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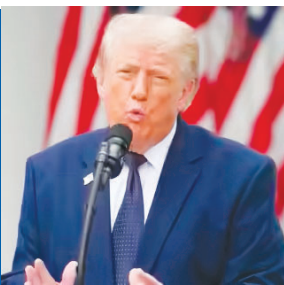


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SCAN FOR
E-PAPER



OM NAMO
VENKATESAYA

09-07-2026
Total pilgrims - 82,172
Tonsures - 36,978
Hundi kankalali - 515 CR
Laddu sale - 425 Lac
Annasprasadam - 257 Lac
Medical treatment - 3,234
Waiting Compartments - Out side line
at Silathoranam
Approva. Darshan Time for Saravali Hanuman
(with out SSD Tonsure) - 10 H.

India says it
already meets US
labour goals

Washington (TSIT):

India has mounted a broad defence of its legal, regulatory and corporate safeguards against forced labour, telling the US Trade Representative (USTR) that the country already has the institutions, laws and industry compliance systems needed to achieve the very objectives Washington is seeking through its proposed Section 301 tariff action.

Rajasthan woman
delivers three
daughters and a son
in rare quadruplet

Jaipur, July 9: In a rare medical case, a woman in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district gave birth to quadruplets - three daughters and a son - at the Hira Kunwar Ba Women's Hospital. The babies were delivered through a Caesarean section and are currently under intensive medical care as they were born prematurely. Jyoti Kashyap, wife of Arun Kashyap and a resident of Bhoi Mohalla in Jhalawar city.

Public Service is Governance's Dharma, Officials Must Be Accountable: Shivakumar

Belagavi (TSIT) Karnataka Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar called upon government officials to remain accountable and people-centric, stating that public service is the true responsibility of governance. He issued a stern message to the bureaucracy during the Belagavi division-level progress review meeting held at Suvarna Soudha.

Addressing senior officials, the Chief Minister said people closely observe the performance of the government and its officers. He stressed that while elected representatives seek public approval once every five years, officials must continuously earn public trust through efficient adminis-



tration and timely delivery of services. Shivakumar instructed district and taluk-level officers to stay accessible to citizens by residing within their jurisdictions and resolving issues locally. He warned against making people repeatedly visit government offices for basic services and urged officials to

work among the public rather than remain confined to offices.

Emphasising the importance of the Prajaseva Department, the Chief Minister said the grievance redressal system must be strengthened and adopted at all levels of administration. He called upon MLAs, ministers and officials to regularly interact with citizens through public outreach programmes.

On urban development, Shivakumar directed officials to prevent unplanned growth and unauthorised layouts. He said cities and towns must develop scientifically with proper planning to meet future requirements.



tribute more than 72.7 lakh land passbooks across 9,833 villages by March 2027 and resolve long-pend-

ing land disputes across the state. Naidu said the previous government's Land Titling Act was

Melbourne (TSIT):

In a rousing address that electrified thousands of members of the Indian diaspora at the 'Melbourne Meets Modi' event, Prime Minister Narendra Modi showcased his trademark charisma, connecting deeply with the audience through heartfelt anecdotes, a bold vision, and infectious optimism.

Speaking at the iconic Marvel Stadium, PM Modi asserted, "The world is witnessing the capability and credibility of India's defence platforms. You must have seen a demonstration of this during Operation Sindoor."

"The explosions were taking place at terrorist hideouts, but their echoes were heard across the entire world," PM Modi said, addressing a community event 'Melbourne Meets Modi' during his Australia visit on Thursday. The event drew tens of thousands of members of the Indian diaspora and was billed



The explosions were taking place at terrorist hideouts, but their echoes were heard across the entire world," PM Modi

as the largest such gathering ever to be held in Australia and addressed by any political leader.

PM Modi painted a vivid picture of a thriving India-Australia partnership, drawing parallels between the two nations' shared aspirations and cultural ties. PM Modi said the growing international demand for Indian-made products reflected the country's expanding manufacturing capabilities and reinforced India's emergence

as an important global production hub. He said that the government's push for domestic manufacturing had strengthened both economic growth and strategic self-reliance.

PM Modi highlighted the strong people-to-people connections. "Friends, the city of Melbourne shows four seasons in one day, but the Bharatiyata (Indian spirit) here remains constant," he said, referring to the vibrant Indian

community often called "Mini India." He recounted how Indian families stay connected across time zones, children returning from Australian schools while grandparents in India wait for video calls, underscoring the diaspora's vital role in strengthening bilateral ties. "Here in Melbourne and the surrounding areas, there are many places and markets infused with the spirit of Indianness.

BRS got Rs 1,400 crore as quid pro quo: Kavitha

Hyderabad (TSIT):

Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) chief K. Kavitha on Thursday alleged that the Rs 1,400 crore in the bank accounts of Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) came from "quid pro quo" deals. She demanded that BRS distribute the money to Telangana martyrs' families. Addressing workers of Singareni Collieries



Company Limited (SCCL) in Kothagudem, Kavitha also launched a scathing attack on her brother, BRS working president K. T. Rama Rao (KTR), and her cousin, former minister T. Harish Rao, accusing them of corruption.

Monsoon fury batters
several states, disrupts
normal life across
north, west India

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

Torrential monsoon rains unleashed widespread destruction across several parts of the country on Thursday, inundating roads, uprooting trees, damaging property and disrupting normal life, while authorities



scrambled to restore normalcy amid forecasts of more rain. Roads and residential areas remained submerged in several cities, with commuters wading through knee-deep water and traffic crawling on major roads and highways. Trees uprooted by strong winds blocked roads at several places, while flooding disrupted vehicular movement and damaged houses. Rescue operations also continued at the site of a building that collapsed a day earlier at a waste-to-energy plant in Maharashtra's Pimpri Chinchwad near Pune after a massive mound of garbage gave way due to heavy rain. One body was recovered on Thursday, while around eight people are still feared trapped under the debris.

Iran strikes targets in Gulf after US hits 90 sites; India urges calm

New Delhi (TSIT) New Delhi said it was "deeply concerned" over the recent attacks and escalation of tensions in West Asia. Terming the developments "a risk undermining regional peace, security and stability", the Ministry of External Affairs said, "India calls upon all parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate tensions and ensure protection of civilians as well as the uninterrupted flow of energy supplies and commerce."

The US military's Central Command said early on Thursday that it had completed "an additional round of strikes against Iran ... to further degrade Tehran's ability to attack commercial shipping and innocent civilian mariners in the Strait of Hormuz". The US said "90 Iranian military targets have been hit, including



air defence systems, coastal surveillance assets, missile and drone storage sites, naval capabilities and military logistics infrastructure along Iran's coastline".

The US attacked eastern Iranian cities of Iranshahr, Bandar Abbas, Konarak, Chabahar and Bushehr, as well as Aqqala in north-eastern Iran. One firefight-

er was killed in an attack on the Iranshahr airport, Iran state news agency IRNA reported.

Iranian officials told the Pars News Agency that attacks on Chabahar included strikes on a maritime control tower and a depot. Iranian state media also reported that a railway bridge had been targeted in Aqqala.

Three former TMC
MPs, including
Sushmita Dev, join BJP

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

Former TMC Rajya Sabha MPs Sushmita Dev, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray and Prakash Chik Baraik joined the BJP in Kolkata on Thursday (July 9, 2026).

The three leaders were inducted into the party in the presence of State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya. Mr. Bhattacharya welcomed the former MPs by presenting them with BJP flags during a programme attended by senior State leaders at the party's Salt Lake office. Ms. Dev, Mr. Ray and Mr. Baraik had resigned from the Rajya Sabha and quit the Trinamool Congress last month following the party's defeat in the West Bengal Assembly elections. Mr. Bhattacharya said the experience of the three former parliamentarians would further strengthen the party in the State.

Ahead of CM Vijay's visit to Karur, Left objects to govt jobs for kin of stampede victims

CHENNAI (TSIT):

Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay will visit Karur on Friday to meet the families of those who died in the Karur stampede and announce a series of welfare measures, including handing over compassionate appointment orders to 32 eligible members of the victims' families as part of the government's relief and rehabilitation package.

The move, which had drawn criticisms from political rivals, has now attracted objections from allies, CPI and CPM, who questioned the propriety of the decision, especially when the probe into the stampede is under way.

In a social media post, CPM state secretary P Shanmugam questioned



whether the TVK government was using its executive authority to provide government jobs because the victims had died during a TVK campaign event.

He also pointed out that the investigation into the Karur stampede was still under way and said announcements of this nature before the completion of the probe could dilute the case. Drawing a

distinction between a political party extending assistance and the government offering public employment, Shanmugam said the party concerned could take responsibility by securing private sector jobs for the affected families, but government jobs stood on a different footing.

He urged the government to formulate comprehensive guidelines governing

the grant of government jobs to victims and families affected by various incidents. Until such a policy is framed, the government should keep its announcement on providing jobs to the Karur stampede victims in abeyance, he said.

In a separate social media post, CPI leader K Subbarayan, the Lok Sabha member from Tirupur, said providing government jobs to families of those who die in such incidents at political meetings would set a wrong precedent and have serious repercussions. History would record the decision as an abuse of power and warned that it could create severe challenges for the government in the future, he cautioned.

Telangana Targets 10% Share in India's Growth CM Revanth Inaugurates Premier Energies' Next-Gen Solar Facility



Hyderabad TSIT BUREAU: Telangana Chief Minister A.Revanth Reddy on Thursday reaffirmed the State Government's commitment to transforming Telangana into a US\$3 trillion economy by 2047, while calling for greater investments, world-class infrastructure and sustainable industrial growth to make the State a major contributor to India's economy.

Chief Minister Addressing a gathering after inaugurating Premier Energies' state-of-the-art 5.6 GW Next-Generation Solar Module Manufacturing Facility at Seetarampur in Shabad mandal, Ranga Reddy district.He also performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the company's proposed 12 GWh Battery Energy Storage System Manufacturing Facility and a 36,000 metric tonne per annum Aluminium Extrusion and Anodization Plant.

Addressing the gathering, Revanth Reddy said politics should remain confined to election periods,

while governments must focus on development for the rest of the time.

"Politics should be restricted to elections.Our responsibility now is to work for the development of Telangana. Despite political criticism and allegations, our Government is committed to ensuring Telangana contributes 10 per cent to India's economic growth," he said.

Chief Minister stressed that the present level of investments would not be sufficient for Telangana to compete globally and called for significantly higher industrial investments. He said strengthening infrastructure, attracting global industries and creating employment opportunities would be crucial in achieving the State's long-term economic vision.

"Our Government is determined to make Telangana the number one State in the country and transform it into a US\$3 trillion economy by 2047," he asserted.

Highlighting the impor-

tance of sustainable urban development, the Chief Minister expressed concern over rising pollution in Delhi and worsening traffic congestion in cities such as Bengaluru and Chennai. He said Telangana had already adopted a long-term development strategy to prevent similar challenges.

As part of this vision State has divided its development model into CURE, PURE and RARE zones to ensure balanced industrialisation, environmental protection and regional development. He explained that around 2,100 square kilometres within the Outer Ring Road have been earmarked under the CURE (Clean and Urban Region Ecosystem) concept exclusively for the service sector.

