

# NEWS BEARER

NEWS FROM NEAR & FAR

■ RNI No. ASSENG/2015/66506 ■ VOL 09, ISSUE 13 ■ DIMA HASAO ■ PAGES: 8 ■ PRICE 10.00 ■ FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 08, 2024

## Re-orientation for PETs commences

**Kohima:** A comprehensive, three-day re-orientation training program for Physical Education Teachers (PETs) from the department of School Education in Nagaland commenced at the Multi-Purpose Hall of Rüzühkhrice Government Higher Secondary School in Kohima on Tuesday. Organized by the Directorate of School Education and funded by Samagra Shiksha Nagaland, the training aims to enhance the skills of PETs across the state, particularly in adapting to new educational policies and sports regulations. During the inaugural ceremony, Razouseyi Vese, addl director of School Education, acknowledged the pressing need for more PETs in Nagaland.

He emphasized that, as a state with limited funds, Nagaland has struggled to create sufficient posts for PETs across all schools. However, Vese assured attendees that the department was exploring alternative solutions in collaboration with other agencies to address this shortage. Presently, the state employs 263 PETs, a number he



described as insufficient given the demands of the student population.

Vese urged PETs to adopt resource-sharing practices and to extend their expertise to neighboring schools that may lack physical education support. "If PETs actively collaborate with adjacent schools, it will be a positive sign for community education," he remarked. He also encouraged teachers to nurture students' physical talents, recognizing physical well-being as a foundational element for academic and extracurricular excellence. Chungngam Konyak, Deputy Mission Director of Samagra Shiksha Nagaland, addressed the

participants, stressing the importance of leveraging the training to improve their performance. He noted that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places a renewed focus on physical education, which should inspire PETs to create a more impactful presence within their schools. Delivering the keynote address, Vitsolie Keyho, Physical Education Officer (PEO), highlighted that the primary objective of the training was to familiarize PETs with the latest rules and standards for sports activities. This knowledge, he said, will help PETs execute their responsibilities with greater fairness and accuracy. Keyho expressed

gratitude to Samagra Shiksha for facilitating this program and expressed optimism that the agency would continue to support high school and higher secondary sports tournaments across the state. The training will cover various topics critical to physical education and sports officiating. Sessions will be led by a range of experts, including: Neilazetuo Khezhie, FSTO on "Athletics – Officiating"; Neikuo-silie, FSTO, on "Athletics – Marketing"; Salew Kadete, certified in NIS Basketball, WABC Level-1, and BFI Panel-B on "Basketball" Mechievilie Yashü, National Football Referee (Level 5) on "Football" and Holshe Khrie, Sepaktakraw coach, on "Sepaktakraw" and Avisa Chase, Aerobics & Fitness Instructor, presenting "Mindful Living: The Intersection of Health, Well-being, and Yoga". The re-orientation program, set to continue through November 7, seeks to reinvigorate physical education across Nagaland's schools, empowering PETs with updated skills to foster a healthier, more active student population.

## Rhino poaching attempt in Orang National Park



**Guwahati:** Assam Police apprehended four suspected poachers at Orang National Park on the night of November 5. Acting on a tip-off, Darrang police intercepted the suspects before they could execute their plan to poach rhinos within the park's protected grounds.

The arrested individuals, identified as Nur Hussain, Abul Hussain, Jaffar Ali, and Nur Islam, were found in possession of a .303 rifle with ammunition, three mobile phones, five mo-

torcycles, and camping equipment. This gear suggested a well-coordinated attempt to target the park's rhino population. Assam's Director General of Police (DGP) GP Singh praised the police team for their effective response. Posting on his official X account, DGP Singh highlighted the police's prompt action, stating, "They were planning to go inside the park for poaching. Well done, @Darrang\_Police and units that provided the input."

## Asia's largest plywood industry stands in shambles

**Guwahati:** The A.R. & T. Company in Margherita, once Asia's largest plywood industry, has turned into a desolate landmark of abandonment, with its premises rumored to be haunted. Established in 1921 during British rule, the Assam Railway and Trading (A.R. & T.) Company thrived, shaping Margherita into a bustling industrial town and linking it inextricably with Assam's economic development. By the early 20th century, Margherita's A.R. & T. Company produced plywood and veneers exported to over 35 countries, earning it international acclaim and making it the bedrock of the local economy. This transformation into a ghostly relic began in 1996, following a Supreme Court ruling that led to its closure amidst a government-led environmental protection initiative. Local activist and former A.R. & T. employee Kamlesh Kumar Dubey highlights how, although the court ruling aimed at environmental protection, the Assam government under Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta's AGP failed to protect over 1,000 plywood industries, including A.R. & T., leading to a devastating economic impact on Margherita. Later, in 2008, a high-level committee attempted to reopen the industry, but machinery failures and escalating operational losses ultimately dashed these efforts. The shutdown not only led to significant economic distress



