 Test batter for the first time in his career. Head replaced England's Harry Brook at the top after Brook and Joe Root endured modest returns in the Nottingham Test against New Zealand. Brook slipped to second while Root dropped two places to third.

Ex-Australia Star, Who Played 16 ODIs And 24 T20Is, Set To Represent Portugal

Former Australia cricket team all-rounder Moises Henriques has switched his international cricket allegiance and will now play Portugal. Henriques played 4 Tests, 16 ODIs and 24 T20Is for Australia and even won the Indian Premier League (IPL) title with Sunrisers Hyderabad in 2016. He will play for Portugal and will look to play a big part in qualification for the T20 World Cup 2028 which will be held in Australia and New Zealand. Henriques was born in Funchal, Portugal, before moving to Australia as an infant. Portugal will face Czech Republic, Israel and Greece to qualify for the next round of qualifiers. England and Ireland have automatically qualified for the tournament and Europe has two more quali-



fication spots for the T20 World Cup. "The opportunity for growth in the game around the world is probably not just my Portuguese heritage but, more importantly, the game and the opportunity for growth worldwide," Henriques told CODE Sports. "We can improve the quality of all the engagement in, say,

another 10 or 20 nations around the world and then you are looking at cricket World Cups that stop the entire world, as opposed to a couple of Western countries and the subcontinent," he added. Henriques became eligible to play for Portugal under the current International Cricket Council (ICC) regulations. The rules state that players need to have a three-year period after their final international appearance to join an associate nation. The former Australia cricketer last played during a T20I encounter against Bangladesh in 2021. Henriques scored 648 runs and took 17 wickets across all formats for Australia. Previously, former Australia batter Joe Burns also decided to play for Italy.

Naomi Osaka Shows Off Another Fashion Creation Before Reaching 3rd Round At Wimbledon

Naomi Osaka had a new look to show off before winning her second-round match at Wimbledon. Osaka, whose fashion reveals have become an event of their own at Grand Slam tournaments, wore a less elaborate outfit for her walk-on than the "Kill Bill" inspired kimono she sported for her opening-round match on Monday. It still drew plenty of attention as she made the walk from the locker room to No.2 Court, trailed by photographers and fans wanting to take their own photos. This all-white outfit featured a wide belt and a long train that trailed behind her, which the four-time major winner took off as she began warming up for her match against qualifier Anastasia Gasanova. She went on to quickly dispatch her opponent 6-3, 6-2. "I'm just trying to mix it up a little bit,"



Osaka said about her outfit, adding she had been worried that a loss might have ruined her daughter Shai's third birthday on Thursday. "I just wanted to be here for longer, I didn't want to make her get on a plane on her birthday," Osaka said. Osaka's match was among the early starts on the outside courts as the second round got under

way at Wimbledon. Later, defending men's champion Jannik Sinner was set to play Nuno Borges in the first match on Centre Court. That will be followed by women's French Open winner Mirra Andrejeva facing 2024 Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejickova before Novak Djokovic takes on Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Defying logic - how Haaland could end up with 260 international goals



Erling Haaland stood on the pitch in Dallas, a goofy grin across his face and a Viking helmet atop his head at a jaunty angle. He was drinking it all in. Norway had just beaten Ivory Coast 2-1, their first knockout victory in World Cup history. It was celebrated by players and fans joining together in their now iconic Viking Row celebration - conducted by Martin Odegard on the drum. And, of course, Haaland had scored the winner. It was hardly his best international goal - a scuff off his instep from Patrick Berg's pull-back that Ivorian keeper Yaya Fofana nearly grabbed off the line - but it is his most

important. Norway became the first European side to reach the last 16, succeeding where Germany and the Netherlands failed. It matches their best World Cup showing, achieved 28 years ago in their last finals appearance in 1998. They face Brazil next, in what could prove a blockbuster. For Haaland, it means his eye-popping international scoring record now features a goal of real substance to go alongside the five strikes against Moldova and another five hat-tricks versus Romania, Kazakhstan and Gibraltar among others. Haaland has now scored 60 goals in 53 senior internationals - averaging a goal every 72 minutes - but the first 55 had not come in a major tournament with Norway having previously failed to qualify for any during his lifetime.