Revanth Reddy also highlighted the Government's emphasis on skill development through the establishment of the Young India Skills University and Advanced Training Centres to prepare youth for emerging industries and advanced manufacturing sectors.

Describing the inauguration of the solar manufacturing facility as a significant milestone for Telangana's renewable energy ecosystem, the Chief Minister congratulated Premier Energies for expanding its manufacturing base in the State.

He also directed the Ranga Reddy District Collector to provide housing and develop commercial complexes for families who had surrendered their lands for the project, ensuring sustainable livelihood opportunities alongside industrial development.

Chief Minister expressed gratitude to the farmers of Ranga Reddy district for supporting the establishment of the manufacturing facility and said special funds had already been allocated for the development of the Chevella Assembly constituency. He also announced that a 100-metre-wide road connecting Budwel and Kodangal was under construction and stated that he would return to inaugurate a temple in the area.

The event was attended by Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu, Premier Energies Chairman Surender Pal Singh Saluja, Managing Director Chiranjeevi Saluja, Executive Director Revathi Rohini Buragadda and Director Sudheer Reddy.

Founded in 1995 and headquartered in Hyderabad, Premier Energies Limited is among India's leading integrated solar cell and module manufacturers. The company currently operates solar cell manufacturing facilities with an annual capacity exceeding 3.6 GW and solar module manufacturing facilities with a cumulative annual capacity of approximately 5.5 GW in Telangana, serving both domestic and international renewable energy markets.

Sarpanches and Panchayat Secretaries Must Work in Coordination for Holistic Village Development: District Collector Khushboo Gupta

Mahabubnagar, July 9 (TSIT): District Collector Khushboo Gupta emphasized that Sarpanches and Panchayat Secretaries should work in close coordination with a clear action plan based on the needs of the people to ensure the holistic development of villages. Addressing a training programme for Sarpanches and Panchayat Secretaries held at the District Collectorate Conference Hall on Thursday, the Collector congratulated the newly elected Sarpanches and said it is the responsibility of every public representative to uphold the trust reposed in them by the people.

She stated that the government is conducting the training programme to equip Sarpanches and Panchayat Secretaries with comprehensive knowledge of welfare schemes, development programmes, funds, ongoing works and govern-



ment guidelines related to village administration.

The Collector said Sarpanches should be well prepared to answer every question raised by the public. She informed that a special initiative has been launched to compile details of all works sanctioned by the Central and State Governments, funds received, completed works, pending works and payment status on a single platform. Panchayat Secretaries were directed to complete the prescribed proformas and submit them within one week. The information will subsequently be uploaded online, enabling

easy monitoring of village development progress.

She urged all participants to pay close attention to the training on the newly introduced VBG-RAM-G Act, including new procedures, selection of works, wage payments, compensation and other provisions. The knowledge gained during the training should be shared with the public through Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas and implemented effectively, she added.

Stressing the importance of sanitation, the Collector warned that poor waste management during the monsoon could lead to the spread of dis-

eases such as dengue, diarrhoea and viral fevers. She instructed the officials to focus on solid waste management, waste segregation, drainage maintenance and protection of drinking water sources in every village. She also called upon Sarpanches to regularly monitor Anganwadi Centres, pre-primary schools, government schools, health centres and agricultural services. Giving priority to child education, nutrition, public health, sanitation and infrastructure development would pave the way for comprehensive village development, she said.

The Collector advised Panchayat Secretaries to work in close coordination with elected representatives and ensure that the benefits of government welfare schemes reach every eligible family. They should remain accessible to the public and resolve local issues promptly, she added.

Communists aim for a society without gaps

B h a d r a d r i Kothagudem (TSIT): CPI State Secretary and Kothagudem MLA Kunanneni Sambasiva Rao said that the goal of the communists is to establish a society without gaps in India, which is characterized by diversity and pluralism. Sambasiva Rao was speaking at the Communist Party of India (CPI) training classes being held in Bhadrachalam on Thursday. He criticized that democratic values are currently being dam-



aged in the country and that anarchy continues.

He alleged that the central government has failed to solve basic problems such as the welfare of the people of the country, employment, education and healthcare, and that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi government is giving more priority to implementing the Hindutva agenda than the interests of the people. He said that in the context of increasing importance of social equality and public wel-

fare around the world, many countries are looking towards the ideology of communism. He made it clear that the establishment of an equal society is possible only through communists, and that communists are ready for any struggle to protect the rights of the poor, farmers, workers, and the weaker sections. He warned that grabbing the lands of the poor is unjust and such actions will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

District Collector Khushboo Gupta Hands Over Compassionate Appointment Orders to Nine Candidates



Mahabubnagar, July 9(TSIT): District Collector Khushboo Gupta on Thursday handed over appointment orders under the compassionate appointment scheme to six

Junior Assistants and three Office Subordinates for appointment in various government departments at the District Collectorate. Congratulating the appointees, the

Collector advised them to treat government service as a responsibility towards the public and discharge their duties with dedication, sincerity, and integrity. She urged them to work with commitment in providing efficient public services. The programme was attended by Additional Collector (Revenue) J.L.B. Haripriya, Trainee Assistant Collector Sai Shivani, District Revenue Officer A. Nirmala, Collectorate Administrative Officer Suvarna Raj, and other officials.

Telangana-North East Cultural Bond Should Grow Stronger: DGP Mahesh Bhagwat



- KIMS Hospitals and NECA host cultural awareness programme
- Bihu and Manipuri dance performances, traditional attire showcase enthral audience

Hyderabad, July 9, 2026: Telangana Director General of Police (Law & Order) M. Mahesh Bhagwat on Thursday said there is a need to further strengthen the cultural bond between Telangana and the North-Eastern States. He was speaking as the chief guest at a cultural awareness programme on the heritage and traditions of the North-East, jointly organised by KIMS Hospitals and the North East Connect Association (NECA) at KIMS Hospitals, Secunderabad.

Mr. Bhagwat said such initiatives play a vital role in enhancing awareness about the history, culture, traditions and languages of the North-Eastern

States. He noted that a large number of people from the region are contributing to Telangana, particularly Hyderabad, in sectors such as healthcare, education and other professions, and stressed the importance of respecting and preserving their cultural identity.

Dr. B. Bhaskar Rao, Chairman and Managing Director of KIMS Group of Hospitals, who attended as the guest of honour, said many professionals from the North-Eastern States serve in the group's hospitals across nursing, paramedical and other departments. The programme, he said, was organised to promote a better understanding of their unique culture and way of life while fostering a more inclusive and welcoming work environment.

Dr. Sarbeshwar Saharia, Vice-President of NECA, said the association is

committed to promoting mutual understanding and respect for people from the North-Eastern States, bringing India's cultural diversity closer together and contributing to a more inclusive society.

The event also featured a special lecture by Prof. Ajailiu Niumai of the University of Hyderabad on the social and cultural distinctiveness of the North-Eastern States. Senior journalist M. Somasekhara also addressed the gathering.

Among those present were Paparao Biyyala, President of NECA and retired IAS officer; Gautam Sawang, Vice-President of NECA and retired IPS officer; Stephen Ronojit Sen, Treasurer; Board Member Dr. K. Rajeswara Rao (Retd. IAS); Sridhar Muppidi; Dr. Sambit Sahu, Director - Medical Operations, KIMS Hospitals; and members of the North-Eastern community residing in Hyderabad. The programme concluded with vibrant cultural performances, including the traditional Bihu dance of Assam, a showcase of traditional attire representing all eight North-Eastern States, and a Manipuri dance performance, all of which received an enthusiastic response from the audience.

Hyundai Opens 61st EV Charging Station in Telangana at Shamirpet

Hyderabad: Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) has inaugurated its 61st Public EV Charging Station in Telangana, a 240kW Ultra-Fast Charging Facility at Minerva Blue Fox, Shamirpet, located on the Hyderabad-Karimnagar Highway. The facility is now open for public use, enhancing charging accessibility for electric vehicle users in the region.

This is HMIL's fourth public EV charging station in Telangana. With this addition, Hyundai's EV charging network across cities, highways and dealerships has expanded to 183 stations nationwide.

The newly installed 240kW Ultra-Fast Charger is designed to provide faster charging capability, reducing waiting time for EV owners and improving the overall electric vehicle ownership experience. The facility is strategically located to support commuters travelling along a key highway route. HMIL said the expansion reflects its commitment to developing a reliable, accessible and customer-focused electric mobility ecosystem in India. The company aims to support the growing adoption of electric vehicles by creating convenient charging solutions for consumers.



sustainable mobility across India.

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Scaler School of Technology Student from Telangana Lands AI Engineering Internship at Mamaearth In his Third Year

Hyderabad (TSIT):

Growing up in Kothagudem, a small town in Telangana best known as a stopover for pilgrims visiting Bhadrachalam, opportunities to pursue a career in technology seemed limited for Keshav. A COVID-era student, Keshav Makkad completed his schooling in 2023 from his hometown, where the focus was largely on board examinations, leaving limited time for structured IIT-JEE preparation.

Despite having only a month to prepare for JEE, he made the most of YouTube as his primary study resource and secured an 86.6 percentile. After exploring multiple engineering college options, he chose to join Scaler School of Technology (SST) as part of its inaugural batch in 2023. What first caught his attention was SST's website, which reflected the kind of modern, technology-driven institution he was looking for. Encouraged by his brother-in-law, he chose SST over traditional engineering colleges. The opportunity to start learning coding from day



one, instead of just relying on traditional textbook learning, further cemented his decision.

Before joining the maiden cohort of SST in 2023, Keshav was a science student with no prior coding experience. Over the next two years, he learnt coding from scratch, built strong computer science fundamentals, and applied

his classroom learning through real-world projects that sharpened his problem-solving skills and prepared him for the industry.

During his second year at SST, Keshav secured his first internship as a full stack developer at TradeIndia in Noida. He later joined Bengaluru-based startup ZippMat in the same role before transitioning to his current internship as an AI engineer at Mamaearth, one of India's fast-growing consumer brands, marking his journey from a beginner to an AI professional while still in college. Reflecting on his journey, Keshav says, "Joining Scaler School of Technology (SST) as part of its very first batch was definitely a leap of faith, but looking back, I'm really glad I took that chance. One of the things that stood out most to me was the Buddy System (BSM) at SST. It wasn't just a programme; it was a community that helped me through the curriculum and the tougher phases of college. Later, I got the chance to give back as a Buddy, helping juniors through the same journey. One thing I've learned is that you don't

have to be a topper to do well. I always saw myself as an average student, but discipline and consistency can take you much further than you think. Don't limit yourself by believing you're 'just average'; keep showing up, keep learning, and the results will follow."

Currently in his fourth year at SST, with graduation scheduled in 2027, Keshav is building a career in artificial intelligence while leaving a lasting mark on campus. Among Keshav's most impactful projects is the seating plan generator that automates examination seating arrangements at SST. The solution replaced the manual process and has been in use for over a year and a half, supporting the institution's examination operations.

Beyond academics, he has mentored junior students as a teaching assistant and founded the institution's Media Club, now one of its most active student-led communities. Through his journey, Keshav continues to inspire students from smaller towns to believe that limited access should never limit ambition.

