

Women Safety Wing Launches Statewide 'Stand With Her' Campaign Through Master Trainer Programme

Hyderabad, TSIT: The Women Safety Wing (WSW), Telangana Police, organised a Training of Trainers (ToT) programme under its flagship 'Stand With Her' campaign at the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (NI-MSME), Yousufguda, to prepare Master Trainers for the statewide implementation of the initiative. Programme brought together lecturers and assistant professors from Government Degree Colleges and Universities across Telangana, who will now lead awareness programmes in their respective institutions to promote gender-sensitive and inclusive campuses.



Inaugural session was attended by Charu Sinha Director General, Women Safety Wing, Parimala Hana Nutan, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Women Safety Wing Dr.Rajendra Singh, Joint Director, Department of Education; Dr.Soundarya Joseph, Department of School Education; and Asiya Sherwani, Head of Training, Women Safety Wing. Addressing the participants, Charu Sinha emphasised that preventing gender-based violence

requires the active participation of men and boys and highlighted the crucial role educational institutions play in fostering equality, dignity and mutual respect.Dr. Rajendra Singh stressed the responsibility of teachers in nurturing values that create safe and respectful learning environments. The training included interactive sessions on gender sensitivity, identifying inappropriate behaviour, bystander intervention, facilitation techniques and practical strategies for implementing the campaign effectively in higher educational institutions.

KIMS restores child's eye function after rare surgery



Kurnool, July 17 (TSIT): Doctors at KIMS Hospitals, Kurnool, successfully restored the eyelid anatomy and tear drainage function of a six-year-old girl after performing a complex three-hour microsurgical reconstruction following a severe eye injury. Consultant Plastic Surgeon Dr. Navya Kothacheruvu said the

child suffered extensive eyelid lacerations and a rare canalicular injury after falling onto a gate while playing. Surgeons performed emergency microsurgery using specialised instruments and reconstructed the tear drainage channel with an Intracath stent. The child recovered without complications and regained normal eyelid function. Doctors urged parents to seek immediate specialist care for eye injuries to prevent lifelong complications.

Mangalya opens 32nd store in Hyderabad



Hyderabad, July 17: Mangalya Shopping Mall on Friday inaugurated its 32nd outlet at Dilksukhnagar, marking another milestone in its retail expansion. Actress Meenakshi Chaudhary inaugurated the new showroom and expressed confidence that the store would receive strong support from customers.Established in Warangal in 2012, Mangalya now operates across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The new outlet offers a wide range of apparel for men, women and children, including exclusive wedding collections, with prices ranging from Rs.99 to Rs.1 lakh. The management also announced plans to open 10 more stores and expand operations into Tamil Nadu.

Yashoda sets Guinness record for IBD awareness

Hyderabad, July 17: Yashoda Hospitals, Somajiguda has entered the Guinness World Records™ by conducting the world's largest awareness session on Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), with 578 participants attending both in person and online simultaneously. The initiative aimed to improve public awareness about IBD, encourage early recognition of symptoms and promote timely medical consultation. The record was officially verified by Guinness World Records™ adjudicator Rishi Nath, who presented the certificate to Dr. Kiran Peddi, Senior Gastroenterologist and Director, Centre for IBD, and Dr. S. Prashanth



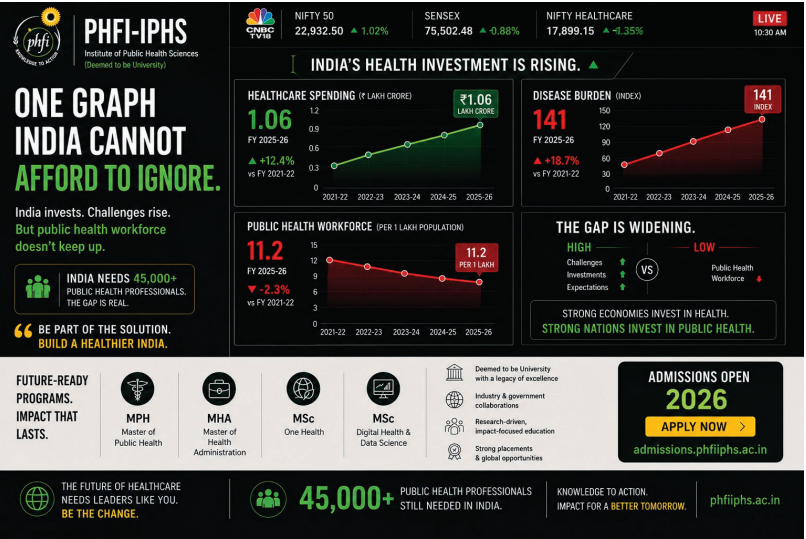
Reddy, Unit Head, Yashoda Hospitals, Somajiguda. Following the record-setting event, the hospital organised IBD Conclave 2.0, an international scientific conference attended by more than 300 delegates, including international faculty and over 50 national experts. The conclave focused on the latest advances in IBD treatment, including biologic therapies, advanced surgical techniques, intestinal ultrasound and the use of artificial intelligence in diagnosis and patient care. Dr. Kiran Peddi said the achievement reflects the hospital's commitment to patient-centric care, research and public awareness, while emphasising the importance of early diagnosis and con-

tinuous treatment for chronic bowel diseases. Yashoda Hospitals Director Dr. Pavan Gorukanti said the recognition highlights the institution's efforts to combine clinical excellence with medical education, research and community outreach. Congratulating the hospital, Guinness World Records™ adjudicator Rishi Nath described the initiative as a meaningful public health campaign that successfully combined large-scale community participation with medical awareness. He said the achievement had not only set a world record but also educated hundreds of people about IBD and its timely management.

PHFI-IPHS focuses on public health workforce

Hyderabad: India is investing in healthcare like never before. From Ayushman Bharat and the Digital Health Mission to AI-enabled healthcare, disease surveillance, pandemic preparedness, climate health and preventive care, the country is building a stronger healthcare system for the future. Yet, experts believe one major challenge could slow this progress—the shortage of trained public health professionals.

According to estimates by the PHFI Institute of Public Health Sciences (PHFI-IPHS), India currently requires more than 45,000 additional public health professionals to support its growing healthcare needs. While investments in healthcare infrastructure and services have increased significantly over the past few years, the availability of trained professionals capable of planning, managing and strengthening public health systems has not kept pace.Recognising this need, PHFI-IPHS, formerly known as the Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH), is preparing the next generation of public health professionals through multidisciplinary education, research and practical training. Recently recognised as a Deemed-to-be University under the Ministry of Education's Distinct Category of the UGC Regulations, PHFI-IPHS builds on the two-decade legacy of the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) in strengthening public health education, research and policy in the country. "India's healthcare ambitions require more than infrastructure. They require skilled public health professionals who can strengthen



health systems, shape evidence-based policies and improve healthcare delivery. PHFI-IPHS is committed to preparing professionals who can meet these emerging national and global health challenges," said a representative from PHFI-IPHS. Healthcare today extends well beyond hospitals and clinical care. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of professionals who can monitor disease outbreaks, analyse health data, design health programmes, develop policies and strengthen healthcare systems before crises emerge. As healthcare challenges continue to evolve, countries are increasingly investing in epidemiologists, health economists, implementation scientists, public health managers, digital health specialists and policy researchers capable of improving health outcomes at the population level.India is also entering a period where public health expertise will

play an increasingly important role. Rising healthcare expenditure, changing disease patterns, rapid urbanisation, climate-related health risks, ageing populations, antimicrobial resistance and digital transformation are creating new demands on the healthcare system. Experts say meeting these challenges requires professionals with expertise in disease surveillance, population health, health economics, healthcare management, digital health, public policy, community engagement, implementation research and environmental health. PHFI-IPHS believes that without this skilled workforce, even the best healthcare infrastructure cannot achieve its full potential. To help bridge this gap, PHFI-IPHS offers multidisciplinary programmes that reflect the changing nature of healthcare. These include the Master of Public Health (MPH), Master of Health Administration (MHA), MSc in One Health, and MSc in Digital Health & Data Science.

SRM University-AP unveils student-built air taxi DOXI

Amaravati, July 17 (TSIT): SRM University-AP has unveiled DOXI, an indigenous electric air taxi developed by 10 B.Tech students under Team Skyworks with mentor Dr. Pradyut Kumar Sanki. The eVTOL prototype features a 16-motor electric system, carbon-fibre frame, 80-kg payload capacity, 50 kmph top speed, 25-minute flight endurance and an operating cost of Rs.3.5 per km. Designed for urban mobility, air ambulance



services, emergency response and disaster relief, DOXI successfully demonstrated vertical take-off and landing during its launch. AP State Quantum Mission Director C.V. Sridhar and SRM University-AP Vice Chancellor Prof. Ch. Satish Kumar hailed the project as a major step in indigenous aerospace innovation and advanced air mobility.