but also severed a deeply rooted cultural and historical connection with the region. A.R. & T.'s legacy goes beyond economic contributions; it represents a formative era of industrialization in Assam. During its peak, over 10,000 workers were employed directly, supporting thousands of families and fostering a flourishing community. The area remains a stark reminder of Margherita's past glory. Despite numerous calls from local leaders like Asomiya Yuba Mancha's Gautam Baruah to declare A.R. & T. a heritage site or revitalize it through alternative industrial efforts, the facility continues to decay. Community members have expressed frustration over what they see as governmental neglect, specifically criticizing Margherita's four-time MLA and former Industry Minister Pradyut Bor-

doloi for his perceived lack of initiative in reviving this lifeline of the town. As time passes, machinery imported from Italy and Germany during the industry's heyday has either vanished or been left to rust. Local authorities suspect encroachment on industrial land, with allegations that plots have been sold off unlawfully. Now, the once-proud structure of the A.R. & T. Company stands as a haunting reminder of an era when Margherita was a thriving economic powerhouse. For the people of Margherita, the sight of the A.R. & T. premises is not just an industrial ruin but a silent testament to unfulfilled potential. In calling for its preservation, they hope to reignite interest in a rich industrial heritage that has shaped not only Margherita but also Assam's journey through history.

## Nagaland CM urges boost economic stability

**Kohima:** Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has requested grants exceeding ₹40,000 crore from the 16th Finance Commission, which is currently assessing the state's fiscal requirements during a three-day visit. The funds are aimed at addressing Nagaland's capital deficit and enhancing long-term economic stability. In discussions with the commission, CM Rio emphasized the need for robust financial support to strengthen Nagaland's infrastructure and development, requesting ₹9,000 crore for a 364-km border highway with Assam and ₹865 crore for an airport at Ciethu. He also highlighted the need for an overall grant of ₹40,386.5 crore to gradually reduce the state's dependency on Revenue Deficit Grants. Rio noted that Nagaland's agriculture sector is shifting towards commercial crops, with increased cultivation of coffee, rubber, palm oil,

and areca nuts. To maximize farmer revenue, he urged the commission to fund value-addition activities such as sorting, grading, and processing, as well as establish market linkages. Nagaland's organic farming practices also provide the state with a competitive edge, creating high-demand niche markets. Rio stressed that sustained support would make agriculture a powerful economic driver at the grassroots level. While the tertiary sector—driven by tourism, hospitality, and a youthful population—accounts for 63.57% of Nagaland's economy, Rio underscored the need to develop the secondary sector, which has lagged due to prolonged financial challenges. Rio also requested ₹7,884.80 crore for upgrading public infrastructure, noting that most government buildings, including schools and hospitals, are over 50 years old and in disrepair.

## Tiwa Students' Union blocks NH 37, clash with police during protest in Jagiroad

**Guwahati:** The All Tiwa Students' Union, along with various tribal organizations, staged a massive protest in Jagiroad, resulting in the blockade of the national highway. This demonstration aimed to voice strong opposition against the establishment of the Jagiroad Town Committee and to address critical issues, including the eviction of encroachers within the designated tribal belt and the urgent call for a tripartite meeting concerning the inclusion of the Tiwa Autonomous Council in the Sixth Schedule of



the Indian Constitution. The protest escalated when police forces intervened to clear the highway and disperse the demonstrators. Despite attempts to restore order, the

protesters remained resolute, continuing to obstruct the road and asserting their demands. The situation grew increasingly tense as clashes erupted between the police

and the protesters, highlighting the growing frustrations among the Tiwa community regarding their rights and representation. Local residents witnessed the unfolding chaos, as the highway blockade not only disrupted traffic but also drew attention to the broader concerns surrounding tribal rights and local governance. The All Tiwa Students' Union has been vocal in its stance, emphasizing the need for greater autonomy and protection of tribal interests amid ongoing socio-political changes in the region.

## Assam Congress chief Bhupen Borah campaigns



**Guwahati:** With the Bongaigaon by-election drawing closer, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee President Bhupen Borah visited the constituency to rally support for Congress candidate Brajenjit Singh. During his campaign, Borah highlighted the party's commitment to local identity and regional pride, expressing confidence in Singh's potential to win by a large margin. According to Borah, "The Bongaigaon constituency has a deep-rooted spirit of regionalism. Congress has selected Brajenjit Singh as our candidate due to his strong sense of nationalism. I am confident that Singh will secure a decisive victory with significant voter support".

Borah also criticized the ruling BJP, alleging that its members have been fostering an atmo-

sphere of tension and hostility in Chamguri. He accused BJP "goons" of regularly instigating conflict in the area, calling it a calculated effort to intimidate the local populace and influence the election outcome. Additionally, Borah addressed allegations against the Congress candidate from Behali constituency, accused of distributing Rs. 2 crore in Jorhat and Rajasthan, a charge he refuted, dismissing it as baseless. Borah further pointed to allegations of financial misconduct within the BJP ranks, claiming that "Money from the coal and betel nut syndicates is being funneled to the residence of a prominent BJP leader in Jagiroad." He urged authorities to investigate these claims, which he argued reveal the BJP's deeper ties to illicit funding sources in Assam.