EDITORIAL

Ram Temple Theft: SIT
Confirms Theft and Security
Lapses But Leaves Key
Questions Unaddressed

Amidst the ongoing controversy following reports of the alleged theft of offerings at Ayodhya’s Ram Jannabhoomi Mandir last month, the Uttar Pradesh government’s home department constituted a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the allegations. The SIT’s interim report has now laid bare the kinds of embezzlement and theft ongoing on the temple – but there are also some questions that the SIT has not raised. At the very outset, the SIT observes that, prima facie, it appears certain employees responsible for counting the donations were involved in the theft and embezzlement of cash. CCTV footage captured 70 instances of theft within a span of 40 days. The interim report further acknowledges that there had been serious lapses in the management of offerings and security arrangements for years – concerns that have been repeatedly highlighted by internal audits but have not been effectively addressed. However, this interim report raises more questions than it answers. It also fails to raise questions around the involvement and/or negligence of those at the very top. The SIT was constituted at the behest of the Shri Ram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. In a letter to the government dated June 12, the Trust stated that media and social media reports concerning the management and misappropriation of temple offerings were creating doubts among devotees and therefore an independent investigation into the entire matter was necessary. Consequently, the home department of the Uttar Pradesh government constituted the SIT on June 17. The team was tasked with investigating the entire incident to ascertain how the theft occurred, identify the individuals accountable and recommend necessary reforms to avert such incidents in the future. Following an investigation that lasted just six days, the SIT presented its nine-page interim report to the additional chief secretary (home) on June 23. The SIT has recommended that an FIR be filed against six individuals: Avinash Shukla, Anukalp Mishra, Lavkush Mishra, Manish Kumar Yadav, Karunesh Pandey and Ramashankar Mishra. However, the report makes no mention of the Trust’s then-general secretary and Vishva Hindu Parishad leader, Champat Rai. While the SIT has noted the supervisory failures of senior Trust office-bearer Anil Mishra and the official in charge of counting, Subhash Srivastava, it has not reached a definitive conclusion regarding the role of the top decision-making body or other senior office-bearers. Moreover, the report fails to answer several major questions, such as the total amount of funds embezzled and where the ultimate responsibility lies for the institutional failures that persisted over the years. How are offerings made at the temple? According to the report, devotees present their offerings at the Ram Temple through three primary channels: It has been reported that the cash and valuables collected through these channels were taken to a counting room, where they were tallied with the help of the State Bank of India (SBI). A detailed standard operating procedure (SOP) was established between the Trust and the bank for this purpose. This procedure mandated that donation boxes be opened in the joint presence of Trust and bank representatives; separate records be maintained for each box; staff undergo searches upon entry and exit; counting staff wear special clothing without pockets.

Thanks To Trump, Saving The US-Iran
Islamabad Deal Is Now Harder Than Ever

Less than a month after the United States and Iran signed the agreement that was supposed to end the war in West Asia and create the basis for a wider deal, American warplanes are again pounding Iran. In response, Iran is attacking US-linked targets in the Gulf nations and threatening commercial shipping. Missiles and drones are flying across the Gulf and over the Strait of Hormuz. Oil prices have jumped, and the nervousness has returned to global markets. At the NATO summit in Ankara, which concluded yesterday, President Donald Trump appeared to pronounce the last rites. "As far as I'm concerned, it's over," he said of the understanding with Iran. Hours later, however, Trump was telling journalists aboard Air Force One that Iranian officials had called "just a little while ago" and wanted a deal "so badly". He was not sure, he added, whether they were "worthy" of one.

■ **WELCOME BACK TO DONALD TRUMP’S TELEVISED, OPEN DIPLOMACY.** The latest escalation began after attacks on three commercial ships near the Strait of Hormuz, which Washington blamed on Iran. The American response was blistering. US Central Command says it hit around 80 Iranian military targets on Tuesday, followed by approximately 90 more in the next round of strikes in the early hours of Thursday. The latest attacks, it said, were aimed at further degrading Iran’s ability to threaten commercial shipping and civilian mariners in the Strait of Hormuz. ‘Bullying And Breaking Promises’ Iran is equally defiant. Its parliamentary speaker and chief US negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, says America has still not learnt that “bullying and breaking promises” are no longer cost-free. Iran’s foreign minister has responded to Trump’s insults by saying Tehran will answer not with vulgarity, but with action. Explosions have been reported in Bahrain. Kuwait says it has intercepted missiles and drones. Qatar has issued a security alert. This doesn’t appear to be a small



breach of a fragile ceasefire. West Asia is again climbing the escalation ladder. And yet, it would be premature to write the obituary of the Islamabad agreement. Trump’s latest words must, of course, be taken seriously. He is the President of the United States, which just celebrated its 250th birth anniversary with pomp and show of strength. In Ankara, he called Iran’s leaders “scum” and “sick people”. Talking to Tehran, he suggested, may simply be a waste of time. He has even spoken about the possibility of taking over Kharg Island, the strategic centre of Iran’s oil exports.

■ **THE TRUMP VOCABULARY** Indeed, Trump has completely changed the language of diplomacy. American presidents in the past made threats, too. They bombed countries. They imposed sanctions, and they toppled governments. But they usually chose their public words carefully. Trump does not. Remember that extraordinary meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office last year? A diplomatic disagreement became a televised argument. The sort of language normally heard behind closed doors was suddenly being spoken in front of cameras. Iran has been dealing with Trump long enough to understand this. This is the same American presi-

dent who has talked about regime change in Tehran and then shown a willingness to negotiate with the very same Iranian government. Even after declaring the Islamabad understanding effectively dead, Trump acknowledged that his envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner remained involved in the diplomatic process. Goodbye To Ceasefire?

■ **SO, IS THE DEAL REALLY DEAD?** Perhaps. But the telephone lines do not appear to have been cut yet. The same contradiction exists in Tehran. Iran says Washington has violated the agreement by restoring pressure on its oil trade and attacking Iranian territory. Tehran has also pointed to continued Israeli military action in Lebanon. Israel was to withdraw from south of Lebanon, which it has not, and continues to bomb Lebanese towns and cities. Iranian officials argue that America has failed to honour important commitments made under the memorandum. The text of the agreement matters here. The MoU envisaged no new US sanctions while a final deal was negotiated and included waivers connected with Iranian oil exports. It also required both sides to maintain the status quo

pending a final agreement. Yet Iran too has stopped short of formally burying the memorandum. Why? Because, for all the anger, Tehran may also want to keep a small diplomatic window open. The bigger problem is that the original argument over Iran’s nuclear programme has now been overtaken by another, potentially even more dangerous fight: the Strait of Hormuz.

■ **THE HORMUZ CARD** Iran appears to have learnt an enormous strategic lesson from the war. It has proven in recent months that Hormuz may be more useful to them than a nuclear bomb. A nuclear weapon is difficult to build. It invites international isolation. Using one would risk national destruction. Hormuz can be squeezed today. Attack three ships, and insurance premiums will rise. Tankers will hesitate to deploy. Oil prices will inevitably jump. Our governments in India and other parts of Asia will become nervous. European markets will fall. Around a fifth of the world’s oil and gas supplies pass through this narrow waterway. Iran does not need to defeat the US militarily to cause enormous global damage. It merely needs to make the Strait unpredictable. Or shut it for as long as it deems necessary.

■ **THAT IS AN EXTRAORDI-**

NARILY POWERFUL WEAPON, ISN’T IT? It has dawned on us that Tehran now appears determined to create a new reality in Hormuz. Iranian politicians have spoken about greater control over vessels passing through the waterway. There has even been discussion of ships effectively paying for passage. Washington will never easily accept such an arrangement. Control over Hormuz would give Iran leverage not simply over America, but over the global economy.

■ **TRUMP’S PLAN** Trump’s threats against Iran’s oil infrastructure, particularly Kharg Island, should be looked at in that context. Iran can store oil on land. It can fill tankers and leave them sitting offshore. But it cannot do this indefinitely. At some point, Iran has to sell its oil. The American strategy appears straightforward. Make it harder for Iran to export oil. Threaten the infrastructure that allows Tehran to earn money. Increase the economic pain.

Then wait. The hope in Washington is that Iran eventually returns to the negotiating table on American terms. But Iran has another card. It can make the rest of the region pay the price. The attacks and threats against US military facilities in Bahrain, Kuwait, and elsewhere in the region are reminders of Tehran’s ability to widen the conflict. Iran cannot match America’s military strength. It does not need to. It only needs to make the war expensive, unpredictable, and regional.

■ **A DILEMMA IN THE GULF** That scenario is painful for the Gulf countries, nearly all of whom are American allies and have American military bases there. Nobody in the Gulf wants another long war. The region has changed dramatically over the past decade. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar want to talk about artificial intelligence, global finance, new cities, tourism, sport, and life after oil. Missiles flying over their capitals do not quite fit that sales pitch.

After US-Iran, Why Is Pakistan Suddenly
'Brokering' Peace In Libya Now?

To further its freshly minted international reputation of interlocuting between Iran and the US, Pakistan seems to be rolling the dice on another conflict. This time, thousands of kilometres away from its borders, in a region with limited historical stake: Libya. Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir on June 24 received the deputy commander of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Saddam Haftar, at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, under a guard of honour. The latest engagement in Rawalpindi followed Saddam’s previous meetings with the Turkish intelligence chief and the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Libya’s civil conflict involves two rival administrations - the UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU) in Tripoli and the eastern Government of National Stability (GNS) in Benghazi, militarily led by Khalifa Haftar’s LNA. The first faction is backed by Turkey and Qatar, and the latter by Egypt, Russia, and the UAE. In April 2026, both sides agreed on a unified national budget, a first since 2013, but the stalemate remains unresolved. The key issues include polls, a unified military command, and a share of Libya’s oil revenue, which still remains under debate. Now, Pakistan has stepped into this conflict, where it has defence ties with the LNA. This development is crucial given that Pakistan’s policy in North Africa has been essentially non-existent, with the country also lacking any historical stake or a sizable expatriate community. This changed in late 2025, when Munir visited Benghazi to meet Khalifa Haftar, the military commander of the LNA. According to



reports, Pakistan became one of the interlocutors alongside the US, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey. Pakistan’s position reportedly revolves around the 36-month reunification plan, where Tripoli-based Prime Minister would hold on to his power, while Saddam Haftar would chair a Presidency Council - essentially taking control of budget revenues and oil fields. Merchant or Mediator? Pakistan’s mediation role comes as a surprise given its recent inclination towards a defence relationship with the LNA, with Pakistan reportedly finalising a defence deal worth over USD 4 billion with it. As part of this deal, Pakistan will supply sixteen JF-17 fighter aircraft, jointly developed with China, and 12 Super Mushshak trainer aircraft, to eastern Libya. This is followed up with cooperation on training. Should the deal go through, this export will become the first sale of the JF-17 to an Arab country. That, notably, would be in violation of the 2011 UN arms embargo on Libya. While Pakistan’s broader position as a mediator deserves further investigation,

its relationship with the LNA will undermine Islamabad’s claim to neutrality. This stands in defiance of conventional mediation theory that necessitates the mediator’s impartiality. In that light, to view Pakistan’s intentions as a product of altruism would be naive. Libya remains Islamabad’s second act this year after it brokered a peace deal between the US and Iran, pausing the West Asian war and earning high praises from US President Donald Trump and his Vice-President, JD Vance. That episode further enhanced Pakistan’s standing with the Trump administration, reflecting on a larger scale the role Islamabad played in facilitating the 2020 Doha agreement between the US and the Afghan Taliban, where Pakistani pressure on the latter and its logistical facilitation resulted in a deal. The implications of that agreement for Pakistan-Afghanistan ties and the wider Afghan population, especially women, is a story for another time. In both cases, the payoff for Pakistan is the same: closer ties with the US and an opportunity to refurbish its interna-

tional reputation. In Libya, the additional benefits include potential access to a lucrative arms export market and a strategic foothold in an energy-rich state, all at a lower political cost. At best, this remains transactional diplomacy and not humanitarian instinct. Pak Punching Above Its Weight? Despite its recent global stature, this does not mean Pakistan can solely determine the future of Libya’s conflict. While it is likely viewed as a Muslim-majority, nuclear-powered state with no direct territorial agenda in Libya, the country still lacks influence or a historic clout, like that of Egypt, or oil investments like Qatar or the UAE. Pakistan remains a secondary player in a ground dominated by the US and other middle powers of the Arab world. That said, Pakistan’s close ties with all stakeholders are likely to work in its favor, despite other diplomatic constraints, which explains Qatar and Turkey’s insistence on bringing Islamabad into the mix. For policymakers in Islamabad, the key is to manage international and national expectations.