NEET crisis sparks fresh calls for education reforms

New Delhi (TSIT): India's competitive examination system is facing renewed scrutiny following a student suicide linked to the NEET-UG examination, continuing allegations of exam irregularities, and education reform advocate Sonam Wangchuk's indefinite hunger strike demanding greater accountability in the country's examination process. An 18-year-old NEET aspirant from Faridabad, Haryana, allegedly died by suicide after estimating her score using the National Testing Agency's (NTA) provisional answer key. According to reports, the student was distressed after finding her expected marks lower than anticipated. The incident has once again highlighted the immense psychological pressure faced by students preparing for one of India's most competitive entrance examinations. Mental health experts have repeatedly warned that prolonged academic stress, fear of failure, uncertainty surrounding examination outcomes, and societal

expectations are contributing to growing emotional distress among students. The tragedy comes amid continuing controversy over NEET-UG, with allegations of question paper leaks, examination irregularities, legal disputes, re-tests and delays affecting admissions. The developments have raised concerns among students, parents and educators over the credibility of the country's medical entrance examination system. Meanwhile, educationist and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk has continued his indefinite hunger strike at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi in support of the youth-led Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), a satirical movement demanding accountability and reforms in competitive examinations. The protest has called for action over alleged examination irregularities, including the NEET paper leak controversy, and has also demanded the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. According to reports, Wangchuk's health has dete-

riorated as the fast has continued, with doctors monitoring his condition warning of potential health complications associated with prolonged fasting. The Union Government has informed the Delhi High Court that his medical condition is being regularly monitored. The ongoing developments have drawn widespread attention from students, parents, educators and civil society groups, many of whom have called for transparent investigations into examination irregularities, stronger safeguards against paper leaks, independent oversight of national examinations and enhanced mental health support for students.Education experts believe the present crisis extends beyond a single examination and underscores the need for systemic reforms to restore public confidence in India's examination system. They argue that ensuring fairness, transparency and student welfare must remain central to future education policies.

India, Japan agree on phased rollout of Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train

New Delhi: India and Japan have agreed to begin operations of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail corridor with Indian high-speed trains, while Japan's next-generation E10 series trains, currently under development, are expected to be introduced in the early 2030s. The decision follows progress in bilateral discussions on the ambitious high-speed rail project, with both countries reaffirming their commitment to launching services at the earliest. Construction of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train corridor has advanced rapidly, and the first section of the project is expected to become operational in 2027. Officials said the phased approach would allow commercial operations to



commence without waiting for the completion of the E10 series, which is still under development in Japan. The E10 series, regarded as Japan's next-generation Shinkansen train, is expected to be supplied to India in the early 2030s, further strengthening technological cooperation between the two countries. The move reflects the shared objective of India and Japan to expedite the implementation of the country's first high-speed rail project while ensuring a smooth transition to advanced rolling stock once the E10 trains become available.

Indian Silk Expo opens in Hyderabad

Rashmi Thakur to Inaugurate "Indian Silk Gallery Expo 2026" in Satya Sai Nagamam Wedding Season Special Silk Collection on Display from 15th to 22rd July 2026



Hyderabad (TSIT): Miss Asia International Rashmi Thakur inaugurated the Indian Silk Gallery Expo 2026 at Satya Sai Nigamam, Hyderabad, showcasing India's rich handloom heritage and wedding season silk collections. The eight-day exhibition, running till July 22, features over 80 stalls displaying Kanjeevaram, Gadwal, Banarasi, Tussar, Muga and Ikat silk sarees from leading weaving clusters across the country. Organised in association with the Handloom and Textiles Department, the expo aims to provide direct



market access to weavers, promote GI-tagged products and support the 'Vocal for Local' and 'Handloom to Global' initiatives. Entry to the exhibition is free.

Looting Farmers’ Land in the Name of Bidadi Satellite Township: BJP State President B.Y. Vijayendra Sounds Battle Cry Against Congress Government”

Bengaluru: The Congress government of the state and Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar are forcibly seizing the fertile lands of farmers in the Bidadi region in the name of a Satellite Township. To fill the stomach of the High Command, they have resorted to the real estate business,"_ alleged BJP State President B.Y. Vijayendra expressing strong outrage.

He was speaking at a massive protest rally organized by the Bharatiya Janata Party in support of the farmers of the Bidadi region. Congress' Madness and Double Standards in Snatching Farmers' Land

The Congress government of the state is committing atrocities by forcibly and compulsorily seizing farmers' lands in the Bidadi region. The government has completely failed to protect



the interests of the farmers who feed this nation. Poor farmer families who depend solely on agriculture are being pushed onto the streets after their 4-5 acres of land is taken away. However, there is no obstacle for these same Congress leaders and MLAs to own hundreds and thousands of acres of land in the Bidadi region, which exposes

their double standards.

Ignoring North Karnataka Farmers' Distress, Prioritizing Real Estate Business The Chief Minister has no time to solve the burning problems of farmers in North Karnataka or to respond to their distress. But he is showing keen interest only in real estate-based projects like the Bidadi Township

and Kanakapura Airport. To fulfill the promise he made to Congress High Command leader Priyanka Gandhi — "If you make me Chief Minister, I will build the Bidadi Township and provide an opportunity to DLF company"_ — D.K. Shivakumar is now hitting farmers where it hurts the most. Goondaism and Government Arrogance Against Farming Families

Goons are being sent overnight to the homes of innocent farmer families who refuse to give up their land, with threats like "You will not survive."_ On one hand, the Chief Minister claims that land will not be forcibly taken from farmers. On the other hand, the government is hatching conspiracies by filing false cases against farmers who are fighting for them and sending them to jail.

GBA polls by December-end, local body elections within March: CM D.K. Shivakumar

Cabinet expansion to be decided after consultations with party high command: Chief Minister

New Delhi : Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said discussions have been held with the Congress high command in New Delhi regarding the expansion of the State Cabinet. As AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge was unavailable today, the Chief Minister said he would meet him and proceed with the necessary preparations after receiving guidance from the party leadership.

He was speaking to the media after meeting AICC General Secretary in New Delhi. Local body elections by March-end

Responding to a question regarding the elections for the five Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) municipal corporations, the Chief Minister said that the Supreme Court was approached seeking time until December 31 to conduct the polls due to the ongoing



Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls. The Supreme Court has granted the extension.

He added that, besides the GBA elections, polls to district, taluk, gram panchayat and

municipal local bodies are expected to be completed by the end of March.

Opportunities for youth and new faces

The Chief Minister said the Congress would provide oppor-

tunities for youth and new faces in the forthcoming local body elections, from Gram Panchayats to municipal corporations. He added that the government is committed to implementing the spirit of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments to strengthen local self-governance and deepen decentralisation of power.

AICC office is our temple Describing the AICC office as a place of great significance for Congress workers, Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said, "The AICC office is like a temple for us. We have grown up in the party, and it is our duty to meet our party leaders there." Responding to questions on the BJP and JD(S) protest at Freedom Park over the proposed Bidadi Township project, the Chief Minister said he would address the issue separately.

ALLEN Bengaluru students Diganth BS has secured AIR-64 and Shreyankh J has secured AIR-94

Bengaluru | ALLEN Bengaluru students have once again proven their excellence in the NEET-UG 2026 results declared by the National Testing Agency (NTA). Allen Bengaluru classroom student, Diganth BS has achieved AIR 64 in NEET-UG 2026 results and Shreyankh J has secured AIR-94.

Allen South Zone Head, Mahesh Yadav said that Allen is known for its excellent results, and maintaining this reputation, Allen has achieved excellent results this year in NEET-UG 2026 as well. Yadav stated that overall, ALLEN South's stellar NEET UG 2026 performance was led by four outstanding classroom programme students who secured positions among the All India Top 100. Vanisha Satish (AIR 51), Diganth B S (AIR 64), Navithana B (AIR 88), and Shreyankh J (AIR 94) showcased the impact of ALLEN South's rigorous classroom coaching, consistent mentorship, and student-centric academic ecosystem.



Top Performers – NEET UG 2026 (Allen South)
AIR 51: Vanisha Satish (6-Year Classroom Student)
AIR 64: Diganth B S (2-Year Classroom Student)
AIR 88: Navithana B (5-Year Classroom Student)
AIR 94: Shreyankh J (6-Year Classroom Student)
National Results
5 Allen Students in Top 10 and 44 in Top 100
Allen Shines in NEET-UG 2026 Results

The National Testing Agency (NTA) declared the results for NEET-UG 2026—the country's biggest medical entrance exam—late Thursday night. Students from Allen Career Institute

have once again achieved success. Five Allen students have featured in the top 10 AIR Ranks, and based on results analyzed so far, 44 Allen students are in the top 100. Among the declared results, Aryan Gupta and Panshul Bansal jointly secured 715 out of 720 marks. Based on tie-breaker rule priorities, Aryan Gupta was awarded All India Rank 1, while Panshul Bansal secured All India Rank 2. Aryan Gupta is associated with Allen Career Institute through distance learning, whereas Panshul Bansal has been a regular classroom student at Allen for two years.

Additionally, Allen classroom student Ayush Bhalotia secured All India Rank 4 with a score of 710. Aryan Dubey, a student of Allen's online test series, achieved All India Rank 7, and Allen classroom student Gaurav Singh secured All India Rank 9.

Allen CEO Nitin Kukreja congratulated all the students on these outstanding results. Allen has once again demonstrated its excellence. Results analyzed so far show 5 Allen students in the top 10 and 44 in the top 100. Of these, 36 are classroom students, while 8 are from the Distance Learning Program (DLP) and online test series.