## Police busts cattle smuggling racket



**Guwahati:** Garchuk police in Guwahati successfully intercepted a 10-wheeler truck loaded with cattle during a high-stakes operation on Tuesday. The operation, directed by Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Nilotpal Saikia, led to the arrest of seven individuals and the recovery of 31 cattle heads. Tragically, some of the cattle did not survive the harsh conditions of transportation, and police found their remains within the truck. The detained suspects have been identified as Moisan Khan, Nazir Hussain, Fazrul Rahman, Amarjit Kalita, Haidar Ali, Abdul Kudus, and Afsar Ali. Authorities also impounded a Swift car believed to be involved in the smuggling effort, underscoring the organized nature of the operation. Preliminary reports link a local businessman from Assam's Barpeta district to the smuggling ring, suggesting he played a key role in sourcing the cattle. As police dig deeper into this case, they aim to expose the larger network underpinning this illicit trade. Law enforcement officials have now launched an in-depth investigation to uncover further connections in the smuggling network.

## Landowners Affected By Kohima-Jessami 2-Lane Road Construction Shuts Down NHIDCL Office

**Kohima:** Aggrieved landowners affected by the Kohima-Jessami 2-lane road construction project, packages II, III, IV, and V, temporarily closed down the office of the Regional Officer (RO) of the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) in Kohima after the ultimatum served to the NHIDCL for the release of compensation got expired. In a press release, aggrieved landowners' 2-lane road construction convenor Kiiveliyi Chuzho said that the executive director of NHIDCL did not respond positively to its request. According to the aggrieved landowners, NHIDCL has shown a lack of urgency and commitment to address their grievances despite several pleas and representations made by the affected landowners. Delays in providing lateral damage compensation and the repeated neglect of the landowner's concerns have only added to their frustration



and despair. The landowners stated that they have decided to temporarily close the office of the RO NHIDCL due to their lacklustre approach. They also stated that until NHIDCL provides a written assurance, the office will remain closed. The aggrieved landowners have requested the NHIDCL to take immediate action and fulfill its responsibilities to resolve their issues.

## Investigation into illegal mining demanded by the Arunachal Democratic Party

**Itanagar:** During a press conference, the state of Arunachal Pradesh's Arunachal Democratic Party called for an investigation into the suspected illicit coal mining operations occurring in the Changlang district. The Arunachal Democratic Party insisted that the Arunachal Pradesh government form an investigation committee to look into the illicit coal mining that is taking place in Changlang district.

Speaking at a press conference on Sunday, ADP general secretary Kipa Natung asserted that, despite being a source of income for the hill state, the state's Namchik-Namphuk coal mine is in danger because of illicit activity. He noted that even though the Supreme Court of India halted coal extraction in 2012 after ruling that 204



coal block allocations made between 1993 and 2011 were unlawful and capricious, completely violating the SC's mandate. He said that despite the district administration's creation of an Anti-Rat Hole Mining Oversight Committee to monitor illicit mining in several subdivisions, the committee filed a fabricated report asserting that Tirap, Changlang, and Longding districts were free of

unlawful activity. According to Natung, Tasar Talar, the mining director, denied any illicit coal mining when the ADP team visited with him to get the truth. He revealed that in addition to the SDO (mining), RFO, police station OC, and assistant mining division officer of the Kharsang subdivision of the district, a formal complaint has also been filed with the Special Investigation Cell against the committee members.

## Essa Warriors, Kohima Old Boys, and Kohima Legends triumph

**Kohima:** The third week of the Senior Masters League 2 saw three matches on November 2, with Essa Warriors, Kohima Old Boys, and Kohima Legends emerging victorious in their respective matches. The first match was played between Lhomithi Veterans CC and Essa Warriors. The Veterans set a modest target of 83 runs, having being bowled out in 19.5 overs. Toni Chishi scored 32 runs off 32 balls, and Pinku Deb contributed 23 off 39 balls. The bowlers of the defending champions, Essa Warriors, Alongba and Ao Shashi were in fine form, claiming three wickets each, and restricting the opposition effectively. Essa Warriors in response chased down the target with ease, reaching 86/4 in just 12.5 overs. Lhomithi bowlers Toni Chishi and Peter took three and one wickets respectively, but Essa Warriors won the match comfortably. The second match was played between debutant Nzon CC and Kohima Old Boys. Nzon CC set a competitive target of

121 runs with eight wickets lost in 20 overs. Ato Chang who scored an impressive 44 runs off 19 balls, and Meshenti Apon added 18 runs off 12 balls. The Kohima Old Boys bowlers however gave a tough set ups, with Lanusunep and Anga Shuya managing to contain the opposition, each taking two wickets. Kohima Old Boys in return chased the target with confidence, scoring 127/2 in just 17.5 overs. Meren Jamir led the way by scoring with 62 runs off 62 balls, while Anga Shuya contributed 23 off 16 balls. Achem of Nzon however was able to take our two wickets in their game to defend. The third and final match for the SML 3 third week was played between Kohima Legends and Chumu Blasters. The match witnessed Kohima Legends delivering a commanding performance, setting a massive target of 247/1 in 20 overs. Tapito's remarkable innings of 138 off just 64 balls and Thejaselhou Yhome's 86 coming off of 49 balls left the Chumu Blasters.