Hardik Trade: CSK, KKR Among 7 Competing Teams, These 2 Sides Show No Interest

Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya is reportedly set to leave the franchise. The star all-rounder started his Indian Premier League career with MI in 2015 and played for the side till 2021. Ahead of the next season, new entrants Gujarat Titans acquired Hardik and named him the captain. He led the new side for two editions before returning to Mumbai as the skipper. Under Hardik's leadership across three IPL seasons, MI ended at the 10th, third and ninth positions, respectively. A total of seven franchises are showing interest in acquiring Hardik in the transfer window, claimed a report in The Times of India. The outlet claimed that only Royal Challengers Bengaluru and

Sunrisers Hyderabad are the two sides that are not in the race to pick the all-rounder. Among the interested franchises, Chennai Super Kings are the front-runners, giving a tough fight to Kolkata Knight Riders, the report claimed, while adding that Rajasthan Royals are also among the serious contenders to acquire Hardik. Hardik has shifted base to Bengaluru with the aim of making the BCCI's Centre of Excellence (COE) his permanent training base for the remainder of his career, reported PTL. The move is unique as India's centrally contracted players normally visit the Centre of Excellence (COE) only for injury rehabilitation, fitness assessments

or national camps. Though Pandya is originally from Baroda in Gujarat, he has spent most of the last decade living in Mumbai and training primarily at his IPL franchise Mumbai Indians' facility in Ghansoli. The 32-year-old, who is currently recovering from a quadriceps injury and was ruled out of the ongoing white-ball tour of the UK, has spent considerable time at the COE over the last six months. "Hardik has already permanently shifted to Bengaluru. He has rented a property on the outskirts of the city, close to the COE. He will be the first Indian cricketer to make the COE his permanent training base for the remainder of his career," a BCCI source told the news agency.

"Hardik wanted to move out of Mumbai as commuting every day from his Lower Parel residence for training had become a problem. As a centrally contracted cricketer, he has access to every facility at the COE, from injury management to skills training.



THE WORLD OF TOXIC GETS WILDER WITH ‘LADIES & LADIES’: POWERFUL WOMEN OWN THE SPOTLIGHT AS YASH RETURNS IN A HIGH-IMPACT ACTION AVATAR

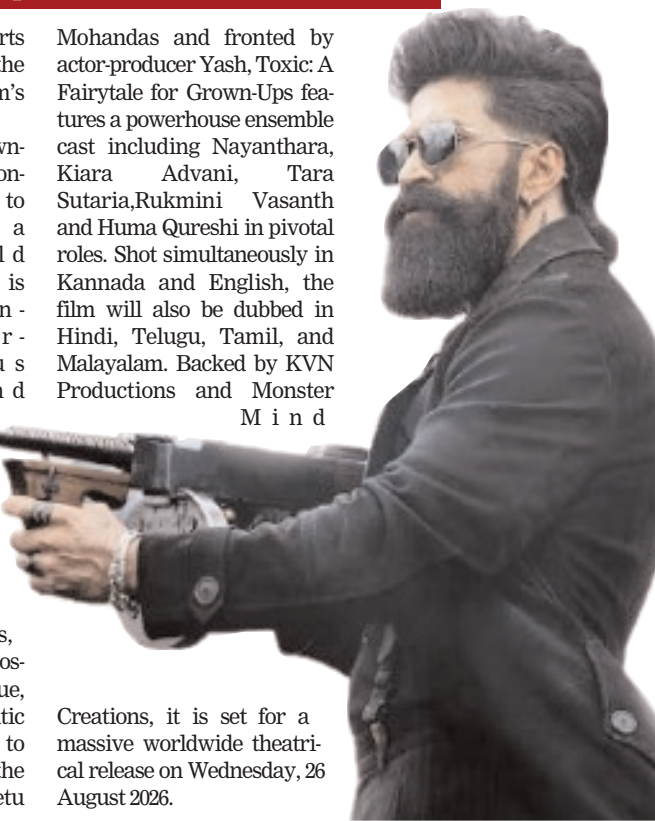
Bold, Fierce and Unapologetic: ‘Ladies & Ladies’ Expands the World of Toxic