Repeated Examination Paper Leaks Are Betraying India’s Students: KPCC General Secretary S. Manohar

Bengaluru : Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) General Secretary S. Manohar has strongly condemned the repeated incidents of examination paper leaks across the country, describing them as a grave assault on the aspirations, confidence, and future of millions of students.

He stated that every examination paper leak not only compromises the integrity of the examination process but also inflicts deep emotional and psychological distress on students who spend months and years preparing with dedication and honesty.

S. Manohar said that the recurring failures in safeguarding examination papers have exposed serious shortcomings in the administration of the country's education system. Such repeated lapses have eroded public confidence in national examinations and created uncertainty among students and parents alike.

He emphasized that merit, hard work, and equal opportunity must remain the cornerstones of India's education



system, and no student should suffer because of administrative negligence or systemic failures. He further stated that Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan must accept moral responsibility for these repeated failures and resign immediately. According to him, accountability is an essential principle of democratic governance, and repeated examination failures cannot continue without those responsible being held answerable.

S. Manohar called upon the Central Government to immediately institute a comprehensive, impartial, trans-

parent, and time-bound investigation into every examination paper leak reported across the country. He demanded that all individuals, officials, institutions, and organized networks involved in these crimes be identified and prosecuted under the strictest provisions of law. He stressed that merely cancelling examinations or announcing fresh tests does not address the root cause of the problem, nor does it compensate students for the immense emotional, academic, and financial hardship they endure.

He expressed deep concern that administrative negli-

gence is placing the future of India's youth at risk. Students invest years of effort, sacrifice, and hope in preparing for competitive examinations. When question papers are leaked, their hard work is undermined, while dishonest practices are rewarded. Such incidents discourage deserving candidates and weaken public faith in the country's institutions.

Referring to the ongoing hunger strike by Sonam Wangchuk, S. Manohar said that his peaceful protest reflects the genuine concerns of students, parents, and responsible citizens who seek transparency, accountability, and integrity in public institutions. He urged the Central Government not to remain indifferent but to engage with him through meaningful and constructive dialogue.

He also appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene without delay, ensure that every necessary step is taken to safeguard Sonam Wangchuk's health and well-being, and initiate a democratic dialogue on the issues he has raised.

Raptee.HV Expands to Bengaluru with the T30, India’s First HV-TEC Motorcycle

Bengaluru : Raptee.HV, the Chennai-based OEM behind India's first motorcycle with Electric Car DNA, today announced its expansion to Bengaluru, marking its first step beyond its home market. The move brings the company's technology platform and customer-centric ownership experience to India's technology capital, as Raptee.HV enters the next phase of its national growth journey.

Over the last six years, Raptee.HV has reimaged electric motorcycling from first principles by developing HV-TEC, a platform that brings Electric Car DNA to motorcycles. Backed by more than 200 patents, the company's vertically integrated technology platform spans battery systems, power electronics, embedded software and vehicle intelligence developed with a singular focus on solving real-world rider challenges around charging convenience, performance, reliability and long-term ownership confidence.

At the heart of this expansion is the new Bengaluru Experience Centre, where customers can explore the technology behind the T30, experience



the motorcycle through test rides, and benefit from dedicated service support and after-sales care delivering an ownership experience built around convenience and long-term support.

Commenting on the expansion, Dinesh Arjun, CEO & Co-Founder of Raptee.HV, said:

"Bengaluru is a city that appreciates meaningful innovation, making it the perfect place for our first expansion. At Raptee.HV, we've always believed that technology is only as good as the experience it creates for customers. That's why every decision we've made from our Electric Car DNA platform to our dedicated customer support and Roadside Assistance has been guided by one objective: giving riders complete confidence at every stage of their ownership journey."

At the heart of this experience Centre is the Raptee.HV T30, built on HV-TEC, compatible with the widely adopted CCS2 charging standard, the motorcycle gives riders access to more than 30,000 public charging points across India while also supporting fast home charging, making every day commuting and long-distance travel significantly more convenient.

Priced at Rs.2.39 lakh (ex-showroom), the Raptee T30 delivers a 150 km real-world range and accelerates from 0-60 km/h in under 3.5 seconds. It is backed by an 8-year/80,000 km battery warranty, a 3-year vehicle warranty, dedicated customer support and Roadside Assistance, reinforcing Raptee.HV's commitment to delivering an ownership experience built on trust.

Zithara.AI Partners with Palmonas to Strengthen AI Led Revenue Growth and Customer Engagement in Jewellery Retail

Bengaluru : Zithara.AI, an AI native customer engagement platform for offline retailers, announced a strategic partnership with Palmonas to enhance customer engagement through data driven solutions across the brand's retail operations.

As part of the partnership, Palmonas will implement Zithara.AI's AI native CRM platform to unify customer data across multiple touchpoints, enabling a single, consolidated view of customer interactions. The platform will support intelligent customer segmentation, automated engagement workflows, and personalised communication designed to improve customer retention and increase repeat purchases. The deployment is aimed at creating a more structured and consistent approach to customer engagement as the brand continues to scale.

The integration will allow Palmonas to capture and analyse customer data across online and offline touchpoints, enabling targeted campaigns, timely follow ups, and more relevant communication across the customer lifecycle. By helping bridge the gap between digital customer enquiries and physical store visits, the platform will support improved customer conversions, strengthen retention, and enable more effective customer



journeys that contribute to revenue growth.

Speaking about the partnership Mr. Hitesh Magoo, CMO, Demifine Fashion Pvt Ltd. said, "At Palmonas, our focus has always been on creating meaningful customer experiences while expanding our retail presence. As more customers discover brands through digital channels, one of the biggest opportunities for offline retailers is converting that interest into store walk ins and lasting customer relationships. We were looking for a platform that could intelligently manage customer engagement across multiple stores while helping us improve walk in conversions and long term customer retention. Zithara.AI's AI native platform aligns with these objectives by enabling more personalised customer interactions that support stronger conversions, increased store walk ins, and sustainable revenue growth. We look forward to leveraging its capabilities to build deeper customer relationships as we continue to scale our retail footprint."

Varun Kashyap, Co-Founder, Zithara.AI, said, "We are

pleased to partner with Palmonas as they continue to expand their retail presence. Our platform is built to help brands organise and leverage their customer data to drive structured, consistent, and personalised engagement. This partnership reflects the growing focus among offline retailers on using technology to strengthen customer relationships and improve retention."

Sridevi Reddy, Co-founder, Zithara.AI, added: "Our focus is on enabling offline retailers to become more data driven and customer centric. Through this partnership, we aim to help Palmonas build stronger customer connections and deliver more personalised experiences at scale."

The partnership marks a continued focus by both companies on leveraging AI native capabilities to strengthen customer engagement and support revenue growth in offline retail environments. By integrating Zithara.AI's platform, Palmonas aims to build a more connected, efficient, and scalable customer engagement framework aligned with its growth plans.

Indus International School Hyderabad Produces Two World-Class IB Toppers, Perfect 45/45 Score



Bengaluru : Indus International School Hyderabad has delivered an extraordinary set of results in the May 2026 International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) examinations, with not one but two students, Ruhan Gudeli and Sujay Reddy Surukunti, achieving the perfect score of 45 out of 45, placing them among the top IB performers in the world. A perfect 45 is achieved by a very small fraction of IB candidates globally each year, and two students from the same cohort reaching this score in the same year is an exceptional achievement, one that speaks to the depth and consistency of academic excellence at Indus. Ruhan Gudeli has secured admission to the National University of Singapore (NUS) with Mathematics as his major, while Sujay Reddy Surukunti has secured admission to NYU Stern School of Business, where he will study Finance. The strength of this result extends well beyond the top scorers. In total, twelve students from the graduating cohort scored 40 points or above, a mark of excellence achieved by only a small percentage of IB candidates worldwide.