VIJAYA MEHTA AND THE ART OF
Committing Fully, Then Letting Go

When Vijaya Mehta passed away, Marathi theatre lost not just a director, but also a living archive of what she called, without a trace of nostalgia-for-nostalgia’s-sake, “a fortunate generation.” Since June 30, 2026, while I have been reflecting on her work, one thing has become quite clear: hers was a mind that never stopped restlessly reinventing itself. Mehta’s own image for this is the most useful key to her career: culture, she said, is like a pond in a forest. “We were all naturally swept up in this current of the artistic renaissance,” she said of post-Independence India, “We didn’t have to make a conscious effort to join it.” It is a humble way of describing an extraordinary confluence. Be it Ebrahim Alkazi holding his first workshop after returning from England; Ravi Shankar’s Kinnara and Sachin Shankar’s dance troupe; the studios of M.F. Husain, Akbar Padamsee and V.S. Gaitonde all housed under one roof at the Bhulabhai Memorial Institute or a seventeen-year-old finding herself in the company of Ganpatrao Bodas, Nanasaheb Phatak and Keshavrao Date. Mehta insisted this was luck, geography, timing. But the legends that she alludes to – Vijay Tendulkar, Kishori Amonkar, Jitendra Abhisheki, Prafulla Dahanukar – gathered in what she fondly called the “Girgaon gang.” This suggests something more than just being at the right place at the right time: a capacity for finding and then holding onto serious collaborators and for turning friendship into a



working method. Rangayan and the courage to let go. That method found its first institutional form in Rangayan, the theatre movement she co-founded with Vijay Tendulkar, Vasant Sarwate and Madhav Vathe, under the presidency of Pu Bhagwat, who, interestingly, was not a theatrewallah but the publisher of the cult publication Satyakatha. Mehta used to describe Rangayan’s structure with the precision of an architect: a core circle of five deciding the vision, a second circle of implementers like Arvind Deshpande and Arun Kakade, an advisory board stacked with the likes of Vinda Karandikar and Kumar Gandharva and finally a membership of a 1,000 people who paid Rs 10 a year for 12 programmes – six plays and six seminars, each followed by an open discussion with the audience. “It was precisely because of this dynamic that it became a movement,” she said. Later, when the need for it passed, when the former amateurs were graduating into professional theatre and the founding circle had scattered,

Mehta and Tendulkar chose to close Rangayan rather than let it become “a hollow shell.” Mehta compared it to the decision to lose a child. Tendulkar and Kakade have their own version of this story. But more about that on some other day. Ideology to truth. What came after is instructive for anyone who assumes an artist’s identity should stay fixed. Mehta moved into commercial theatre and worked for eight years, primarily with the playwright Jaywant Dalvi, on plays like Sandhyachhaya, Hamidabaichi Kothi, Mahasagar and Purush. She was candid about her initial discomfort as a Rangayan artist stepping into a managerial commercial structure and equally open about her refusal to make ideology the organising principle of her work. “I never performed plays that could be labelled as feminist or political,” she said, not because the material lacked politics but because she distrusted theatre used as “a tool to serve a theme.” Her account of Purush makes the distinction precise: the play was not about rape as an issue

but about masculinity and the complicity of women in a young woman’s destruction. This difference, she insisted, changes everything about how a play should be built and how an audience receives it. The play ran for 16 years. Twelve-year cycles. Then, characteristically, she moved again. Mehta describes herself as someone who commits to a phase for approximately 12 years, “ek tapp,” she called it, a period of disciplined practice, before restless sets in. That rhythm carried her from Rangayan to commercial theatre to a rediscovery, during directing training at Oxford, of Indian “non-urban” performance conventions she had once dismissed as unsuited to her own urban sensibility. Staging Alfred Jarry’s Ubu Roi using tamasha’s touring, village-to-village structure startled her Indian audiences. Discovering that Brecht had made a parallel journey into Asian non-urban forms led her to Fritz Bennewitz and years of cross-cultural work in Germany, producing Marathi and German-language versions of Hayavadana and Ajab Nyay Vartulacha and eventually to a genuine friendship and creative exchange with Peter Brook around a shared understanding of Shakuntala (Mehta, interestingly, saw the play not as Shakuntala’s story but as Dushyanta’s journey of self-discovery). “When two completely distinct cultures come together in such a way, while respecting each other, a new truth unfolds,” Brook told her. It could serve as a theatre-mantra for her entire working life.

OIL PRICES JUMP AS US-IRAN TRUCE FALTERS OVER HORMUZ STRIKES

New York: The potential unravelling of a fragile truce between Iran and the United States renewed anxiety Wednesday over whether fuel prices would go back up if sustained fighting kept oil tankers from travelling through the Persian Gulf. Oil prices rose to their highest point in weeks after President Donald Trump declared the US ceasefire with Iran over, responding to Iranian attacks on commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz and on American military sites in other Gulf nations. Costlier crude oil could lead to costlier gas station fill-ups as drivers in many countries were getting a break from elevated prices brought on by the war. “Tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has essentially stopped, which tells you more about risk perception right now than any statement from Washington or Tehran,” said Jorge Leon, head of geopolitical analysis



at Rystad Energy, in an email. “Oil markets reacted quickly to the renewed geopolitical risk.” US gasoline prices increased slightly Wednesday to an average of USD 3.80 for a gallon of regular, up from USD 3.79 the day before, but still well below the month-ago average of USD 4.16, according to motor club federation AAA. Crude oil makes up the bulk of the price of gasoline, so when oil prices rise, gaso-

line eventually follows. But it can take weeks for consumers to feel the full impacts. That’s because refiners make gasoline with oil purchased in advance. The finished product then has to travel through a system of pipelines and trucks to reach gas station pumps. Gas station owners set prices at the pump, and to stay competitive, they sometimes absorb the impact of higher oil prices instead of

immediately passing it along to customers. To suppress high oil prices during the war, the US and other countries released oil from their emergency stockpiles starting in March. But those stockpiles won’t last forever. The US Strategic Petroleum Reserve held 319.5 million barrels as of July 3. The last time the inventory was that low was in 1983, when the reserve was initially being filled up.

GADKARI CHALLENGES CRITICS TO SHOW ANY CAR DAMAGED BY E20

Hyderabad: Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has challenged critics to produce evidence of any vehicle damaged by E20 fuel, dismissing concerns over the higher ethanol blend as part of a “concerted false narrative” on social media. “Show me a single car that has suffered damage because of E20 fuel. What is being circulated on social media is part of a concerted false narrative,” Gadkari said in an interview with the Indian Express, amid a raging debate over the fuel blend’s impact on vehicle performance. The minister, however, acknowledged that mileage could see a marginal dip as ethanol content in fuel increases, since the calorific value of ethanol is lower than that of petrol. He said mileage also depends heavily on driving conditions, particularly in cities such as Delhi and Mumbai, where vehicles largely run in lower gears due to stop-and-go traffic. “In



stop-and-go traffic from Delhi to Gurugram, you are constantly braking. Your speed barely goes above 40-50 kmph before you hit a red light. However, if you drive at a continuous speed of 100 kmph, you may see some difference,” he said, citing an ARAI report that found no mileage efficiency issues for vehicles built with flex-fuel engines. Adulterated fuel, not ethanol, cause for engine damage: Gadkari On claims of engine damage, Gadkari said companies asked to

investigate such instances had found adulterated fuel to be the actual cause.

He added that older vehicles’ metal washers, prone to wear, have now been replaced with rubber ones, with manufacturers instructed to swap them free of cost during servicing. Gadkari said nearly a dozen automakers, including Tata Motors, Mahindra, Hyundai, Toyota Kirloskar and Maruti Suzuki, are readying flex-fuel models, pointing to Brazil’s use of a 27 per cent

ethanol-petrol blend since 1970 without reported issues in Honda and Hyundai vehicles. He said the goal is to offer consumers multiple fuel blends at different price points, with ethanol currently priced at around Rs 75 per litre. Methanol blend Calling indigenous fuel the only way to curb oil imports, Gadkari said the West Asian crisis underscored the need to explore all alternatives to fossil fuel imports.

He cited a Karnataka pilot in which Ashok Leyland ran 25 buses on a 15 per cent methanol-diesel blend for three months without problems, following which the company developed a dedicated methanol engine. He said Assam Petro-Chemicals currently produces 700 tonnes of methanol daily at Rs 20-22 per litre, against diesel priced at around Rs 110, and suggested methanol could power buses and trucks in the Northeast as well as marine engines on the Brahmaputra.

FROM CHECK-BOX VISITS TO A SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH:

HOW TELANGANA CONNECTED EVERY SCHOOL VISIT AND REVIEW INTO ONE SYSTEM

Hyderabad, July 2026: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 placed foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) at the centre of India’s education reform agenda, recognising that a child’s ability to read with meaning and perform basic Math calculations by Grade 3 shapes every stage of learning that follows. To act on this vision, the Ministry of Education launched the NIPUN Bharat Mission in July 2021 — a holistic approach spanning curriculum, teacher capacity, assessment, parental engagement, and data-driven governance, all working toward a single outcome: ensuring every child achieves foundational learning milestones. In Telangana, this national vision has driven five years of reform reaching 10.34 lakh children across 24,000 government schools with FLN grades, supported by 60,000 primary grade teachers. The results are evident in the state’s learning data: between Academic Year 2024-25 and 2025-26, Telugu sentence reading scores rose by 6 percentage points, English by 9 points, and Maths addition and subtraction scores by 8 points. These gains rest on a governance transformation that funda-

mentally changed how the state supports learning in schools.