## Rupali Ganguly's stepdaughter Esha still stands by her damning 2020 post about 'cruel, controlling' actor

**Mumbai:** Rupali Ganguly is facing a fresh controversy, this one originates from within the home. Several media publishers have carried stories about a resurfaced Facebook post from 2020, which is seemingly from the account of Rupali's stepdaughter Esha Verma. In it, Esha called Rupali cruel and controlling, blaming her for her parents' separation after carrying on an affair for years. After four years, Esha still stands by that post. Rupali married Ashwin Verma in 2013 and they have a son together. Ashwin also has two daughters from his previous two marriages, the younger one being Esha. In her post from 2020, Esha made some serious allegations against Rupali. "This is absolutely pathetic. Does anyone know the real story of Rupali Ganguly? She has had an affair with Ashwin K Verma for twelve years while he was in his second marriage. Ashwin has two daughters from his previous marriages. She is nothing but a cruel-hearted



woman who has done nothing but tried to separate me and my sister, his own daughters from their father." She added, "I'm speaking out because she claims all over the media that she has a happy marriage with my dad, when in reality she's controlling and psychotic towards him. Whenever I try to call my father, she starts yelling and screaming death threats to myself and my mother. It's not fair that she ruined lives of Ashwin's real family and has been publicizing that they have a true love marriage when she's destroyed others to get what she wants. Honestly, she's conducted acts very similar

to what Rhea Chakraborty has done to SSR. She feeds my dad's strange medications and is very controlling of his life."

Esha, now 26 and living in New Jersey, tells us that the post was indeed her own. Talking about her resurfaced post she said, "I've been seeing it going viral and it's definitely overwhelming but I'm glad it's being brought to light". However, things with Rupali are no better. "Not really, there's no relationship between the two of us. She's just the mother of my brother, and that's about it." One also notices that shortly after the damning Facebook post, Esha also shared a rather pleasant

picture on Instagram with her father and Rupali in October 2021.

Explaining that as the 'bare minimum', she says, "Nothing much has changed, I posted the picture to showcase that I am related to both of them, since neither my father nor Rupali chose to acknowledge me as family, personally nor publicly. Going to meet my dad once after 5 years was a blessing but also the bare minimum, as people are very lucky in this world to have both their parents. My father hasn't been in my life and left home when I was 8. She following me on Instagram and taking me out to dinner was the bare minimum too. I wanted to post that picture to showcase that he is my father, as I have the right to do so. But he's never posted me, and it hurts to see that they're a great, happy family, but he left his other family behind." Attempts to reach Rupali for comment regarding the controversy have thus far been unsuccessful.

## Strong representation of women at DIFF 2024

**New Delhi:** Twenty four out of 45 films to be screened at the 13th edition of the Dharamshala International Film Festival are directed by female filmmakers, says festival co-founder Ritu Sarin, who believes it's essential to celebrate voices of women in cinema. The gala, which will run through November 7-10 in Dharamshala, will present more than 80 films from over 28 countries around the world, spanning narrative features, documentaries, and short films, alongside powerful stories from South Asia. Cannes Grand Prix winning-film "All We Imagine As Light", directed by Payal Kapadia, will open the festival. "I am incredibly proud to see such a strong representation of women in this year's festival, with 24 out of 45 feature films being directed by women -13 of them by Indian filmmakers - along with 19 short and mid-length films directed by women. Director Dibakar Banerjee, whose unreleased film "Tees" will be screened at the festival, will also conduct a masterclass

at DIFF. DIFF co-founder Tenzing Sonam said the gala has always been about more than just watching films. "It's a space for filmmakers and audiences to engage deeply with cinema and the stories that shape our world," Sonam added. Another highlight at the gala would be a conversation between actor Shahana Goswami and DIFF programming director Bina Paul. Some of the movies which are part of the line-up are: "Separated", "The Room Next Door", "MA - Cry of Silence", "Agent of Happiness", "Nocturnes", "A Fly on the Wall", and "Village Rockstars 2". DIFF, with the support of PictureTime, the festival's technical partners, will run a full programme of films across four theatres two auditoriums on site and two of Picture DIFF Online will enable audiences worldwide to access a curated selection of films remotely, after the physical festival. "Pooja, Sir" by Deepak Rauniyar will bring down the curtain on DIFF 2024.

## Reddit calls out man for claiming Sidharth Malhotra 'rudely' ignored him

**Staff Reporter:** A few days ago, a video featuring actor Sidharth Malhotra seemingly 'ignoring' a fan went viral. The video was shared by paparazzi initially and later reshared on various social media platforms. But it left the internet divided with some saying the actor had a right to his privacy while the others chiding him for being rude. Now, the fan in question has spoken out and accused Sidharth of being rude to him in a new video he posted. However, after that video was shared on Reddit, many users criticised the man for 'milking' the situation and called out his past 'stalker' behaviour. Several people posted the original video on X, criticizing Sidharth. The video shows a fan approaching him with a handmade sketch of the actor at the airport, but Sidharth does not stop for him. Many portals carried internet reactions to Sidharth 'ignoring' the fan. On Sunday, the artist who routinely approaches celebs with his handmade sketches, shared a video claiming Sidharth was rude to him on Sunday. The video was shared



on the subreddit Bolly Blinds N Gossip titled "Bro is milking this now." The original poster said that the first video had made it clear that Sidharth appreciated his work, and has previously met him too.