EDITORIAL

Why Was A Russian Doomsday Plane In Iran Recently? Inside The 'Tu-214PU'

Russia dispatched a Tupolev Tu-214PU airborne command post, often referred to as a "doomsday plane", to Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport. A Tu-214PU aircraft took off from Moscow and landed in Tehran at around 10:10 am (IST) on July 13. The deployment coincided with escalating US and Israeli airstrikes on Iranian military infrastructure after the collapse of a regional ceasefire. The heavily modified Tupolev Tu-214 is operated by the Rossiya Special Flight Squadron and contains advanced, hardened communication and command systems. It enables senior officials to coordinate state affairs and military operations from the air in high-threat environments. The arrival is widely interpreted as a signal of high-level crisis diplomacy and tightening strategic cooperation between Moscow and Tehran. Analysts and commentators have pointed out that while this move doesn't mean Russian troops are entering the fight, it's a massive power signal to Washington, that Russia remains closely aligned with Iran and is prepared to support coordination at a high level. During the ongoing Ukraine war, at least on five occasions, President Putin or his foreign minister has used the 'N' word. Putin's nuclear sabre-rattling has been part of the Russian escalate-to-deescalate strategy that he himself was the author of as a young official. In late 2022, Putin even ordered a drill of Russia's strategic deterrence forces, which included intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarines, and heavy bombers, the entire Russian nuclear triad. Interestingly, both the US and Russia have special airborne presidential command posts to manage major hostilities, especially a nuclear war. These are appropriately called the "Doomsday" airborne command and control aircraft. Doomsday aircraft are essentially large transport aircraft fitted with special, long-range communication equipment, along with some other security features. Russian Doomsday Aircraft "Maxdome" The Russian President's "Doomsday" aircraft is a specially configured Ilyushin Il-80 "Maxdome", which is also referred to as "Flying Kremlin". Interestingly, it was seen flying low over Moscow in early May 2022 during a rehearsal for Victory Day celebrations. Given the repeated threats of nuclear weapon use in the early days of the Ukraine war, such a flypast raised concerns in the strategic community. Earlier, Russian President Putin had said that he won't "brag" about nuclear weapons but will use them "if necessary". The Maxdome had last participated in such a flypast in 2010. The Il-80 Maxdome is a modified Ilyushin Il-86 airliner converted into an airborne command-and-control centre and a presidential office in the sky. The aircraft reportedly made its first flight in 1985 and was inducted in 1987. Four were built, and three are still in service. Such aircraft are required for cases when the ground-based command infrastructure may be destroyed in the event of nuclear war or a major disaster.

PAKISTAN'S IRAN PROBLEM ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE

As fighting between the US and Iran returns to March 2026 levels, the Islamabad MoU that both sides signed on June 17-18 is under severe strain. Barring the possibility of ground operations in Iran by the US and its allies, both Washington and Tehran will inevitably return to the negotiating table, given the pressures on the global energy economy. While it remains to be seen how much the current fighting will force Washington to comply with the MoU's terms (especially vis-à-vis Hormuz), the MoU itself has a principal third signatory - the Prime Minister of Pakistan. This article does not debate the degree to which Pakistan has succeeded or failed at "mediating" the conflict between the US and Iran. Rather, it explores a crucial secondary question: what has Pakistan's unanticipated diplomatic blitz meant for the Iran-Pakistan relationship? The two states, which were once staunch but competitive allies within America's Cold War security architecture, have remained fundamentally at odds since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. Pakistan's role in the current conflict does not necessarily generate long-term strategic trust between the two, but rather entrenches the complicated outlook that these two Islamic Republics have long adopted towards each other.

Not Your Typical Mediator At the outset, it is important to recognise that Pakistan has not acted as a traditional mediator in the current conflict. It is not like the Middle East's traditional mediators, such as Oman, which has deep institutional memory and the credentials to act as an objective third-party actor bringing good faith between disputing parties. In fact, Islamabad's call-up to the mediating role was the result of a new and personal rapprochement between key figures from the Trump administration (and family) and the Pakistani administration, led de facto by Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces, Asim Munir, and de jure by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif.



Catalysed by a crypto deal (signed with much ceremony in Islamabad) in January 2026, US-Pakistan ties had already evolved sufficiently enough since mid-2025, when President Trump hosted an unprecedented lunch meeting with Munir at the White House in June that year. This coincided with the 12-day war that saw Israel striking Iranian military and nuclear facilities. The relationship was nourished further as Trump's own appreciation of Munir grew, and, finally, matured as Islamabad became the site of talks to end the March war. For Tehran, this arguably meant little, until Pakistan emerged as the US's preferred mediator - especially over Oman, which had publicly expressed frustration with America's negotiating methods. However, given its 'overtly' positive ties with Islamabad, and with Washington conceding on the Iranian demand to have the US Vice-President himself as lead negotiator, Tehran had little reason to deny Pakistan the role. Where Pak's Influence Really Lies For Pakistan, the benefits it sought and still seeks to accrue from its mediatory role are actually rooted in its relationship with Washington, not Tehran. The instrumental element for Pakistan is the degree to which it can persuade Iran to make concessions.

For that, it naturally needed to gain Iran's good faith. For this, it went beyond the traditional ambit of a mediator-at-the-table by influencing the facts on the ground. For instance, across April, it enabled the transshipment of Iranian oil through Pakistani ports, helping Tehran bypass the American blockade of Iranian ports. That this did not fatally degrade Washington's trust in Islamabad proved the resilience of the new US-Pakistan ties. It also proved that Islamabad's actions were meant to reinforce its value in Tehran; they also cushion the fallout from Pakistan's advocacy of Washington's demands during negotiations - something that was explicitly mentioned by Iranian MP and National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Spokesperson, Ebrahim Rezaei.

The Afghanistan Chapter The question of whether mediation of this nature generates long-term trust between Pakistan and Iran is answered by Pakistan's own precedents in Afghanistan. Despite having initially supported Taliban's guerilla action against US/NATO troops in Afghanistan (both during and after Pakistan's overt role as Washington's principal regional partner in the Afghanistan theatre of the Global War on Terror), the ties between

Pakistan and Taliban are now at an all-time low, with Pakistan accusing the latter of orchestrating separatist/militant attacks on its territory. While the Iran-Pakistan relationship is fundamentally different, the Afghanistan-Pakistan experience shows that playing a brokering role does not inherently generate long-term strategic benefits with either party. In the case of Afghanistan, the US ultimately pivoted away from Afghanistan to focus on the Indo-Pacific, while the Taliban sought a more equitable relationship with Islamabad and is still asserting itself to that end. In the Pakistan-Iran case, apart from Iran's dissatisfaction with Pakistan over not curbing anti-Iran terror groups within its territory, it is Tehran's vastly different outlooks towards both the United States and Afghanistan that form the basis of the differences with Pakistan. Note that while Iran helped organise Pakistan-based Shia volunteers during the fight against the Islamic State in Syria (the Zainabiyoun Brigade, which Pakistan designated as a terror group in 2024), sectarian differences have often contributed to an undercurrent of bilateral mistrust.

A Complicated Past

In 1979, as Iran ushered in an Islamic Revolution built around Shia Islam and it became clearer that it was going from being Washington's principal Gulf ally to its principal foe, Pakistan naturally found itself in an awkward position. On one hand, Zia-ul-Haq had embarked on a Sunni Islamisation of the Pakistani state (in contrast to Iran's Shia revolution), while on the other hand, Pakistan was on the road to becoming a more entrenched US ally due to its inextricable role in facilitating the Afghan jihad against the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (while Iran moved as far away from Washington as possible). Consequently, while Islamabad pushed for overt cooperation with Tehran (with Zia even publicly celebrating it as a grand Islamic victory), it recognized the long-term Iranian threat to Pakistan due to strong geopolitical divergence. The coming period of cold ties was a sharp contrast to the heady years of deep Iran-Pakistan cooperation under the Shah; "Pakistan's security is Iran's security," Reza Pahlavi had once purportedly said to Gen Yahya Khan amidst the staunch Iranian support for Pakistan's wars against India. While the Iran-Iraq war years kept Tehran's focus away, the 1989-2000 period revealed the complicated nature of this bilateral relationship. Despite being an entrenched US security ally, Pakistan pushed for deeper ties with Tehran, an effort with roots in Zia's last years and advanced by Gen Mirza Aslam Beg. But, this push was also driven by Washington's fresh antipathy towards Islamabad for its undisclosed nuclear programme and allegations of the AQ Khan network's subversive activities (unreported publicly at the time). Iran, if it ever sees a chance to wean away a US ally (even if not a natural partner to Iran), has always treated such an opportunity as more important than bilateral concerns. This was just as evident in that era as it is now in Iran's persistent calls to "brotherly" Arab countries to leave the US-led security architecture.

BEYOND RUNWAYS:

THE NEXT CHAPTER FOR TIER-2 AND TIER-3 AVIATION

India's domestic aviation market is now the world's third largest. Airlines have ordered more than 1,500 aircraft. The number of airports has more than doubled since 2014, from 74 to 159. By the usual scorecard, this is a remarkable success. Look closer at what those assets actually do, and the story becomes more nuanced. Of the 669 routes launched under UDAN, the flagship scheme to connect smaller cities by air, only about half are still flying. An audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General found that once the subsidy supporting a route ends, about one in ten routes continues on its own. The easy explanation is that India's regional aviation market simply is not ready. But almost everything else moving between tier-2 and tier-3 cities is booming. Trains run close to capacity. Highways carry more traffic than planners expected. Business travel by road and rail continues to rise. The challenge, then, is not simply demand. It is that an airport is only one layer of the aviation stack, and the next phase of growth depends on getting two other layers right: what a route is designed around, and what kind of aircraft flies it. The government's recently revamped UDAN policy, often referred to as UDAN 2.0, acknowledges some of this by placing greater emphasis on airport viability, economic potential and industry participation. The next leap in regional aviation



will come from designing an integrated network around economically vibrant corridors, hub connectivity and the aircraft best suited to serve them. UDAN's original unit was the route: start a flight and keep it airborne for a certain period of time. But viability depends on whether that flight plugs into a wider network of onward connections. The smarter unit is the corridor: the business, tourism, healthcare and trade traffic already moving between two economic centres by road and rail. Even a strong corridor can fail if the route was never designed to connect beyond its destination. Another challenge is the aircraft flying on a corridor. India's regional fleet is effectively limited to two options, and neither fits many of the regional routes it is expected to serve. At the smaller end, ATR turboprops carry up to 70 passengers. They are efficient on short