■ SOLVING THE GOVERNANCE VISIBILITY PROBLEM

Till as recently as 2022, School visits in Telangana functioned as check-box exercises, with no systematic tracking of teaching-learning materials or instructional quality. Review meetings circulated administrative instructions but rarely discussed learning outcomes. And disconnected data systems meant no one in the system had a real-time view of what was actually happening inside classrooms. The state’s response, built jointly by SCERT, the Directorate of School Education, and Samagra Shiksha, was to wire together three previously disconnected areas of school oversight — visits, reviews, and data — into a single connected governance system. School visits were redesigned from administrative inspections into structured mentoring exercises, with officials at every level, from cluster to state, now using a common observation tool logged directly into the Telangana School Education Application; visit quality is

assessed not merely by whether a visit occurred, but by what was actually observed and followed up on. Monthly review meetings were made compulsory, built around fixed, learning-focused agendas designed by SCERT and powered by live data from monitoring dashboards rather than administrative bulletins. Underpinning both is a five-platform digital architecture — the Integrated School Management System Portal, the Telangana School Education Application, TLM tracking, the Training Management System, and the Vidya Sameeksha Kendra (VSK) Monitoring Centre — running live across all 33 districts as a single, real-time source of truth. VSK staff monitor these dashboards continuously, flagging gaps and following up directly, while over 2,100 officials now conduct visits and facilitate block and cluster reviews, and more than 100 senior officials chair state and district meetings using this same live data. The results of this restructuring are tangible. School visits by officials rose 2.5 times to over 1.5 lakh in the 2025-26 academic year, reaching 98% of schools every quarter. Teaching-learning materials

now reach more than 90% of students within the first month of the academic year, and review meetings became more regular and learning-focused. This governance overhaul was, from the outset, anchored in independent, structured measurement of learning itself. Before 2022, Telangana had no reliable, independent way to measure early-grade learning outcomes — information came directly from schools, was unverified, and could not be trusted to inform district-level planning. To close this gap, SCERT Telangana, with technical support from Central Square Foundation, established a yearly sample-based assessment of Grade 2 children across all 33 districts. Conducted annually since the 2022-23 academic year, the assessment now covers approximately 8,500 children across more than 1,750 schools, evaluating skills across Telugu, Urdu, English, and Mathematics, including letter and word recognition, passage reading, number identification, and arithmetic. To ensure neutrality, assessments are carried out not by regular classroom teachers but by trained DIET students, sup-

ported by a two-tier training cascade in which state-level Master Trainers prepare these student-assessors at the district level. Between Academic Year 2024-25 and 2025-26, Telugu sentence reading improved by 6 percentage points and English sentence reading by 9 points, while Mathematics addition and subtraction scores rose by 8 and 6 points respectively. The most striking gains came from Narayanpet district, where Telugu word reading jumped by 19 points, English sentence reading by 29 points, and numeracy subtraction by 28 points — evidence of how independent, granular assessment data can drive sharply targeted district-level improvement. Telangana’s experience shows what becomes possible when a state stops treating school visits, review meetings, and learning data as three separate exercises and instead builds them into a single, connected system. By grounding that governance architecture in parallel independent, rigorous assessments of what children are actually learning, Telangana has built a model where oversight does not just record what is happening in schools — it drives what happens next.

Generali Central Life Unveils Sunehra Pension Plan to Strengthen Long-Term Retirement Security

Mumbai, July 2026: Generali Central Life Insurance Co. Ltd (GCLICL), a private leading life insurer, has launched the Sunehra Pension Plan. It is a participating (PAR), on-linked, pension, savings-oriented life insurance plan aimed at helping policyholders build a retirement corpus for their future financial security. Beyond its core insurance benefits, the plan also offers complimentary wellness services, reinforcing Generali Central Life Insurance’s commitment to delivering holistic value to its policyholders. Generali Central Life Insurance is a joint venture between global insurance leader Generali and Central Bank of India, combining international expertise with a local banking legacy. By 2050, India’s elderly population is expected to nearly double from 10.5% in 2022 to around 20.8% (1). At the same time, pension assets remain low at just 17% of GDP compared to ~80% in developed markets (2), underscoring the urgent need for stronger retirement preparedness. Recognizing this emerging reality, Generali Central Life Insurance’s Sunehra Pension Plan is designed to help individuals plan more effectively for their retire-

ment, enabling them to systematically build a corpus and secure long-term financial stability in their post-retirement years. As a PAR plan, bonuses under the Sunehra Pension Plan begin accruing from the first policy year, providing policyholders with a longer runway to benefit from compounding. The plan offers flexibility to choose a policy term ranging from 5 to 40 years, making it suitable for individuals across life stages, along with assured benefits on death or vesting. It also provides liquidity through partial withdrawals in case of financial emergencies, multiple premium payment options including Single Pay, Limited Pay, or Regular Pay throughout the policy term and the ability to enhance protection through optional riders, enabling a comprehensive and adaptable retirement planning solution. The plan provides guaranteed benefits under two scenarios. If the policyholder survives until the end of the policy term, they receive a vesting payout, which is the higher of the Sum Assured on Vesting (along with any accrued bonuses) or 105% of the total premiums paid, forming a strong base for retirement income. In the

unfortunate event of the policyholder’s demise during the term, the nominee is entitled to receive the higher of the Assured Benefit on death (plus any accrued bonuses) or 105% of the total premiums paid. At vesting, surrender, or in case of a death claim, the payout can be used in a few ways. The customer can purchase an annuity (immediate or deferred) from Generali Central Life Insurance or another insurer, take a part of the amount as a lump sum and use the rest to generate regular income, or, in the event of a death claim, withdraw the entire amount as a lump sum. The Sunehra Pension Plan goes beyond long-term wealth creation by offering policyholders a range of complimentary wellness services such as discounted annual health checkups, reduced rates on diagnostic lab tests, second medical opinions via teleconsultation, and online physician consultations. These additions underline Generali Central Life Insurance’s commitment to keeping policyholders engaged and supported throughout the policy tenure and delivering value that extends well beyond financial coverage.

UJJIVAN SMALL FINANCE BANK LAUNCHES MUTUAL FUND DISTRIBUTION SERVICES

July 2026: Ujjivan Small Finance Bank recently launched its Mutual Fund distribution services, marking a significant milestone in the Bank’s journey towards offering comprehensive banking solutions. This offering is designed to provide customers with a seamless and digitally enabled investment experience that is supported by curated fund options, simplified onboarding processes along with in-depth analytics for better financial planning. The platform offers easy onboarding with minimal customer input, multi-channel access through Internet Banking, Mobile Banking, and RM channel. Ujjivan Small Finance Bank has partnered with leading AMC’s to offer customers a wide range of investment options. Commenting on the launch Mr. Hitendra Jha, Head of Retail Liabilities - TASC & TPP, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank said,

Highlights

■ Ujjivan Small Finance Bank recently launched its Mutual Fund distribution services, marking a significant milestone in the Bank’s journey towards offering comprehensive banking solutions.

“At Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, we are committed to empowering our customers with accessible and transparent wealth creation opportunities. The launch of our Mutual Fund distribution platform marks an important milestone in our journey of providing comprehensive financial solutions. With a seamless digital experience, wide range of mutual fund offerings across channels, we aim to simplify investing and help customers make informed financial decisions aligned with their

goals.”

About Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited is a Scheduled Commercial Bank serving ~1 Cr+ customers through 776 branches across 335 districts in 26 states and Union Territories, supported by robust digital channels. The Bank offers a diversified portfolio spanning across Affordable Housing, MSME, Agri, Vehicle, Gold, Micro-Mortgage, FIG, and Microfinance (group and individual) loans. As of March 31, 2026, Ujjivan’s gross loan book stood at 40,655 Cr, with deposits of 45,668 Cr and a Net worth of 6,816 Cr. The Bank is rated AA- (Stable) for long-term facilities and A1+ for short-term instruments by CARE Ratings and CRISIL, respectively, reflecting the sustained strength of the banks performance and balance sheet.

WELFARE CUTS: WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING WITH PIP AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT?



A key disability benefit is "not fit for purpose" and requires fundamental change, a review has said. Disability Minister Sir Stephen Timms has been leading a review into Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and his comments came as its interim report was published. The review was commissioned by the government last year after it was forced to water down planned cuts to benefits in the face of fierce opposition from backbench Labour MPs. What is PIP and what is it worth? PIP is paid to 3.7 million people with a long-term physical or mental health condition in England and Wales. It is not linked to someone's

savings or income and does not affect other benefits, or the benefit cap. People can get PIP if they are working. PIP includes a daily living component and a mobility component. Claimants may be eligible for one or both. The daily living payments are: a standard rate of £76.70 per week an enhanced rate of £114.60 per week The mobility payments - which are not affected by the changes - are: a standard rate of £30.30 per week an enhanced rate of £80.00 per week What is happening to PIP? In March 2025, the government announced plans to tighten daily living assessments for both current and future PIP claimants.

INDIA IS ADDING BIOFUELS TO PETROL – BUT MANY DRIVERS ARE UNHAPPY

=India’s decision to increase the share of biofuels blended with petrol is facing ire from motorists who question its viability in a market where a majority of vehicles are not yet designed for it. The world’s largest two-wheeler market and third-largest car market, is trying to reduce its dependence on imported oil and cut carbon emissions. It began blending ethanol - made from crops such as sugarcane and maize - into petrol in the mid-2000s and has steadily increased the proportion ever since. Complaints intensified in April this year when India made E20 - petrol blended with 20% ethanol - the standard fuel at every pump, replacing the 10% blend that most vehicles are designed to use. Although unblended petrol is still available, it is often 40-50% more expensive than E20, depending on the state, and many motorists are unaware they can ask for it. Over the past few months, consumers have flooded social media with complaints of engine wear, lower fuel efficiency and reduced performance. Last week, several motorists joined a protest in Delhi, organised by an entre-



preneur who often backs the opposition Congress party in TV debates, accusing the government of unilaterally imposing E20 and leaving them with higher servicing costs and little choice at fuel stations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government has dismissed the complaints as “misleading” and “social media misinformation”. In a statement last month, the government said the fuel was rolled out after extensive testing and does not damage engines. It has also issued statements on the benefits of E20 and to bust what it called the “more colourful myths that have circulated on social media”. The government has also enlisted experts and automakers to defend E20.

Last weekend, in an unusual show of unity, six automakers joined a government press conference to say that years of testing and service data showed no evidence of widespread vehicle damage from the mandatory 20% ethanol blend. Rahul Bharti, senior executive officer for corporate affairs at Maruti Suzuki, said that India’s largest carmaker had serviced more than 15 million older vehicles which were not E20 compliant but found no fuel-related fault. The automakers did admit that the use of E20 had led to a 3-3.5% drop in fuel efficiency due to lower energy content in ethanol. Some estimates, however, say the actual drop in efficiency could be higher, between 4-12%.