"It was quite audible in the airport video that Sid responded with 'good job'. Also I have seen a tweet where it was said that this guy has had chased sid in the past too and he appreciated his paintings 2 times," read the post's subhead. Redditors reacted strongly to the accusation of rudeness saying that celebs were entitled to their privacy and space as well. "What do these people think of celebrities? Can't they be

having a bad day or going through something that you may not have any idea about," asked one user. Another made fun of the artist claiming it is his 'first time being ignored by a celebrity', saying, "Bro has been humbled without achieving anything." Many others pointed out that the artist is routinely known to 'chase' celebs, likening him to a stalker. "So he is a stalker," wrote one. Another added, "He's wearing a mask, ignoring you once twice and thrice. Why did you even persist... Let him go.. Creep." Sidharth Malhotra has not responded to the original video, or the news articles accusing him of rudeness after that.

## Samantha Ruth Prabhu said, 'I accept failure'

**Agency:** Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu has opened up about her last few films saying that she "might not have done my best" in them. On Monday, the actor held an Ask Me Anything session on Instagram in which she revealed making "some mistakes in the past". Talking about her upcoming show Citadel: Honey Bunny, she said that it is the "most layered, complicated, and challenging role" of her career. A person asked, "Can you tell us how hard have you worked for Citadel and what your character would look like?" Samantha said, "I made a promise to myself that I'll challenge myself with every role that I take, each challenge being more difficult than the last one. I agree I made some mistakes in the past and things haven't really worked out, and I accept failure. I accept that I might not have done my best in my last few films." "Citadel is something that I am truly proud of, even before its release just for the fact that I was able to complete the project. So I'm already proud of it. I also do believe that it is the most layered, complicated, and challenging role that I have played in my career. she concluded with a smile.

## Meenakshi Seshadri says Rahul Rawail made her cry



**Mumbai:** Meenakshi Seshadri took a trip down memory lane and talked about the experience of working on the 1987 film Dacait. Speaking with Friday Talkies, Meenakshi shared how she was very eager to work with the director Rahul Rawail because he had given several hit films in the past. However, the actor shared that the director made her cry and even declined to pay her for the film. During the interview, Meenakshi said in Hindi, "Rahul Rawail ji came to meet me. I thought I would work with the director who has made films like Betaab, Arjun, and Love Story. He told me clearly that Sunny will have the main role in Dacait and his family will have more importance in the film but the 5-6 scenes and

2-3 songs that you will feature in will be very good and they will have strong content and I believe in presenting my heroines very beautifully. I told him that he did not need to convince me anymore." She added: "He did make me cry though during the signing. He clearly refused to give me my price. He said, 'I won't give you the price. You are working with me... that itself is your price. Whatever I will give, take it happily.' But I was such a fan of his that I smiled while crying and agreed to do it. I was young and wanted to earn well." Released in 1987, Dacait was directed by Rahul Rawail and starred Sunny Deol, Meenakshi, Raakhee, Raza Murad, Suresh Oberoi, Paresh Rawal, and Urmila Matondkar.

## Tata Tea Gold VitaCare launches innovative campaign to combat Vitamin D deficiency

**Guwahati:** In a bid to tackle the alarming prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in India, Tata Tea Gold VitaCare has launched a groundbreaking print campaign featuring an acrylic mirror advertisement and an augmented reality (AR) face test.

This initiative comes in conjunction with World Vitamin D Day and aims to raise awareness about vitamin deficiencies, particularly vitamin D, which affects approximately 70% of the population, according to a 2021 study published in the Journal of Nutritional Science. The campaign highlights the critical need for convenient wellness solutions,

especially in urban areas where indoor lifestyles restrict sun exposure, hindering natural vitamin D synthesis. Tata Tea Gold VitaCare, enriched with essential vitamins D, B12, B6, and B9, provides a simple way for consumers to obtain 30% of their daily vitamin intake through just two cups of tea.

Mr. Puneet Das, President of Packaged Beverages at Tata Consumer Products, emphasized the brand's commitment to enhancing consumer experience through accessible and delicious wellness options. "This campaign underscores our dedication to making conscious choices both convenient and enjoyable," he stated.



Awareness around health and wellness is steadily growing, with consumers increasingly seeking products that integrate nutritional benefits into their daily routines. This campaign's innovative approach is expected to resonate well with health-conscious individuals in the region, further promoting the significance of vitamin intake in everyday life.

## Bandhan Group enters tech arena with acquisition of Genisys Group

**Guwahati:** Bandhan Group, a prominent name in financial services, has ventured into the technology sector with its acquisition of Genisys Group, a global player in IT and business process services.