hops but too slow to operate more than a couple of trips a day on regional corridors. At the larger end, airlines fly A320s and 737s seating 150 to 190 people, superbly efficient, but only when a route is busy enough to fill that many seats several times a day. Even when IndiGo expanded into regional connectivity, it turned to ATRs, leaving the gap in the middle largely unaddressed. What India needs is the aircraft in between: the 70-to-120-seat category represented by the likes of Embraer's E-Jets and rivals such as the Airbus A220. These aircraft exist precisely for corridors too thin to fill a 180-seat plane several times a day, but too important to be served only by a slow turboprop. Consider corridors like Coimbatore to Pune, Indore to Nagpur, or Lucknow to Bhubaneswar. These have real, growing demand that still cannot sustain a mainline jet at high frequencies. The logic is simple: a 90-seat jet flying a route four times a day serves passengers better than a 180-seat jet flying it once. The total number of seats is the same, but the odds that a business traveller finds a flight that fits their schedule improve dramatically. On a mid-density corridor, what people value most is frequency, not size. Brazil built much of its domestic network around this. Embraer is a Brazilian company that grew up solving this problem for a country whose economy, like India's, is spread across dozens of mid-sized cities rather than concentrated in three or four. The United States similarly relies on regional jets to serve markets too large for turboprops and too small for mainline aircraft. IndiGo built its dominance by primarily operating A320s, one aircraft family.

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Why A Post By A Senior US Defence Official About 'Allies' Should Worry India

"There is a great deal of hubbub about a collective 'middle powers' strategy these days ... we are more concerned that a few allies and partners will think it is and waste valuable time, money and political capital on a distraction." Elbridge Colby, the United States Under Secretary of War for Policy, posted these words on July 14, a week after the NATO Summit in Turkey. His immediate target was Canada. Prime Minister Mark Carney has made collective middle-power action the bedrock of Canadian foreign policy, telling a recent forum that the countries in between must combine to create a third path or find themselves on the menu. Colby's reply dismissed the entire approach as detached from the realities of power. The exchange deserves attention in India as it has structural implications. Colby's response to Ottawa is relevant to every state that is building networks of capable partners, including New Delhi. His post frames what could become the next major strategic question in India-US relations. India has embraced the idea that a network of capable middle powers can shoulder a larger share of Indo-Pacific stability. Washington, in Colby's words, will support stronger partners while remaining deeply sceptical of any framework that diminishes American centrality. Today, the difference is theoretical. Over time, it has the potential to become a structural source of friction between two otherwise converging partners. A Blunt Exposition About Power



Colby's argument rests on a straightforward realist proposition. Countries align because they face common threats, possess complementary capabilities, and pursue shared interests. Geography, economics, military strength, and threat perception determine alignments. Labels matter little. From that perspective, a coherent middle-power bloc is unviable. India worries about China and Pakistan. Australia watches the Western Pacific. Saudi Arabia's principal concern remains Iran. Canada's anxieties centre on its southern neighbour. These countries share only a notion and a label, nothing that matters. Colby's second argument is more important. The United States remains the indispensable military and technological hub of the democratic world. Its defence industrial base, intelligence and military machine and capacity to undertake large-scale operations independently are unmatched. He rejected the suggestion that frustrat-

ed partners will buy their weapons elsewhere, calling the idea neither feasible nor accurate. He further revealed increased demands for American engagement. Allies, he concluded, should build their own defence industries in ways that are collaborative with America. That final phrase summarises his argument. Washington welcomes stronger partners. Washington expects those partners to strengthen the existing American-led system. Capability is encouraged. Alternative centres of strategic gravity are unwelcome. India's Networked Approach India is moving on a different trajectory. Over the past decade, New Delhi has expanded its partnerships in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. The Quad has matured into a platform for maritime cooperation and critical technologies. The India-France partnership now encompasses defence production, space, artificial intelligence, and the Indian Ocean. The India-France-

UAE trilateral has introduced a new model of multilateral cooperation, and engagement with ASEAN, the Gulf, Europe and Africa have deepened simultaneously. Together, these initiatives reflect a coherent philosophy: India is constructing a networked regional order. In this system, several capable powers contribute to stability, free of formal alliances and hierarchical leadership. The purpose is to expand India's options: diversified partnerships, stronger indigenous capability, and insurance against dependence on any single external power, no matter how close. This philosophy has deep roots. Non-alignment faded as a slogan while its central objective endured. Successive governments have sought maximum freedom of action while engaging every major centre of power. Today's minilaterals are the latest evolution of that tradition. Colby's realism is valid in one aspect that must be acknowledged. Middle-power networks currently lack the hard-power depth to function without the American hub. Remove the United States from the Indo-Pacific equation, and the calculation against China collapses. India's planners know this. Their networks are hedges tacked onto the American relationship and designed as insurance rather than substitution. Dangerously, for the middle powers, Colby's post suggests Washington may come to read insurance itself as disloyalty. Two Organising Principles Therein lies the emerging tension.

Trump alleges China meddled in 2020 election and questions voting security ahead of midterms



US President Donald Trump has delivered a primetime address in which he accused China of interfering in the 2020 election and alleged "shocking vulnerabilities" in American voting systems. Trump, who spoke from the White House on Thursday, has repeatedly made unsubstantiated claims about voter fraud and foreign meddling in the 2020 election, which he lost to Joe Biden. In the half-hour speech, delivered three months before the midterm elections, he said he had declassified hundreds of intelligence files which supported his claims that Beijing had tried to sway the election in Biden's favour. The US intelligence community has previously concluded China did not interfere in the 2020 election. In response to his speech, China's foreign ministry strongly denied the allegations of Chinese meddling in the 2020 presidential election, saying they were "entirely fabricated". Trump's claims are "malicious smears" which have "long been proven to be groundless", foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said. Trump spoke in front of

several members of his top team as he gave his address, but journalists were unable to put questions to the president. In his remarks, he accused China of the "illicit acquisition" of 220 million voter files including personal information. Trump said voter data in 18 states was "bought, stolen or hacked by China" and accused "those responsible for sounding the alarm" of not disclosing the discovery to government officials or Congress. A lot of voter data is publicly available and Trump did not in his speech present any evidence that China had used this information to alter voting systems or to influence election outcomes. Hundreds of pages of intelligence documents were released by the White House during Trump's address, many of them heavily redacted. The BBC is in the process of reviewing them. Democrats, meanwhile, accused Trump of attempting to sow doubts about the security of the upcoming November midterms which will decide control of Congress for the remainder of his presidency.



■ US hits civilian infrastructure in Iran

JAPAN RELAXES ROYAL SUCCESSION RULES - BUT BAN ON FEMALE EMPERORS REMAINS

The Japanese parliament has approved a bill to relax imperial succession rules, amid concerns over the dwindling size of the imperial family. The bill, passed by the upper house on Friday, allows the imperial family to adopt distant male relatives over the age of 15 and lets women keep their royal status after marrying outside the family. But it does not change the law barring women from ascending the throne despite wide public support for a female emperor, meaning Princess Aiko, the only child of the current emperor, is still not eligible to succeed the throne. The bill cleared the lower house last week, and will move through the final legal procedures before the changes take effect. Japan has the world's oldest continuous



hereditary monarchy, with a lineage that's believed to span more than 2,600 years. Currently first in line to the throne is 60-year-old Fumihito, the emperor's younger brother. Fumihito's son, 19-year-old Prince Hisahito, is second in line. Third-in-line, and the last eligible candidate for the throne, is the emperor's 90-year-old uncle. Without any amendments to the law, the

line of succession will end if Prince Hisahito does not have a male child. However, with the new bill, male descendants of 11 former imperial branches could be adopted back into the family. These family branches had been removed following the Second World War. Female members of the imperial family will also be able to retain their royal status if they marry commoners. They were previously made to give up their titles and leave their families - which is what Princess Mako did in 2021 to marry her college sweetheart. This allows for a larger royal family who will be able to keep up with official duties like attending court ceremonies and making public appearances. However, descendants of female members with commoners will still not be able to inherit the throne. The bill, the first amendment to the main text of the Imperial House Law since 1949, marks the biggest overhaul to Japan's imperial system in decades. There has long been public concern over the lack of male heirs in the imperial family - along with debate over whether women should be allowed to take the throne.