Democrat Graham Platner suspends campaign for key US Senate race after assault allegation



Democrat Graham Platner has suspended his campaign for US Senate in Maine, following a series of scandals that included a woman accusing him of sexual assault. In the days since the accusation was made, Democrats have called on him to drop out of the race considered pivotal to their chances of gaining control of the US Senate. In a video posted online, Platner said his decision was not an admission of guilt but due to Democrats' threats to cut off campaign support. He called the assault allegation "false". He said he would officially file to withdraw from the race once he's assured his replacement in the race against Republican Susan Collins is selected in a "transparent and democratic" way. "We're suspending campaign operations," he said in an 11-minute video posted to X, adding that he would file his paperwork to withdraw only after he was assured the process to replace him would be "open and democratic moving forward". Platner added that he is not "trying to dictate to anyone who it should be or

how we get there". "But I will say this: it needs to be open, transparent, and democratic. It needs to be reflecting the will and the values of the people that built this movement," he said. Under state law, Platner has to officially drop out by 13 July for a replacement name to be put on the ballot. The race is one of several pivotal to Democrats eyeing a long-shot bid to flip control of the Senate in November's congressional elections, commonly called the midterms. Maine is considered a must-win state for Democrats to take the majority in the Senate. But it's an uphill battle. The party must flip Collins' seat, hold on to all their existing seats and gain three more in the November midterm election. Who is Graham Platner? Platner, an oyster farmer and military veteran, rocketed to the top of the Democratic field with a message of plain-spoken populism. He championed progressive policies like universal health care and affordable housing, and won over many frustrated Democratic voters with his critique of the party's establishment.



■ Iran launches more strikes after accusing US of striking near nuclear plant

Ukraine strikes Russian ships near Crimea, escalating attacks on fuel supplies

Ukraine's military has intensified its attacks near Russian-annexed Crimea, following up strikes on Russia's land corridor to the peninsula by targeting maritime supply routes as well. Ukraine's drone force commander Robert Brovdi, also known as Magyar, says at least 25 ships have been hit and set on fire over the past four days in the Sea of Azov, the inland sea linked to the Black Sea by the Kerch Strait. Such losses in so short a time are a clear blow to Russia's naval capability as well as Vladimir Putin's guarantee of maintaining fuel supplies. These attacks appear to be the latest phase of Ukraine's self-declared "logistics lockdown" which aims to choke off supplies and routes into and out of



occupied Crimea. Ukraine's military talks of 36 ships hit and that most belong to Russia's "shadow fleet" of commercial oil tankers. The exact number is unclear as some ships may have been hit more than once and not all the strikes have been confirmed independently. The sight of tankers loitering in the Sea of Azov off the north-eastern coast of occupied

Crimea is common, as there is an onshore oil loading facility at Kerch port on the peninsula itself. Kerch port was attacked by Ukraine last month and BBC Verify's analysis of satellite imagery shows the number of tankers in this area reduced in the days that followed. Night-time footage of the latest strikes began appearing on social media early on Tuesday, and Brovdi detailed strikes every day between 6 and 9 July. The governor of Russia's Rostov region, Yuri Slyusar, said two empty tankers were attacked on Wednesday in Taganrog Bay in the north-east corner of the Sea of Azov, although they were still burning on Thursday. Brovdi says two tankers attacked earlier in the week were each carrying about 7,000 tons of fuel from the Taganrog area to Crimea. One satellite image captured on Wednesday shows a large plume of smoke rising from one ship around 2.5 miles (4.2 km) off the Crimean coast. Data from Nasa suggests the fire had been raging from that spot since 6 July and likely a result of the first wave of strikes claimed by Ukraine's drone forces.

Trump 'immediately' asking US Supreme Court to reconsider birthright citizenship case



President Donald Trump has said he will "immediately" ask the US Supreme Court to rehear a case challenging birthright citizenship in the US. It comes a week after the high court ruled that those born in the US have a constitutional right to citizenship, rejecting Trump's executive order that sought to restrict the 150-year-old policy. While the Supreme Court allows for such a request, the high court has rarely ever granted a rehearing. The last time a decided case was reheard was some 60 years ago. "This miscarriage of justice will destroy America if they don't change their absolutely insane decision," Trump wrote on social media on Wednesday. The high court's rules allow for a losing party to formally file a request for a rehearing within 25 days. A majority of the nine-member court would have to approve granting a rehearing. The 30 June ruling to uphold birthright citizenship marked a setback for the president's immigration agenda, though it was welcomed by civil rights groups. In a 6-3 decision,

Chief Justice John Roberts ruled that children born in the US "to parents unlawfully or temporarily present" are "citizens at birth" under the 14th amendment of the US Constitution. Trump had sought to limit the right through an executive order, arguing that the children of undocumented immigrants and some temporary visitors were not "subject to the jurisdiction thereof", and thus not eligible for birthright citizenship. Five of the justices, including Chief Justice Roberts, agreed that Trump's executive order violates the Constitution's 14th Amendment. Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote separately to say he believed Trump's order is in violation of federal law. After the ruling was issued, Trump vowed to continue to fight to end birthright citizenship through legislation, which would need passage through the US Congress. The US has granted citizenship to everyone born in the country since 1868, with the right enshrined in the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution, and bolstered by later US Supreme Court rulings.

Uganda judges push back against lawyers' bid to scrap 'colonial titles'

Uganda's judiciary has pushed back against a directive by the country's lawyers' association instructing its members to stop addressing judges as "My Lord" or "My Lady" and to abandon the longstanding practice of bowing before them. In the directive, the Uganda Law Society (ULS) said such "feudal and colonial honorifics" elevate judicial officers above citizens, "who are in reality their employers". But judiciary spokesperson James Ereemye told the BBC that the ULS had no authority to tell judges "what to do or say" and would continue to "demand the known decorum" from lawyers. Like many former British colonies, Uganda inherited its legal system and many courtroom traditions from the UK. The ULS, the professional body which represents advocates, said the "archaic" colonial structure had contributed to the "failure" of Uganda's judicial system. The society said colonial courtroom practices "force Ugandans into postures of humiliation as the powerful enjoy comfort and deference". "The practice of bowing or any other form of physical subservience before judicial officers is henceforth prohibited for all members of the Uganda Law Society," it said in a statement signed by its president Isaac Ssemakadde. It added that as part of reforms aimed at "decolonising justice



and restoring dignity to the people", lawyers should stop addressing judges and magistrates with titles such as "My Lord", "Your Lordship", "My Lady" and "Your Worship". Instead, lawyers should use plain forms of address such as "Mr Justice", "Madam Justice", "Mr Judge", "Madam Judge", "Mr Magistrate" or simply refer to judicial officers by their surnames where appropriate. "All advocates and litigants appearing before any court or tribunal shall stand upright and speak as free citizens," the ULS added. Responding to the directive, Ereemye, the judiciary spokesperson, said the courts were an independent arm of government and could not be instructed by

any outside body. He dismissed the ULS as "just a section of young people who have failed to know the principles of agenda setting in management and administration". "If you have a point, you use the appropriate forum for discussion and when you make a good case, it forms part of the policy or the policy," added Ereemye. Across Africa, lawyers and other legal practitioners have long debated whether colonial-era courtroom traditions, including wigs and robes, should be abandoned as part of broader efforts to reform judicial systems. In 2011, Kenya's then-Chief Justice Willy Mutunga criticised the judges' dress code and chose to take his oath of office in a suit.

STARMER GIFTED GUN AND AMMUNITION BY TURKISH PRESIDENT AT NATO



Sir Keir Starmer was given a personalised revolver with live ammunition as a gift by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during the Nato summit. The firearm, engraved with the prime minister's name, was one of a series of similar gifts presented to the leader of each country who attended the event in Ankara. Sir Keir's revolver has not been brought back to the UK and remains with British officials in Turkey. It is expected to be decommissioned before it is returned, meaning it will no longer be capable of firing live ammunition. Erdogan waived export controls on the gift but it was left in Turkey

because it is illegal to import a live firearm into the UK. Downing Street has not released a picture of the revolver. At the summit, Sir Keir signed a defence agreement with Erdogan which will pave the way for closer intelligence sharing between the countries. Speaking after the summit, Sir Keir said he believed the alliance was stronger and more united following the gathering. "This has been a good summit. We achieved what we wanted to achieve, which is unity. "So important we have that, particularly with the conflicts going on in Ukraine and the conflicts in Iran," he added.



Factory fire kills at least 28 in China's 'shoe capital'

A country that made huge progress on measles now reports 120,000 cases

"I have never seen an outbreak this huge," says paediatrician Dr Mohammed Golam Mawla, as we look around a measles ward in the Bangladeshi city of Mymensingh. Until March this year, Bangladesh had made "substantial progress" towards eliminating measles, according to the World Health Organisation. Vaccination rates had been higher than 90% until recently. But that progress has quickly and suddenly come undone. Since March, government figures show nearly 750 people, mostly children, have died from the highly contagious disease, which spreads easily through breathing, coughing or sneezing. The death toll includes confirmed and suspected cases of measles. But Unicef says the true



numbers are likely to be higher, given the sudden surge, an overwhelmed health system and difficulties in gathering data. Those numbers are made real by the dozens of families around us who have no choice but to lie on blankets on the floor, in the hallway. The ward at Medical College Hospital is at more than double its capacity, with nearly 130 patients in just 32 rooms.

Four-month-old Arafat is one of them. His nose is too small for oxygen tubes to sit comfortably so doctors have bandaged and taped them into place. "We have been in the hospital for about 15 days now, but my baby isn't getting any better," his father, Mohammad Alam Mia, tells us. His baby is writhing in the heat and struggling to breathe. Arafat's parents travelled

nearly 10 hours to the hospital. His father vomited and fainted in the ambulance, as his first child became unresponsive. Doctors diagnosed Arafat with pneumonia and heart failure, both complications of measles. The little money Mohammad has is not enough for his treatment, and he's been forced to borrow from neighbours. Arafat is one of Bangladesh's more than 120,000 suspected and confirmed measles cases since cases spiked in mid-March, according to government figures. "This disease was under control in our country," says Mawla. Vaccines are highly effective. "Why did this suddenly happen?" Miguel Mateos Muñoz, Unicef's spokesperson in Bangladesh, puts it down to a "perfect storm" of several factors.

ARE ARGENTINA BEING TREATED FAVOURABLY AT WORLD CUP?

Argentina are throwing everything at the defence of their World Cup title - and they have needed to. After being expected to steam-roller past Cape Verde and Egypt in the first two knock-out rounds, La Albiceleste had to fight tooth and nail for 3-2 victories. But the win over Egypt came with an edge as the African nation asked Fifa to kick the officials in charge of their last-16 defeat out of the tournament. Egypt have alleged bias in favour of Argentina and favouritism towards their star player, Lionel Messi. After the game, coach Hossam Hassan said Egypt had been "treated unfairly" and "suffered injustice". Hassan went on to allege some kind of bias from Fifa. "Perhaps they wanted to keep the world champion in the competition. Perhaps they wanted Messi to stay in the running," he said. BBC Sport examines whether there is anything in the conspiracy theory that every-



thing is being set up for Argentina to succeed. Is there any merit to Egypt's complaints? It is easy to understand why Egypt would feel so frustrated after Tuesday's 3-2 defeat. The Africans had led 2-0 with 11 minutes to play, on the brink of a historic first-ever quarter-final appearance. But it all went wrong as Argentina stormed back to turn the

game on its head and score the winner in stoppage time. Egypt say there was something more suspect at play. They put their exit down to "serious refereeing mistakes" and "double standards" from French referee Francois Letexier and his team. The Pharaohs had a goal ruled out through a video assistant referee (VAR) intervention. They also

claim Argentina's winner should have been disallowed, and a penalty awarded to them instead. Mostafa Zico's brilliant goal was chalked off after Marwan Attia was penalised for stepping on the foot of Lisandro Martinez at the start of the move. It was controversial, but they were leading 1-0 and did score a second goal nine minutes later. You cannot prove the

game would have taken a different path had Zico's goal stood. Egypt believed there were two potential penalty claims in their favour before Enzo Fernandez headed home the clinching goal. Hamdi Fathy went to ground claiming he was held by Alexis Mac Allister, which was unclear on replays, while Mohamed Salah felt he was tripped by Julian Alvarez. There were some similarities between the Martinez and Salah situations, with foot-on-foot contact, but not enough to constitute a penalty. Egypt stood a better chance of getting the goal chalked off if Salah had been outside the area. The VAR would merely be judging a foul - as was the case with Martinez - rather than a penalty. Controversial? Absolutely. But it is hardly proof of a conspiracy in favour of Messi. Take a look at the appointments for Thursday's quarter-final between France and Morocco.