The world of Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups just got even more dangerous. With the unveiling of ‘Ladies & Ladies’, the film drops a bold new video that shines a spotlight on the formidable women of its dark, stylish universe. Packed with power, mystery, attitude and adrenaline, the video offers a glimpse into the female forces shaping the story — and makes it clear they are not here to play by anyone’s rules. Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Tara Sutaria, Rukmini Vasanth and Huma Qureshi command every frame with undeniable presence, teasing characters that are as complex as they are powerful. Whether it’s the fierce and formidable Nayanthara, Kiara’s mesmerizing, magnetic and yet somewhat melancholic energy, Tara’s unbothered and vivacious presence,

Rukmini’s fierce intensity or Huma’s captivating and steely glimpse, each woman leaves an unmistakable mark on the world of Toxic. Elevating the intrigue further is a captivating female voice-over that tells a woman’s perspective, adding a layer of mystery, power and rebellion. Right from the first frame, the video embraces its rebellious spirit with the disclaimer: “Kids... stay away. Parents... make sure your kids stay away. Grandparents... make sure your kids’ kids stay away. Great Grandparents... at

your own risk.” Equal parts unfiltered and candid, the warning captures the film’s pulse. Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups, the asset continues to expand a world that is dangerous and impossible to look away from. Through striking visuals, stylized action and an atmosphere dripping with intrigue, Toxic promises a cinematic experience that refuses to colour inside the lines. Directed by Geetu

Mohandas and fronted by actor-producer Yash, Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups features a powerhouse ensemble cast including Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Tara Sutaria, Rukmini Vasanth and Huma Qureshi in pivotal roles. Shot simultaneously in Kannada and English, the film will also be dubbed in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam. Backed by KVN Productions and Monster Mind Creations, it is set for a massive worldwide theatrical release on Wednesday, 26 August 2026.



The world of Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups just got even more dangerous. With the unveiling of ‘Ladies & Ladies’, the film drops a bold new video that shines a spotlight on the formidable women of its dark, stylish universe.



I want 'Hangmen' to be a great film.. Padmashri Dr. Brhanandam at the trailer launch event

Vihaan's film 'Hangman' is directed by Brahmaji in the lead role under the banners of Ajay Mysore Productions and Chloro Films. V. Srikanth, Ajay Mysore, V. H. Produced by Rao, this movie is composed by Kamran. Uday Gurralla worked as cameraman and production designer for

this movie. This movie is going to be streamed on Sun Next from July 3. The trailer of the show was released on Tuesday. Padmashri Dr. Brahmanandam for the trailer launch program organized on this occasion. Nandini Reddy and Adnaki Dayakar were the chief guests.

'NIMMAKAYA.. NEEKENDUKU BHAYAM' LAUNCHED GRANDLY



New Telugu film that aims to expose superstitions still prevalent in modern society through an engaging and suspense-filled narrative has been officially launched. Titled "Nimmakaya.. Neekenduku Bhayam" (Why Are You Afraid of a Lemon?), the film stars Rajesh Bhupathi, Swapna Raj and Abitha in the lead roles, with veteran actors Suman and Amani playing

pivotal characters. Produced under the BVC Films banner, the film marks the directorial venture of Roshi Reddy Pandillapalli, who earlier earned appreciation for his film "Itlu." The movie was formally launched with traditional pooja ceremonies at Sarathi Studios, Ameerpet, Hyderabad. The muhurtham shot was inaugurated by PCC General Secretary Uppala Srinivas

Gupta, who sounded the clapboard. Lion Venkat switched on the camera, while TFCC Chairman Prathani Ramakrishna directed the first shot. Several distinguished guests attended the event and extended their best wishes to the film's team. Speaking on the occasion, veteran actor Suman said, "The story of this film is filled with interesting horror and thriller elements.