CHINA HITS OUT AT BRITISH STEEL NATIONALISATION



China has hit out at the nationalisation of British Steel, saying it "firmly opposes and is strongly dissatisfied with the British government's decision". On Thursday, the UK government said that taking the loss-making firm into public hands would protect jobs and safeguard a "vital national capability". The UK took control of British Steel's operations in Scunthorpe last year, though it was still owned by China's Jingye Group, limiting the government's ability to steer its future. China's commerce ministry said on Friday that the moves "seriously infringed upon Jingye's legitimate rights and interests and severely undermined the confidence of Chinese companies investing in the UK". It also called on Britain to "faithfully fulfil" its obligations under the China-UK Bilateral Investment Treaty. "Disregarding Jingye's significant contribution to the UK economy and society, the British side forcibly took control of the company in the name of national security," the ministry said. The statement added that Beijing would monitor developments closely and support Chinese firms to protect their rights, but did not specify what protecting Chinese companies' rights might involve. The decision to nationalise British Steel threatens to strain the relationship between London and Beijing just as Andy Burnham is set to

become the prime minister on Monday. The incoming PM will have to weigh his approach to the issue with the economic benefits of ties with the world's second largest economy. The China-UK Bilateral Investment Treaty is a legally binding agreement that was signed in 1986. It was designed to promote and protect investments between the two countries. The nationalisation came after Parliament on Wednesday passed legislation allowing the government to bring the steel industry into public ownership under circumstances where it met a public interest test. Jingye is seeking compensation, having previously said the business was losing £700,000 a day. The BBC has been unable to get a response from Jingye itself to Thursday's announcement. Small Business Minister Blair McDougall told the House of Commons on Thursday that the government will appoint an independent valuer in the autumn "to make a judgment on any compensation that is due, and that could be nil". By taking British Steel into public ownership the government now has the power and freedom to decide on the future of the plant, while keeping the blast furnaces going. It is unlikely the government will want to continue running the business in the long term as it is costing it more than a million pounds a day.

Canada fires prompt US air quality alerts as smoke blankets major cities

More than 800 wildfires are burning across Canada, with air quality alerts now extending south into multiple US states. A thick blanket of smoke clouded skylines from Detroit and Toronto to New York and across New England, causing "hazardous" air quality alerts across much of the region. Many outdoor events were cancelled as officials urged for people to stay indoors, stressing the dangerous health ramifications of inhaling the fumes. In Canada, one fire in northern Ontario forced residents from local First Nations to evacuate, with one chief saying that her community has been "burnt to ashes". Hazardous air quality alerts have been issued in cities, including Chicago and Grand Rapids in Michigan, Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania and Toledo in Ohio, according to the US Air Quality Index program. Many outdoor activities were cancelled on Thursday, including events for children's summer camps, and beaches were shuttered along popu-



lar lakes. An outdoor concert for the rock group The Black Keys was being rescheduled in Chicago due to the dangerous air quality. There are currently 858 fires actively burning in Canada, including 30 new fires that sparked on Thursday, according to the Canadian Wildland Fire Information System. The vast majority are burning out of control. The large cluster of fires affecting northwestern areas of Ontario are responsible for sending thick plumes of smoke and poor air quality across Thunder Bay and Toronto, with lower concentrations of smoke high in the atmosphere drift-

ing over the Great Lakes and above New York with hazy skies. "We're in a very serious health situation right now," New York Governor Kathy Hochul said in an announcement on Thursday. She noted thick smoke was "blanketing" much of the state, making it "very unhealthy to be outdoors" in many areas. "This is bad news for every New Yorker," she said. "There will be great impacts." In western regions of New York state, the air quality on Thursday is considered "very unhealthy", while in the New York City metro area the air quality is "unhealthy". Many across

the city - the most populous across the US - were wearing masks over their mouths and nose hoping to protect themselves. A thick haze of smoke blocked views across the city of sights including the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty. New York has extended its heat emergency plans and activated its air quality emergency protocols - with hundreds of cooling centres and KN95 masks being made available citywide. In Ontario, there will be quite widespread thunderstorms over the next few days, but the rain may not be enough to make much of a difference. Northwesterly winds will continue to blow the smoke into northern US states for the rest of this week and into the weekend, leading to concerns smoke will drift into New Jersey where Sunday's World Cup final is due to take place. A change in the wind direction by Monday means that the smoke will tend to be steered across Quebec with an improvement in air quality further south in the US.

GERMAN POLITICIAN FACES CALLS TO RESIGN OVER SURROGACY CHILD



German centre-right politician Jens Spahn has been accused of double standards, after he revealed he and his husband had become parents using a surrogate mother in the US. Surrogacy is banned in Germany - a policy firmly backed by his Christian Democrat party, and several years ago by Spahn himself. Although there is no German ban on bringing up a child born to a surrogate mother abroad, Spahn, 46, has been criticised by politicians from several parties, including his own. "Politicians who set standards for others must be measured by them too," said Marion Rosin, a Christian Democrat in Thuringia and part of the Women's Union. "If that credibility is gone,

resignation is a matter of consequence." Spahn, the parliamentary group leader of the Christian Democrats and Christian Social Union, announced on Wednesday that he and his husband Daniel Funke had become parents. "Georg is our greatest joy. This feeling is almost impossible to put into words," he told tabloid newspaper Bild. Then his husband posted a picture on Instagram of the couple with Spahn pushing a pram along with the words "We Are Family". Under the 1990 Embryo Protection Act, surrogacy in Germany is punishable with three years imprisonment or a fine, so Spahn and his partner looked to the US for a surrogate mother.



Uganda suspends school trips after 20 pupils die in bus crash

MORE THAN 500 ROHINGYA VANISHED AT SEA - WHAT HAPPENED?

Two boats carrying an estimated 530 Rohingya asylum seekers left Myanmar's Rakhine state on 29 June, and have not been heard from since. The equivalent of a jumbo jet full of people has vanished. It is very likely that they both capsized. The monsoon has started, the seas are rough, and the boats - usually old fishing trawlers converted to carry as many people as possible - are barely sea-worthy with unreliable engines. It is also very likely that there were few, or no survivors. Half of them may have been women and children. But we will never know for certain. Rakhine has been in a state of war for many years, with the insurgent Arakan Army driving the Myanmar military out of most of it and besieging its last stronghold in the state capital Sittwe, which is now



accessible only by air and sea. Almost all telecommunications have been cut by the military. Chris Lewa, who runs the Arakan Project that campaigns to improve the situation of Rohingyas, has been trying to piece together what may have happened to the two boats. This is extremely challenging. She no longer has contacts she can reach in Sittwe, or in Sin Tet Maw, the Arakan Army-controlled village from

where the boats departed. But through a series of other contacts, combined with other snippets of information, she is confident that both boats did leave on 29 June, one in the morning, the other later in the day. She says they would have been heading for the southern coast of Myanmar, where they would unload their human cargo. From there they would be transported by road, via rough transit camps in the for-

est, through Thailand to the Malaysian border. Normally their families would expect to hear from them within a week or 10 days. Nearly three weeks later, they have heard nothing. The Bangladesh authorities have recovered the body of one woman, washed up from the sea. Fishermen working the sea between the Irrawaddy delta and the coast of Mon state found several other bodies nine days later. Chris Lewa believes all this suggests that the boats capsized, one several hours after leaving Sin Tet Maw, the other after several days of sailing south east. There are more than a million Rohingyas living in overcrowded camps in southern Bangladesh, where aid is drying up, there are almost no jobs, and organised crime gangs operate freely. They are not allowed to leave.



IS LIONEL MESSI ABOVE DIEGO MARADONA IN WORLD CUPS?

Former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia rates Diego Maradona above Lionel Messi in their World Cup performances but said the current Argentine skipper would reach the status of the 1986 Cup-winning hero if the South American country wins the 2026 edition title on Sunday. Argentina face Spain in the 2026 World Cup final in New York on Sunday. Messi also led Argentina to title in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Maradona led the 1986 Argentina side to victory and was also the captain of the team that lost to Germany in the final in 1990. For Bhutia, Maradona's exploits of single-handedly winning the 1986 World Cup for Argentina would put him above Messi. But he said a second World Cup trophy for Messi on Sunday will take him on equal standing with Maradona. "It's difficult to compare. But

for me, it's Maradona because he single-handedly won the 1986 World Cup which I don't think any player in history has done that. I watched him in 1986 World Cup and other matches as well," Bhutia told PTI in an interview, when asked to rate Maradona and Messi in the World Cups. "I think Messi is almost near. If he can win this World Cup, I think he will obviously reach the status of Maradona. He (Messi) has already won one World Cup but to overtake Maradona I think he needs one more World Cup to win," said the former India striker. "Messi is a great player but he's got a great team around him who really works for him. For Maradona he had to work for everybody and also create those goal-scoring opportunities (for himself)." Maradona, who died in 2020 at the age of 60, played in four World Cups

(1982, 1986, 1990, 1994) and scored eight goals from 21 matches. Messi, on the other hand, is playing in his sixth World Cup (2006, 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022 and 2026) and has scored 21 goals from 33 appearances so far. He also led Argentina to a runners-up finish in the 2014 World Cup, losing 0-1 to Germany in the final. 'Spain slight favourites against Argentina' For Bhutia, Spain are a complete side and they are the favourites to win the title against Argentina on Sunday, though he feels that the Messi-led team cannot be written off after the so many stupendous comeback wins. "Spain has a complete team structure, they have a better midfield, they don't really wait for a single player or moment," said Bhutia, Indian football's poster boy in the first decade of this century.