"VERY BIG MOMENT FOR US": India Women Captain Harmanpreet Kaur Ahead Of Lord's Test Against England

With the historic Lord's Test against England beginning on Friday, India captain Harmanpreet Kaur called it a "very big moment" for her side, saying a victory at the iconic venue would not only help erase the disappointment of their early T20 World Cup exit but also become a landmark achievement in the team's history. It has taken 142 years for Lord's to stage its first women's Test since hosting its inaugural men's Test, making the landmark fixture a long-overdue milestone. The historic occasion has drawn significant attention in the build-up to the match. After India's group-stage exit from the T20 World Cup in England and Wales, a victory at the iconic Lord's could provide the perfect morale boost. Harmanpreet acknowledged as much, saying a win at the hallowed venue would be a special moment for the team. "I think this Test match is a very big moment for us because if we win this Test, it



can be very good for the team. Because right now, you know, after the T20 World Cup, everybody was very sad that we couldn't give our best," the skipper said at the pre-match media interaction. "...in patches we did well, but unfortunately as a team, we couldn't do so well (in T20 WC). But through this Test match, we can cover a lot of things. We can bring that confidence back. Then you feel so strong, you feel, you know, you're the best team in the

world," Harmanpreet said, adding that she hopes the Lord's Test will mark a fresh start for the side. She hoped every player would contribute and back one another to make the historic outing memorable. "Sometimes, you feel a little low when things don't go your way. So, I think, this Test match is very important for us. If we play together and support each other, and win our team at that time, I think this victory can bring us a lot of confidence back.

Egypt Coach Shouts At Lionel Scaloni After Heated FIFA World Cup Clash. Argentina Boss Does This

The controversy surrounding Argentina's thrilling 3-2 win over Egypt in the FIFA World Cup 2026 Round of 16 is showing no signs of slowing down. While Argentina came back from two goals down to register a sensational win, Egypt's players and coaching staff were left fuming over some of the refereeing decisions in the match. In a new video that has surfaced on social media, Egypt head coach Hossam Hassan was seen shouting at FIFA officials once the game ended. Hassan, along with some members of his coaching staff, was having a heated chat with the officials when Argentina head coach Lionel Scaloni walked past them without engaging. In the video, Hassan was seen animatedly screaming at



Scaloni as well. However, Scaloni did not react and quietly made his way back to the dressing room at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta. Meanwhile, the Egyptian Football Association (EFA) said Wednesday it "cannot remain silent" after what it believes was unfair and biased officiating in Egypt's 3-

2 round of 16 loss against Argentina on Tuesday. Egypt coach Hossam Hassan and several players criticized the officiating after being left in disbelief as Argentina scored three unanswered goals in 13 minutes to pull off one of the biggest comebacks in World Cup history. "Defending the rights and interests of the Egyptian national team is not

a matter that can be ignored, minimized, or treated as secondary," the EFA said in a statement. "It is a responsibility that we carry with full conviction and determination." FIFA's chief of refereeing Pierluigi Collina, in a statement issued later Wednesday, said while constructive discussion about decisions would always be part of football, "unfounded allegations have no place in our sport." "Nobody can question the integrity of the FIFA World Cup match officials," he said. "When this happens, it may provoke reactions that lead to threats against them and their families. This is not right." The EFA said that the referee failed to use the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system appropriately, leading to the loss to Argentina.

R Ashwin Reminds Gautam Gambhir Of Comments On Sai Sudharsan: "Where Has Sanju Samson Fallen?"

The constant chopping and changing in the Indian team has left a lot to be desired. Yes, emerging stars like Vaibhav Sooryavanshi do need playing time and opportunities to continue their growth, but is it fair to drop a player like Sanju Samson - the man who was India's Player of the Tournament in the T20 World Cup 2026 earlier this year? Ravichandran Ashwin, one of the most passionate cricketers turned pundit, hit the nail on the head as he called out the dangerous 'chop-and-change' culture he is seeing in the Indian team. Speaking to Vimal Kumar in a video on his YouTube channel, Ashwin staged a skit on the video-blogging platform, explaining what



his conversation would be with the selectors who had dropped him from the tour of Zimbabwe: "I don't want any rest. If I want to, I will bring my mother, father, and wife along with me to Zimbabwe. I want to play there. I have never been to Bulawayo. They are a proud cricketing nation. I saw in 1999, Zimbabwe beat India in the World Cup. I

want to take revenge for that. Please take me there, I don't want to rest." Adopting a more serious tone as the conversation progressed, Ashwin asked who was going to be the next player to be dropped, now that India have lost two games in a row against England. "Who is next?" Ashwin asked bluntly, questioning who would be

dropped next now that the team have lost two consecutive matches against England. "After those two losses in Ireland and a loss of form, they have made Sanju Samson sit out. Now, we have lost two in England. So, who is next? This is really wrong. I really hope the Indian cricketers don't find themselves in an insecure spot. I previously spoke about Suryakumar Yadav [being dropped from the squad]. Players will go insular; they will start thinking about themselves more than the team. In T20 cricket, that is disastrous. If batters start thinking 'if I don't score runs, I might be benched', then they will start playing for their places. That is extremely dangerous."

France Coach Responds To FIFA's All-Argentine Referee Panel For Morocco Quarter-Final

Ahead of his side's FIFA World Cup quarterfinal against Morocco, France head coach Didier Deschamps feels totally unbothered by the appointment of Argentinian officials for the match, saying that their opponent is Morocco, not the officials, and he trusts them. In one of the most mouth-watering clashes of the tournament, an unstoppable-looking Kylian Mbappe-led France will take on Morocco, the 2022 semifinalists, the first to finish in the final four by an African nation. Having already eliminated the Netherlands from the tournament during the round of 32 clash on penalties, the Achraf Hakimi-led side aims to do the same to France, although it would not be easy as an attacking line-up of Mbappe, hat-trick hero Ousmane Dembele,



assist-machine Michael Olise and Bradley Barcola is extremely dangerous. France has scored 14 goals so far, more than any other team in this tournament. While the match, a repeat of the 2022 edition semifinal, is an exciting one, one major talking point of the match is the appointment of all-Argentinian officials for the match, including assistants, reserve assistant and fourth official alongside the

main on-pitch official Facundo Tello. However, Deschamps does not see any problem with it, saying, as quoted by ESPN, "We have to deal with it. I trust the referees. Our opponent is Morocco, not the referee." Both teams have developed a rivalry ever since the Lionel Messi-led side beat France in the 2022 final despite a hat-trick from Kylian Mbappe, and with the form both teams are in, a repeat of the 2022 epic looks like a huge possibility. The backup goalie Robin Riserer also has put his trust in the official, saying that the "certain bitterness" between both teams is a "part of the game". "There has been a certain bitterness [between France and Argentina] for a few years now since the last final, but that's part of the game," Riserer said.

BRITAIN'S WILDCARD ARTHUR FERY SETS UP WIMBLESAN SEMI-FINALS VS ALEXANDER ZVEREV, MARTA KOSTYUK ADVANCES

British wildcard Arthur Fery extended his sensational Wimbledon run into a semi-final against French Open champion Alexander Zverev, after Marta Kostyuk set up a women's last-four clash against Linda Noskova on Wednesday. Fery, the world number 114, dismantled Roland Garros runner-up Flavio Cobolli 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), 6-0 to become the first Wimbledon wildcard to reach the men's last four since Goran Ivanisevic won the 2001 title. Incredibly, Fery is just two victories away from emulating Ivanisevic and becoming the first British man to win Wimbledon since Andy Murray in 2016. "It gets better and better every match. It's incredible. I just can't believe it," Fery said to his adoring new fans, who created a partisan atmos-



phere on Centre Court. He is the third-lowest ranked man since 1985 to reach the Wimbledon semis, after world number 237 Vladimir Voltchkov in 2000 and world number 125 Ivanisevic in 2001. Zverev romped to a 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 victory over sixth seed Taylor Fritz, making his first semi-final at the All England Club by snapping a seven-match losing streak against the American. The German second seed had never got past the

Wimbledon last 16 in nine previous trips to south-west London. "I'm extremely happy to be in the semi-finals, especially against Taylor who I haven't beaten in two years," he said.

MUCHOVA BEATS GAUFF IN EPIC TIE- BREAK TO REACH FINAL



Karolina Muchova saved a match point before coming through an epic deciding-set tie-break to beat Coco Gauff and reach a first Wimbledon final. Muchova started the semi-final the stronger of the pair but Gauff hit back, and they could barely be separated in a high-quality third set. Two o t i m e Grand Slam c h a m p i o n Gauff came back from 4-1 down in the resulting tie-break and had match point on her serve, before sending a simple forehand into

the net tape. Muchova also missed her first match point but it was she who stood triumphant at the end after an astonishing 6-2 1-6 7-6 (12-10) win in sweltering conditions on Centre Court. The Czech 10th seed had reached four major semi-finals before Thursday's match against Gauff, but only once made the final - at the 2023 French Open, where she was beaten in three sets by Iga Swiatek. But Muchova will get another shot at Grand Slam glory on Saturday, where she will face either compatriot Linda Noskova or Ukraine's 12th seed Marta Kostyuk. After clinching victory, Muchova buried her face in her towel as she took a moment to absorb the enormity of her achievement.

Erling Haaland Gets Special Google Honour After World Cup Heroics - Try Searching His Name Now

If you type Erling Haaland on Google Search Engine today, you'll get a little surprise. The Norwegian forward, who has lit up the ongoing FIFA World Cup 2026 with seven goals in five matches, has earned himself a special search result on Google, who have paid tribute to Haaland with a unique feature on their search engine. When you enter Haaland's name on Google, it not only displays the usual links, but also generates a pop-up that has seven characters dressed in traditional Norwegian costume rowing across the bottom of the screen. The characters are accompanied by a drum sound that plays whenever the cursor moves across the screen.