This acquisition bolsters Bandhan's reach with new offices in the U.S., UK, and India, adding expertise in digital transformation, cloud services, AI-powered analytics, and more. Arvind Agrawal, Managing Director of Bandhan Financial Services, emphasized the strategic timing, noting the growing impact of digital transformation across sectors, particularly in BFSI. "The ongoing global disruptions driven by hyper-automation, AI, and cloud computing are reshaping the IT industry. We recognized an opportuni-

ty to acquire Genisys Group, bringing its balanced portfolio and decades of experience," he said.

In Guwahati, business leaders view this move as a significant step, with potential to strengthen the local market by attracting tech talent and investment. Bandhan's entry into IT aligns with aspirations for Guwahati to emerge as a tech hub, potentially fostering partnerships and economic growth in the region. Genisys CEO Satish Subramaniam shared excitement about the merger, highlighting Bandhan's investment potential and expertise as drivers for global scaling and innovation. Together, Bandhan and Genisys aim to deliver agile, data-driven solutions, creating enduring value for clients worldwide.

## Vi launches festive Deepawali rewards for subscribers



**Mumbai:** Leading telecom operator Vi is celebrating Deepawali with exciting rewards for its subscribers, promising to enhance the festive experience. From now until November 3, customers can recharge via the Vi App and qualify for a spin-the-wheel game to win guaranteed rewards, including additional data and recharge packs valued at Rs 3,499. The Deepawali offers encompass a range of benefits: customers can receive extra data ranging from 1GB to 30GB, along with discount coupons from popular online portals. With the ability to spin the wheel and answer a simple question post-recharge, users have a chance to win every 48 hours. This initiative is expected to generate significant interest, as subscribers increasingly seek value-added services and enhanced connectivity during the festive season. With a growing population of tech-savvy consumers in the region, the promotional offers are likely to resonate well, driving higher engagement on the Vi App. Additionally, subscribers can enjoy instant discounts of up to Rs 100 on annual prepaid packs, along with attractive discounts on vouchers from brands like Mynt, Flipkart, and Amazon. Vi aims to provide greater value to customers, ensuring they stay connected with loved ones during this festive period.

## India's classical language status boosts Assamese, Bengali and Marathi; celebrations held in Peru

**Guwahati:** The Indian Embassy in Lima, Peru, recently held a cultural celebration to honor the Government of India's designation of Assamese, Bengali, Marathi, Pali, and Prakrit as classical languages. This status, which raises India's classical language count to eleven, brings increased global attention to these languages and promotes academic support and cultural engagement.

Indian Ambassador Vikas Sapkal addressed attendees, highlighting the Indian gov-

ernment's commitment to fostering linguistic diversity through research funding and preservation efforts.

The Lima event showcased cultural performances from Assamese, Bengali, and Marathi communities, underscoring these languages' rich histories and roles in Indian literature and heritage. Over 100 guests, including members of the Indian community and distinguished Peruvians, joined in the celebration. For Guwahati, this milestone is expected to create new op-

portunities, especially for Assamese.

Local leaders and cultural organizations see the designation as a potential boost for cultural tourism, academic exchanges, and international partnerships. They anticipate that this recognition will attract interest from language scholars, investors, and cultural enthusiasts, positioning Guwahati as a key center for Assamese language promotion, thereby enhancing the region's economic and cultural profile on the global stage.

## JSW MG Motor India offers a special offer

**Guwahati:** JSW MG Motor India has announced the expansion of the MG Hector lineup, India's first Internet SUV, by including two new 7-seater variants, the Hector Plus 7-Seater Select Pro and Smart Pro, offer a spacious and versatile option for customers seeking a premium SUV experience. The Select Pro is powered by a 1.5T petrol engine paired with a CVT transmission, delivering a smooth and efficient driving experience. Available in a 2.0L diesel engine, the Smart Pro variant is equipped with a 6-speed manual transmission, offering fuel efficiency and torque. "The addition of our new 7-seater Hector variants underscores JSW MG Motor India's commitment to meeting the evolving needs of our valued customers," shared Satinder Singh Bajwa, Chief Commercial Officer, JSW MG Motor India. Priced competitively, the new variants of the Hector making all the key features more accessible that have made the Hector a popular SUV, including its commanding road presence, advanced technology, and superior driving comfort. Both Select Pro and Smart Pro variants come with the unique car ownership program "MG SHIELD," offering after-sales service options.



## MG Windsor becomes India's highest-selling Electric Car



**Guwahati:** JSW MG Motor India recorded remarkable sales for its recently launched MG Windsor, India's 1st Intelligent CUV, in October 2024. The company sold 3116 units of the CUV, contributing nearly 30% of total Passenger Electric Car sales in October. The company witnessed a 31% YoY growth, selling 7045\* units in October 2024, the highest sales figure achieved since the company's inception. The carmaker's sharp focus on sustainable mobility solutions for a cleaner tomorrow is yielding encouraging results, with its NEV portfolio significantly contributing to sales growth, M-o-M. In October, NEVs contributed 70% of the total sales of JSW MG Motor India, reflecting the rapid increase in popularity of the company's electric vehicle portfolio among customers.