Rohit Sharma "Wasn't Happy": Report Shares Inside Details Of BCCI's 'Last ODI' Meeting



Indian cricket is abuzz with speculation about the curtains coming down on one of the most illustrious ODI batters, Rohit Sharma's career. The speculation had intensified even before the England series as BCCI and Team India chalk out plans for next year's ODI World Cup. Rohit Sharma will be over 40 by the time India play the ODI World Cup in late 2027. While his form has been decent, the fact that an in-form younger opener, Yashasvi Jaiswal, has been waiting on the sidelines for a long time has not escaped anyone's attention. On Thursday, multiple reports claimed that the third India vs England ODI at Lord's on July 19 might be the last time Rohit will be picked for the Indian team. The Indian Express reported that Rohit met with BCCI officials during the ongoing three-match ODI series against England, and the opener 'wasn't happy' with their decision. The report further claimed that the BCCI selec-

tion committee has informed Rohit that they have decided to 'move on' from the former India captain after the ODI series. The selection committee reportedly spoke with Sharma, along with coach Gautam Gambhir, last week. The BCCI selectors are intent on giving youngsters like Yashasvi Jaiswal game time while looking ahead to the 2027 World Cup. "The selectors have decided that henceforth they will not select Rohit Sharma in ODIs. If he wants to bow out gracefully or chooses not to call it a day immediately, that is entirely

his personal decision. However, the message is clear: the selectors will not pick him for ODIs after the game at Lord's on Sunday," a BCCI source told IANS on Thursday. On May 7, 2025, Rohit quit Test cricket ahead of India's five-match tour of England and was shortly replaced by Shubman Gill as the Test captain. In 286 ODI games, Rohit has amassed 11,731 runs and firmly established himself in Indian cricket folklore as one of the most explosive and dependable openers in the 50-over format.

Virat Kohli, Ravi Shastri Knew About Rohit Sharma? 2nd ODI Broadcast Drops Big Hints

Cricket fans around the world were left stunned after reports of Rohit Sharma's international retirement began circulating on Thursday. During the second ODI against England in Cardiff, which India lost by four wickets, Rohit once again failed to make a significant impact with the bat, scoring just 26 runs. However, a report by The Indian Express claimed that the third and final ODI between the two teams at the iconic Lord's on Sunday could be Rohit's last match for India. Rohit, who has already retired from Test and T20I cricket, had reportedly set his sights on playing the 2027 ODI World Cup. However, the report stated that the selection committee had informed him that he was no longer part of their plans for the tour-



nament. While the reports left fans heartbroken, several subtle moments during the second ODI against England fuelled speculation about Rohit's possible farewell. One picture, in particular, went viral on social media, showing a visibly dejected Virat Kohli seated between Rohit and pacer Jasprit Bumrah. The image was captured

shortly after Kohli was dismissed for 65 by Jofra Archer, and many initially assumed his expression reflected disappointment over his wicket. However, as reports of Rohit's retirement gathered momentum, fans began viewing the moment differently, adding to the emotional reaction online. Another poignant moment came during India's fielding

innings, when renowned commentator Ravi Shastri repeatedly highlighted Rohit's achievements as both a captain and a batter. His remarks on Rohit's leadership qualities and contributions to Indian cricket further intensified speculation that the ODI series finale could mark the end of an illustrious international career. "He's been on the side for a long time. Won the T20 World Cup but missed out on the 50-over World Cup. He's got the record for the most hundreds in the World Cup. Five of them in the UK in the 2019 edition," said Shastri. The Indian Express reported that Rohit met with BCCI officials during the ongoing three-match ODI series against England, and the opener 'wasn't happy' with their decision.

SLAVKO VINCIC: Argentina's Ultimate Bogeyman Appointed Referee For FIFA World Cup 2026 Final

The referee for the FIFA World Cup 2026 final has been decided, and it is Slovenia's Slavko Vincic who has been given both the honour and the responsibility of officiating the high-profile clash. Assisting him in the Argentina vs Spain clash in New York on Sunday will be the likes of Tomaz Klancknik (assistant referee 1), Andraz Kovacic (assistant referee 2), Adham Makhadmeh (fourth official), and Mohammad Alkalaf (reserve assistant referee). "Playing with golden stripes is something beautiful. I am sure you agree with me. It's beautiful and it's absolutely great. As well, it's great that the referee will be Slavko Vincic," head of refereeing at FIFA, Pierluigi Collina, said in a video



shared on social media, as Vincic's appointment was confirmed. Amid the chatter around FIFA 'favouring' Argentina in this World Cup, there has been an additional focus on the referees and the VAR (Video Assistant Referee) in this tournament.

cle of his career in the sport. Having made his World Cup debut with two matches in Qatar in 2022, the Argentina vs Spain final will mark his sixth career World Cup match overall and his fourth assignment of the current campaign, which he kicked off during the group stage. Vincic is no stranger to the pressure of elite football, built on a stellar resume packed with high-profile appointments. Among the highlights of his career, Vincic officiated the 2024 UEFA Champions League final between Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund at Wembley Stadium, which is widely considered one of the most prestigious honours a European official can receive.

Shakira's Instagram Story On Lionel Messi Goes Viral

Music icon Shakira shared a heartfelt tribute to Lionel Messi ahead of Argentina's highly anticipated FIFA World Cup 2026 final against Spain. Argentina booked their place in the final with a dramatic 2-1 comeback victory over England in the semi-finals. After trailing in the first half, the defending champions fought back through Enzo Fernandez's equaliser before Lautaro Martinez struck a stoppage-time winner. Messi, meanwhile, remains among the front-runners for the tournament's Golden Boot award, along with France captain Kylian Mbappe. Taking to Instagram, Shakira posted a photo of Messi and praised the Argentina captain for his remarkable performances at the age of 39. The Colombian singer, who has a long association with the World Cup through her iconic tournament songs, lauded Messi's dedication



and perseverance. "What Leo Messi is doing is beyond extraordinary! It shows the values of a man who is deeply committed and disciplined, challenging time and all odds. Proving that a person is not defined by age or by what others say," Shakira wrote. She also praised Messi's wife, Antonela Roccuzzo, crediting her for being a source of strength and inspiration for the football superstar.



Salima Tete To Lead India At FIH Women's World Cup In Netherlands And Belgium



Salima Tete will lead India at the FIH Women's World Cup 2026, as Hockey India announced the 20-member squad that chief coach Sjoerd Marijne has described as a well-balanced group. The showpiece tournament, which will be hosted jointly by the Netherlands and Belgium, is scheduled to be held from 15 to 30 August 2026. The squad, currently training at the national camp in Bengaluru,

features a mix of experienced campaigners and promising young players, who impressed everyone during recent international assignments – most notably at the FIH Nations Cup in New Zealand last month, where the team lifted the trophy and remained unbeaten. Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam are the two goalkeepers named in the squad, while the defense unit comprises Ishika Chaudhary,

Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Lalthantluangi, Jyoti and Shilpi Dabas. In the midfield, captain Salima will be joined by Nikki Pradhan, Sakshi Rana, Sunelita Toppo, Neha and Deepika Soreng. The forward line features Lalremsiami, Rutuja Dadaso Pisal, Navneet Kaur, Deepika, Ishika, Baljeet Kaur and Beauty Dungdung. Speaking about the selected squad, coach Marijne said, "We have chosen a well-balanced group of players who are ready for the big challenges we will face this summer. The team has worked hard in the lead-up to the tournament and we are confident in this group's abilities. We look forward to competing against the best teams in the world and showcasing our hockey on the biggest stage."

ASTON VILLA SIGN DEFENDER HARVIKEN FROM JUVENTUS



Aston Villa have signed Norway international Mathilde Harviken from Juventus. The defender made almost 50 appearances for the Italian club after joining in January 2025 and featured in the Women's Champions League. She helped Juventus win the Serie A title and Coppa Italia during the 2024-25 season and the inaugural Serie A Women's Cup in 2025. Harviken began her career in Norway with FL Fart and Roa IL before joining Rosenborg in 2022, where she went on to make over 80 appearances. "It's a really good opportunity to join a club with such a big history," said Harviken on her move to the Women's Super League. "There are great

facilities here and everything you need to perform and continue developing as a player." The 24-year-old made her senior Norway debut in 2022 after progressing through the youth ranks. She was part of the Norway squads at both the 2023 Women's World Cup and Euro 2025. Aston Villa's director of women's football Marisa Ewers said: "Mathilde is a player we've been tracking for over two years and we've been consistently impressed by her development." She has a lot of experience for her age and we believe she has all the attributes to make an impact here and continue developing. "We're excited to see what she can bring to the team."