Haaland also took to social media to inform fans about Google's special tribute to the star striker. "One thing to do today...search my name on Google," Haaland captioned the post with a winking emoji. Recently, Haaland surprised fans by releasing a remix of his old, viral rap song titled 'Kygo jo' with Norway DJ and music producer Kygo. Before Haaland became a goal-scoring juggernaut known for his Bundesliga and Premier League exploits for Borussia Dortmund and Manchester City, the Norway striker enjoyed a short stint as a rapper with his fellow national team under-17 teammates Erik Botheim and Erik Tobias

Sandberg, creating a collective named 'Flow Kingz'. Back in 2016, when a teenage Haaland was representing a club named Bryne in Norway, the trio released a song title 'Kygo jo'. Now, with Norway making their FIFA World Cup entry after 28 years and Haaland having smashed seven goals in his side's run so far, the song has found its way on social media's viral charts and has 8.9 million views on YouTube. The animation showed traditional Norwegian Vikings fiercely rowing a longboat across search screens, accompanied by the Norwegian word "Ro!" (Row!) in a rhythmic, booming drumbeat that synchronised perfectly with

the rowers' strokes to build tension and excitement. The Google Easter egg was a direct reference to Norway's viral "Viking Row" team celebration chant that Haaland has led on the pitch during the 2026 World Cup. This interactive Google feature served as a digital homage to both Haaland's personal heritage and the electric atmosphere surrounding the Norwegian national team.

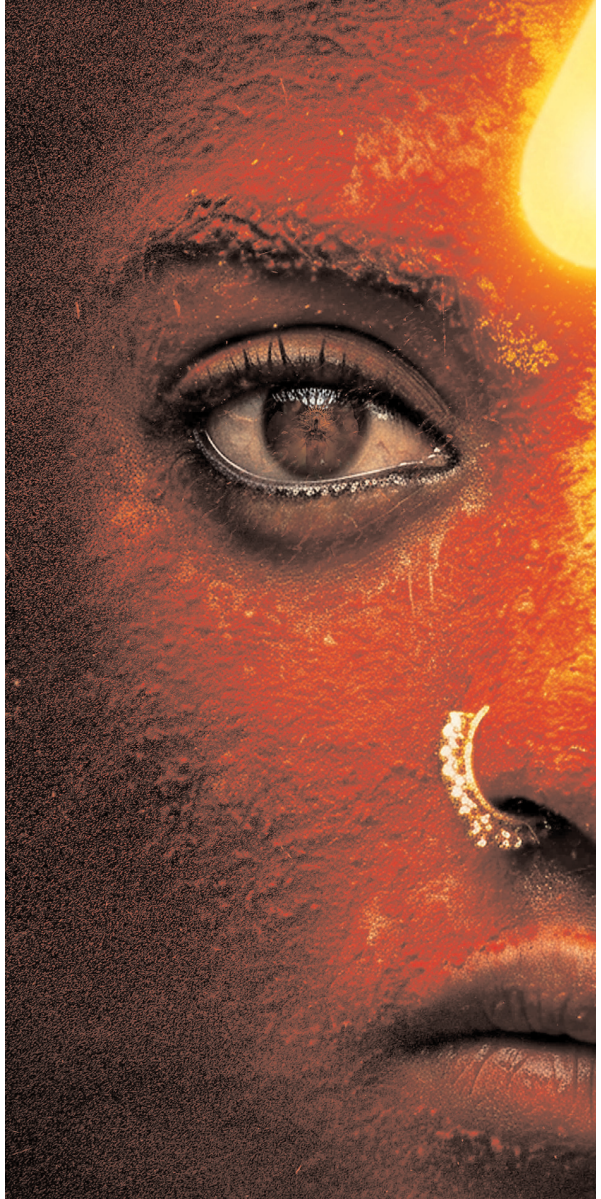


M.S. Raju's Mystic Divine Thriller 'AGADHA' Set for a Grand Worldwide Release on August 14

Acclaimed filmmaker M.S. Raju, who created a remarkable legacy as a producer, has crafted his latest directorial venture, 'AGADHA', as a spectacular visual wonder. This prestigious mystic divine thriller is all set for a grand worldwide release on August 14, 2026.

Presented by Ajay KR under the banner of Sri Adi Varaha Productions, the film is produced by Kashi Visalakshi Balusu. The teaser of AGADHA, released recently, created a sensation and generated tremendous excitement among audiences. Its stunning visuals, haunting background score, mysterious atmosphere, and grand production values received widespread appreciation from all sections of viewers. The teaser has already crossed 14 million views, reflecting the enormous anticipation surrounding the film.

Speaking about the film, director M.S. Raju said: "AGADHA is my dream project. What audiences saw in the teaser is only a small glimpse of the world we have created. The film has many more surprising elements that will leave viewers amazed. Every frame has been designed as a visual spectacle, while emotions remain the film's highest priority. Every artist and technician has delivered exceptional work. Kamakshi Bhaskarla, Shravan Reddy, Ulka Gupta, and Jovika Vijay Kumar have



all given extraordinary performances. Audiences will experience something truly unique in theatres. Blending mythological elements, mystery, thrilling moments, breathtaking

visuals, and deep emotions, AGADHA promises to be an unforgettable emotional roller-coaster ride. The film will have a grand worldwide release on August 14, 2026.

SHARVARI WAGH BRINGS BLING BLISS



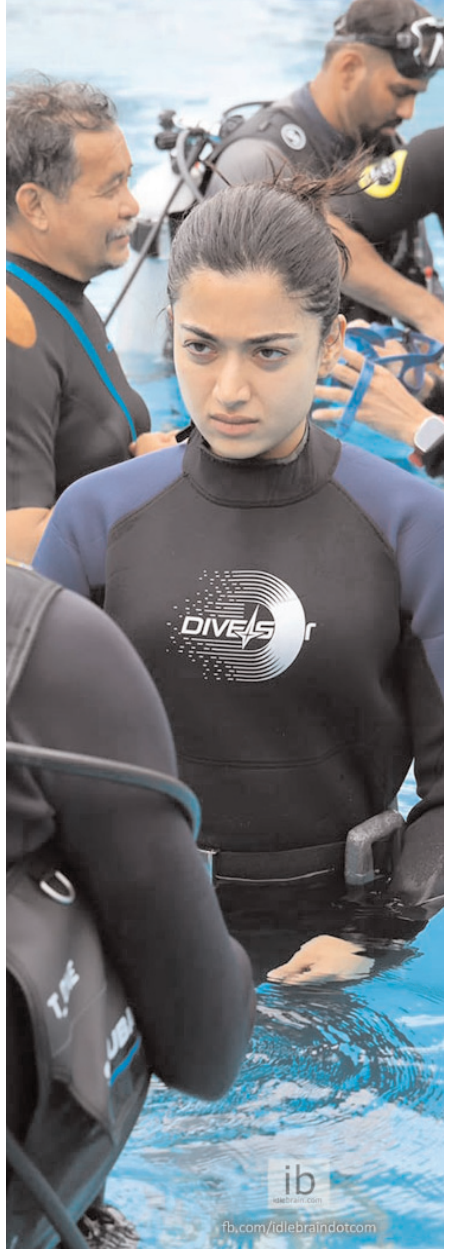
Sharvari Wagh is enjoying a big moment as Alpha, co-starring Alia Bhatt, continues its theatrical run. The action thriller has maintained a steady hold at the box office and is now inching closer to

the ₹75 crore worldwide mark after six days, keeping the momentum alive. Amid the film's promotions, Sharvari grabbed attention in a shimmering golden saree paired with a stylish embellished blouse.

Rashmika Mandanna's Gruelling India's First Female Underwater Fight Sequence for 20-Hour Across 2 Days For Mysaa, Without A Body Double

National Crush Rashmika Mandanna is currently busy with Mysaa, the ambitious Pan-India action drama that promises to showcase the actress in her most physically demanding role yet. Ever since the film's powerful first glimpse was unveiled, curiosity has been steadily growing, but the effort Rashmika is putting in behind the scenes has taken the excitement to another level. Helmed by debutant director Rawindra Pulle and backed by Unformula Films, Mysaa presents Rashmika as a Gond tribal woman, a character that demands immense emotional depth, resilience, and uncompromising physicality. To convincingly step into the role, the actress underwent extensive preparation before the shoot began.

Now, Rashmika is taking her commitment a step further by performing some of the film's toughest and riskiest stunt sequences. The actress filmed a gruelling underwater sequence, spending nearly 20 hours underwater across two days while performing the challenging portions herself. This is India's First Female Underwater Fight Sequence by any actress in Indian Sequence. Despite the complexity and risks involved, Rashmika refused to use a body double, choosing instead to execute the sequence on her own to maintain the authenticity of the scenes. Her unwavering dedication left the film's technical team and underwater crew astonished. This underwater episode is not merely an action spectacle. Mounted on a grand scale, this is expected to emerge as one of the film's biggest visual highlights. Rahul Ravindra, Eshwari Rao play other prominent roles in the film. Shreyas P. Krishna handles the cinematography, while Jakes Bejoy composes the music. International stunt choreographer Kecha Khampakdee is overseeing the action for this ambitious film. With the shoot progressing at a brisk pace, the makers are now gearing up to unveil the film's teaser soon. If the effort



Rashmika has invested behind the scenes is any indication, Mysaa is shaping up to present the National Crush in a way audiences have never seen before.

Grand Launch of "Memu Kooda Cinema Teesinamuro" Song from Kotha Cinema

Ramagundam MLA Makkan Singh Raj Thakur, filmmaker Madhura Sreedhar Reddy, director Sailu Kompati, and actor Sagar attend as chief guests. A remarkable 100 newcomers are being introduced to Tollywood through this film. Proving that cinema is not confined to cities but thrives in villages too, debut director Azhar has made Kotha Cinema entirely with local talent from his hometown. One of the film's biggest highlights is that it introduces 100 fresh talents to the Telugu film industry. Starring Suresh and Rakesh in the lead roles, the film is written, directed, edited, and scripted by Azhar. Mohammed Wasim Akram, Sagi Sudheer Rao, and



Yadandla Satish Yadav are producing the film. The promotional song "Memu Kooda Cinema Teesinamuro...", written and composed by Charan Arjun, was launched grandly today in Hyderabad. Ramagundam MLA Makkan Singh Raj Thakur, producer-director Madhura Sreedhar Reddy, director Sailu Kompati, and actor R K Sagar Naidu

attended the event as chief guests.

Actress Kajal Aggarwal Creates Fresh Buzz With Glamour

Kajal Aggarwal is back to trending again after her latest pictures captivated fans across social media. Dressed in a graceful white outfit with warm-toned lighting, the actress exudes elegance, confidence, and timeless charm. Her effortless style and striking expressions have once again become the talk of the internet. Kajal recently emphasized that every individual's effort ultimately contributes to building a healthier nation, earning praise for promoting meaningful awareness while continuing to inspire her followers. As the stunning images circulate widely online, fans are flooding the comments with admiration, calling her one of the industry's most graceful stars. Kajal currently shoots NBK111 alongside Balakrishna, raising fans' excitement and expectations. Kajal Aggarwal recently turned 41 and she is absolutely not letting that number define her. The actress is currently busy shoot-

ing for NBK111, the upcoming film of Nandamuri Balakrishna which is very much in progress right now. A big project, a big hero and Kajal is right in the middle of it all. The actress has been posting pictures quite regularly on social media and her latest clicks are simply beautiful. She wore a white co-ord set with a cropped sleeveless top and flared wide leg trousers, both covered in cute nature embroidery of clouds, butterflies.