## Swiggy kicks off IPO with price band of Rs 371- Rs 390 per share

**Guwahati:** Swiggy Limited, India's leading on-demand convenience platform, has officially launched its Initial Public Offering (IPO) today, with the price band set between ₹371 and ₹390 per equity share. The IPO will close on November 08, 2024. The offering consists of a fresh issue of equity shares worth up to ₹44,990 million, along with an offer for sale of 175,087,863 shares by existing shareholders. As part of the IPO, 750,000 equity shares have been reserved for eligible employees, constituting up to 5% of the post-offer paid-up equity share capital. Investors can place bids for a minimum of 38 shares,



and in multiples thereafter. Swiggy aims to list its shares on both the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE). The IPO is being managed by a group of prominent investment banks including Kotak Mahindra Capital Com-

pany, J.P. Morgan India, Citigroup Global Markets, and others, who are leading the book-building process. Swiggy's IPO comes at a pivotal moment as the company looks to further solidify its position in India's competitive food-tech and convenience sector.

## Nissan Motor India registers October sales of 5570 units

**Guwahati:** Nissan Motor India has witnessed strong customer demand this festive season for the New Nissan Magnite. With festive fervour driving sales, the company registered 5570 wholesale dispatches in the month of October 2024. Out of the total sales for the month, export wholesales accounted for 2449 units & domestic wholesales comprised of 3121 units. Mr. Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India, said, "We would like to thank our valued customers for their overwhelming response to the New Nissan Magnite this festive period." The growing demand for the 'Made in India' Magnite across international markets has enabled Nissan to expand its export footprint to more than 45 new markets, bringing its total presence to over 65 countries, including Left-Hand drive markets. The New Nissan Magnite features a bold, stylish design both inside and out, offering 20+ first & Best-In-Segment features and 55+ total safety features.

# New Zealand announces changes to student visa fees and immigration policies effective October 1

The New Zealand substantial levies, set October adjust- pact



aims charges a ctual cessing visa Despite the fee remains committed neighbours by continuing to applicants from Pacific countries.

Immigration Minister Erica Stanford emphasised that even with the new charges, New Zealand's visa fees remain competitive compared to countries like Australia and the United Kingdom. Among the most notable changes is the increase in student visa fees. Applicants from regions classified as Band C, including much of the world outside of the Pacific and a few other specific regions, will see the student visa fee rise from NZD 300 to NZD 485. The post-study work visa fee, however, will decrease from NZD 490 to NZD 320. This decrease

Government has announced a increase in visa fees and to take effect from 1, 2024. These ments will im- almost all visa cat- egor- ies, as the gov- ern-

ment to align with the costs of pro- applications. hike, New Zealand to supporting its Pacific offer subsidised fees for appli-

comes alongside a significant increase in the immigration levy associated with these visas. The student visa levy will rise from NZD 95 to NZD 265, while the post-study work visa levy will see a dramatic jump from NZD 210 to NZD 1350.

The Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV), which is the primary temporary work visa in New Zealand, will also experience changes. The AEWV fee will be reduced slightly from NZD 540 to NZD 480. However, the immigration levy for this visa will increase substantially from NZD 210 to NZD 1060.

This visa is crucial for ensuring that New Zealanders are prioritised for jobs while allowing employers to hire skilled migrants where genuine labour shortages exist. In addition to fee changes, the government has also announced updates to the AEWV scheme. These updates introduce new requirements aimed at further regulating the employment of migrant workers. One of the key changes is the introduction of an English language requirement for migrants applying for low-skilled roles classified under ANZSCO (Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations) levels 4 and 5. Additionally, a minimum skill and work experience threshold will be implemented for most AEWV roles. For roles at ANZSCO levels 4 and 5, employers will now need to engage with Work and Income, New Zealand's welfare agency, before they can be granted approval to hire



migrants. This step ensures that local workers are given priority and that hiring migrants is truly necessary. Furthermore, the maximum continuous stay for most roles at these levels will be reduced from five years to three years.

## Toxic baby products are real. How do you choose better?

Parents go above and beyond to care for their little ones, ensuring they have the softest clothes, the most nutritious meals, and everything else to keep them safe and happy. They never cut corners or expenses when it comes to their children. Yet, despite these efforts, toxic baby products still manage to reach little ones, posing hidden risks that can harm them in unexpected and serious ways. Toxicity in baby products has become a major concern over the past few years due to a combination of heightened awareness, scientific research, regulatory changes, and increased access to information. "Parents today are more informed through social media, blogs, and online communities, where concerns about chemicals like BPA, phthalates, and parabens are widely shared," Dr Shreya Dubey, a consultant in neonatology and paediatrics at CK Birla Hospital, Gurugram, tells India Today. The doctor observes that there is growing recognition that the first few years of life are critical for brain and body development, making exposure to even low levels of toxic substances more concerning. Parents are now more inclined to look for natural, non-toxic alternatives. Dr Gowri Ravi Chinthalapalli, a consultant in child development at Aster CMI Hospital, Bengaluru, agrees, noting an increased demand for natural and organic products to minimise exposure to harmful chemicals.