Max Verstappen Leaves F1 Future Open, Says Things 'Really Good' With Red Bull

Max Verstappen has left his future in Formula 1 open again ahead of the Belgian Grand Prix and praised his "really good" relationship with Red Bull team principal Christian Horner. Verstappen has yet to commit to staying

with Red Bull for next year after he was linked to McLaren and suggested he'd consider leaving F1. "I don't want to go here, say yes, and no, and this and that about my future. I said already many times that if there was something new I would say it myself," the four-time world champion said Thursday. Mekies is marking a year in charge of the team after replacing longtime boss Christian Horner midway through 2025, and Verstappen had warm words for him. "It's been really good. I get on very well with Laurent. We speak a lot on track, but also off track," he said. "I think the relationship that he has also within the team is great. "Everything for me feels very posi-

tive and I think it's always nice when you can discuss a lot of things with your team boss. So from that sense, yeah, very happy. It's all very open and transparent." After faults with the rotating rear wing pitched Verstappen into the barriers at high speed two weeks running in Austria and Britain, Red Bull is reverting back to an old wing design for Belgium this week. "It's quite obvious, no, why? So we'll go back on the old one and then see whenever the latest or new one is ready again to be used for us," Verstappen said. He crashed out of the British Grand Prix and delivered an expletive-laden rant at the car over the radio before branding it "dangerous" to drive. It's the

third year running that Verstappen has kept his future open, only to recommit to Red Bull halfway through the season. Last year, he didn't pledge to stay with the team until the Hungarian Grand Prix on July 31. He has been part of Red Bull's racing program since childhood and has a contract through 2028, though it includes clauses potentially allowing an earlier exit. This time, a reported meeting between Verstappen's management and McLaren fueled the speculation of what would have been a blockbuster move. McLaren has also signed Verstappen's longtime engineer and confidant Gianpiero Lambiase as its "chief racing officer" in future.

ONE MORE SUCCESSFUL PRODUCER FROM ALLU ARJUN’S CAMP

For over a decade, Sarath Chandra Naidu has been one of the key minds behind the marketing and digital campaigns of some of Telugu cinema’s biggest films. After years of helping build successful campaigns, he has now taken a successful leap into filmmaking as a producer. His debut production, Gurthukosthunnayi, has been receiving an encouraging response from audiences, marking a promising start to his journey as a producer. Beyond producing the series, Sarath chandra naidu also made a significant creative contribution by writing several portions of the series alongside director Vinod and the writing team. His understanding of audience emotions and storytelling found its way onto the screen, adding another dimension to his role in the project.

How did the web series begin?
The journey began with my Instagram podcast page, Relangi Mavayya, where I share nostalgic stories from the '90s in my own voice. Over time, the page received immense love from audiences and built a strong connection with people who grew up during that era. After watching the content, Sai garu and Nitin garu from ETV Win felt there was potential to turn those emotions into a web series. That’s how Gurthukosthunnayi was born. What makes this mile-



stone even more special is the support he received from Allu Arjun. Delighted by Sarath’s new journey, the Icon Star personally congratulated him and publicly wished him success, expressing his happiness at seeing one of his longtime team member’s take the first step as a producer. The gesture reflected the strong bond they have built over the years and the culture of nurturing talent within the Allu

Kalyanam Kamaniyam Jeevitham" Movie Teaser Launch Event



Under the banner of Vivifi Media Film Factory, Khan Durani and Sahithi Avancha are the hero and heroines of the movie "Kalyanam Kamaniyam jeevitham" which is being jointly produced by Paila Prasad Rao Kishore Gundala under the direction of Ravi Lokireddy. The film is getting ready

Promising Hero Kiran Abbavaram Unveils the Lyrical Video of 'Oopirantha Ivalle' from Tatvam



The makers of the upcoming murder mystery suspense thriller Tatvam have released the lyrical video of the melodious track 'Oopirantha Ivalle Oogesthundi Ooyale', which was unveiled by promising hero Kiran Abbavaram through his social media handles. Featuring a fresh storyline and an edge-of-the-seat screenplay, Tatvam promises to offer audiences a unique cinematic experience. The film’s recently released trailer received an encouraging response, further raising expectations. The soulful melody has been composed by Chetan Bharadwaj, with lyrics penned by Bhaskarabhatla and beautifully rendered by Anurag Kulkarni. Starring Dinesh Tej and Dashvika K. in the lead roles, Tatvam is directed by Arjun Kola. The film is jointly produced by Vamsi Seemakurthi and Shwetha Pasupuleti under the banners of Trayathi Ishani Creations and S.K. Productions. The film is slated for a theatrical release soon. Speaking on the occasion, the producer said, "Tatvam is an emotional thriller with a strong emotional connect. Music plays a significant role in the film, and we are confident that this song will appeal to everyone. The trailer, which was released recently, has already received a wonderful response. Every element has come together perfectly in this film, and we are grateful for the tremendous support we've received. Director Arjun Kola has been waiting for this day for a long time, and he has brought the story to life far beyond our expectations. This is a film that will deliver a memorable theatrical experience to audiences." Director Arjun Kola said, "Music is one of the major strengths of Tatvam. Chetan Bharadwaj has composed exceptional tunes that perfectly complement the story. The film is inspired by incidents happening around us, making it highly relatable and engaging. The narrative will keep audiences hooked throughout, much like Vamsy's investigative thrillers. The twists in the film will leave the audience genuinely shocked."

ANNAPURNA STUDIOS & EPIC STUDIOS ANNOUNCE TELUGU FILM PALLABURUSU’; SET FOR A GRAND RELEASE ON AUGUST 14, 2026

Annapurna Studios, in association with EPIC Studios, has officially announced its upcoming film Pallaburusu with the unveiling of a striking first-look poster. The highly anticipated project is locked to hit screens worldwide on August 14, 2026. To mark the announcement, the makers unveiled a striking first-look poster that gives audiences a taste of the film's unique flavor. Rooted deeply in regional cultural essence, the Telugu film promises a refreshing, laugh-out-loud blend of comedy and drama. The film features Sudhakar Reddy and Muralidhar Goud in lead roles as father and son, alongside Prajwal Yadma and Gomathy Reddy in key roles. The first-look poster features the two



lead characters seated back-to-back on a giant toothbrush resembling a balancing scale outside a district courtroom. The striking visual creates intrigue and leaves audiences eager to discover

the story behind Pallaburusu. The feature film is written and directed by Uday Chauhan, and it is presented and produced jointly by Annapurna Studios and EPIC Studios. Aditya Pittie and Vivek Krishnani serve as producers for EPIC Studios. Backed by a stellar technical lineup, Pallaburusu brings together top-tier talent to ensure a visually and aurally rich cinematic experience. The film features cinematography by Vinod K Bangari, music composed by Pawan CH, and production design by Kshitij Jeevan Randhir. With its distinctive concept and eye-catching first look, Pallaburusu is set to offer a refreshing cinematic experience. More updates on the film will be announced in the coming days.

Prestigious Banner SLV Cinemas #KJQ King - Jackie – Queen, starring Deekshith Shetty, Shashi Odela, Yukti Thareja, Releasing On August 7



After delivering a string of acclaimed and commercially successful films, SLV Cinemas, led by producer Sudhakar Cherukuri, is gearing up for yet another exciting project. The banner is bankrolling #KJQ – King

Jackie Queen, a period crime drama set against the backdrop of the 1990s, promising an engaging narrative packed with intense drama and nostalgia. The film features Deekshith Shetty, who directed by late KK who passed away last year. This film is a celebration of his craft and passion for cinema. spread appreciation for his standout performance in Dasara and The Girlfriend, in the lead role, alongside newcomer Shashi Odela and actress Yukti Thareja. The film was written and directed by late KK who passed away last year. This film is a celebration of his craft and passion for cinema.

Ayesha Khan Proves Style Never Takes A Break

Bollywood beauty Ayesha Khan, who went viral last year with the special song “Shararat,” seems to be taking a break from the big screen this year. Despite featuring in movies like Jaat and Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2 last year, both of which failed to work at the box office, Ayesha isn’t slowing down when it comes to her style game. In her latest pictures, Ayesha is seen in a stunning peach embellished gown, with her hair styled in an elegant updo, giving off pure glamour vibes. Her radiant makeup and confident poses have caught the attention of fans online. While movie offers may be on pause for now, Ayesha continues to stay in the spotlight with her fashion moments, proving she doesn’t need a film release to make headlines. In a recent incident,

who went viral last year with the special song “Shararat,” seems to be taking a break from the big screen this year. Despite featuring in movies like Jaat and Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2 last year, both of which failed to work at the box office, Ayesha isn’t slowing down when it comes to her style game. In her latest pictures, Ayesha is seen in a stunning peach embellished gown, with her hair styled in an elegant updo, giving off pure glamour vibes. Her radiant makeup and confident poses have caught the attention of fans online. While movie offers may be on pause for now, Ayesha continues to stay in the spotlight with her fashion moments, proving she doesn’t need a film release to make headlines. In a recent incident,

larily when unexpected obstacles arise. This incident serves as a reminder of the importance of situational awareness in crowded environments, where clear communication and cooperation are essential for safety. Observers noted that such occurrences are not uncommon, emphasizing the need for better traffic management strategies in densely populated spaces. Bollywood celebrities have come out in support of educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who is currently on an indefinite hunger strike at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar. The protest is being held by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan’s resignation over alleged irregularities and paper leaks in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) conducted on May 3. Ayesha Khan was the latest celebrity to voice her concern. Khan took to Instagram to reshare a video of

3 Idiots actor Omi Vaidya expressing support for Wangchuk. She said, "I request the paps and the media to highlight this news; only you can make people aware of what's happening in the country." "It's so unfortunate that I had no idea about this too. We are so lost in glamour, beauty, and controversies that we often end up being avoidant of the things that actually need our attention." Actor Abhay Deol also expressed concern over W a n g c h u k ' s hunger strike.