Nagabandham is a very castile film. The visuals are amazing. I wish the film a huge success: Producer Suresh Babu at the pre-release press meet



Nagabandham will be a visual wonder. It will give the audience a great theatrical experience: Hero Virat Karna Nagabandham is a film that celebrates our culture, roots and Sanatana Dharma in a grand way. The audience will definitely like it: Director Abhishek Nama Nagabandham is a sureshot blockbuster: Producers Kishore

Annapureddy and Nishitha Nagireddy Virat Karna is the hero of the epic adventure visual wonder 'Nagabandham - The Secret Treasure' directed by Abhishek Nama. Kishore Annapureddy and Nishitha Nagi Reddy have produced this film on a huge budget under the banner of Nick Studios. The film stars Nabha Natesh, Aishwarya

Menen, Jagapathi Babu, Mahesh Manjrekar, Rishabh Sawhney and other key roles. The promotional content that has already been released has created a sensation across the country. The film will be released worldwide on July 3. On this occasion, the makers organized a pre-release press meet. Producer Suresh Babu attended the event as the chief guest.

SARA GURPAL SINGS HIT PAKISTANI SONG ON INDIAN SHOW



At a time when tensions between India and Pakistan continue to dominate headlines, a video of Indian singer Sara Gurpal performing a Pakistani drama song has gone viral. On paper, it looked like a wholesome cross-border music moment. In the comments, though, things went in a very different direction. Sara performed "Meri Zindagi Hai Tu", the much-loved song from the Pakistani drama of the same name, during her appearance in the Indian singing reality show Voice of Punjab Master Champs. The track has a strong fan base, especially among Pakistani drama lovers, and is remembered for its emotional pull more than just its vocals.

that the performance failed to match the feeling of the original song.

FANS SAY THE EMOTION WAS MISSING Pakistani fans were quick to react, with many saying the song should not have been performed in that style. Some felt that the softness and pain of the original track were lost on stage, while others said the performance sounded too forced. What made the reactions more interesting was that it was not just Pakistani users who criticised the performance. Several Indian users also agreed that the song deserved a more delicate treatment and that Sara's version did not do justice to it. For many, the issue was not that an Indian singer performed a Pakistani song. In fact, many called that part wholesome. The problem, according to fans, was the way the song was sung.

Anand Deverakonda, director Aditya Haasan, and producer SKN launched the "Crush Song" from the upcoming film Summer Holidays



Successful producer and distributor Dheeraj Mogilineni, known for backing content-driven films, is gearing up to bring an endearing children's film titled Summer Holidays under his banner, Dheeraj Mogilineni Entertainment. Directed

by Srikar, the film is designed as a heartwarming journey that brings back nostalgic childhood memories. Master Rohan, Master Arun, and Baby Khushi play the lead roles, and the film is gearing up for a grand theatrical release soon.

Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media To Release The Fun-Filled Entertainer Ameer Log

Ameer Log has received a major boost ahead of its release, with Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media stepping in to bring the film across the Telugu states. The team at Spirit Media was impressed after watching the completed film, appreciating its refreshing concept, engaging storytelling, and wholesome entertainment, prompting them to come on board as its distribution partner.



Spirit Media which earlier backed strong content films like Kaantha, Psych Siddhartha, etc. is being seen as a huge advantage for the makers. Featuring MC Hari, Manoj, and Sasidhar in the lead

roles, Ameer Log also stars Vedashree, Raavan Nitturu, Vishwender Reddy, and Saiyogi in key roles. The film marks the maiden production venture of Awwal Number Productions and is directed

by Ramana Reddy Soma. Madhavi Reddy Soma produces the film, while Manohar Reddy Manchuri serves as the co-producer. Promising a fun-filled entertainer rooted in friendship and relatable emotions, Ameer Log aims to offer audiences an enjoyable cinematic experience packed with humor, warmth, and memorable moments. The previously released posters and song received thumping response, setting good expectations for the movie. The technical crew includes cinematographer SVK, music composer Smaran Sai, and editor Rohit Penumatsa.