What are these chemicals?

"Chemicals like phthalates and triclosan found in fragrances, plastics, and food packaging, along with parabens and preservatives in many personal care products, are linked to hormonal disruption, antibiotic resistance, and potential health risks," mentions Dr Chinthalapalli. The doctor further explains that bisphenol A (BPA), found in plastic baby bottles and canned food linings, can seep into food and drinks, especially when heated, and is associated with various health issues, including reproductive problems and cancer.

Not only this, but sulphates (SLS and SLES), present in shampoos and body washes, are strong detergents that can strip skin of natural oils, leading to skin irritation and allergies. Meanwhile, talc, often used to prevent diaper rash and chafing, may be carcinogenic.

Additionally, Dr Dubey shares that toys, which children love playing with, can contain lead, phthalates, BPA, and PVC—chemicals that can cause developmental

issues. These toxins can be present in various baby products for several reasons, such as increasing shelf life, making clothes wrinkle-resistant, enhancing product texture, and adding color. Research has found that many products made for babies contain harmful chemicals. In a new-

study of items designed for borns, babies, and toddlers—such as car seats, breastfeeding pillows, changing pads, crib wedges, and bassinet mattresses—80 per cent of t h e



products con- chemical flame retardants that are known to be toxic. The experts recommend that parents should always opt for toxin-free, BPA-free, organic, or eco-friendly products to ensure safety. Frequently used baby products, such as toys, should be washed regularly.

One should consciously choose glass or stainless steel bottles instead of plastic feeding bottles. It is also important to avoid strongly fragranced soaps and shampoos.

# Are organic foods healthy or is it all just a pricey scam

**Mumbai:** We are the social media generation—hyper-aware and always connected. We want our beauty products to be chemical-free, our food carb-free, and our lives stress-free (though that last one might be a stretch!). SO, while health consciousness is on the rise, the one word we tend to overuse is ‘organic.’ If a product claims to be organic, it often goes straight into our shopping cart. But what does organic food really mean, and does choosing organic truly make it safer? The term organic food often brings to mind images of fresh, pesticide-free produce, but it’s essential to understand what this label does and doesn’t mean. “In India, ‘organic’ signifies food grown without synthetic pesticides, fertilisers, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs), relying instead on natural substances and methods like crop rotation and composting,” Vandana Verma, senior dietician, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, tells India Today. Adding to this, Vaishali Verma, consultant - nutrition and dietetics, Manipal Hospital, New Delhi, states that organic farming emphasises soil health, sustainable practices, and natural pest control techniques.



Additionally, organic food production aims to minimise environmental impact and promote biodiversity. However, it is important to note that natural and organic foods are not the same. Not all natural foods are organic, even though all organic foods are natural. “Genetically modified organisms (GMOs), synthetic fertilisers, and pesticides are not used in the production of organic food, and certain guidelines for animal welfare are followed. But the label for natural foods is subject to less regulation. Generally, it indicates that the product is free of artificial colouring, flavouring, and preservatives; however, it doesn’t ensure the absence of GMOs or synthetic pesticides,” adds Vaishali Verma. Organic vs conventionally grown food Vandana Verma explains, “Studies show that organic foods may have slightly more antioxidants, certain vitamins, and minerals than conventional options, though the difference is not consistently significant.” According to Vaishali

Verma, differences in vitamin content, like Vitamin C, are typically minimal between organic and conventional foods. While organic practices may enhance soil health, they don’t necessarily lead to significant changes in mineral levels, as these are primarily influenced by soil quality. Factors like soil quality, crop variety, seasonality, and storage methods play a larger role than organic or conventional labelling in determining nutrient content. Additionally, conventional products are often shipped long distances, which can compromise freshness, whereas organic products are typically available locally and may retain more freshness. “A major difference between organic and conventionally grown food lies in the use of pesticides, which is significantly lower in organic farming with minimal reliance on toxins. However, organic food tends to deteriorate quickly due to fewer preservatives,” adds Dr Archana Batra, a Gurugram-based dietitian. She mentions that organic food also comes at a higher price, making it less accessible, especially for lower-income households. “To maintain your health on a budget, I recommend focusing on whole foods and seasonal produce, regardless of how they are grown,” she advises.

Dr Archana Batra believes that organic food is far from a scam. “It has a range of nutritional benefits due to its lack of synthetic additives or pesticides, which reduces toxin intake. However, with proper preparation and planning, both conventional and organic foods can be healthy,” she says. Vandana Verma adds that while organic food may reduce exposure to certain chemicals, there’s no guarantee it’s entirely free from contamination. Both conventional and organic products have their pros and cons.

A key concern is the high cost, which limits access to organic food for many people. Organic foods also have a shorter shelf life, leading to more waste, and they are less accessible in certain regions, which limits choice. Be aware that organic doesn’t always mean healthier; processed organic products can still contain sugars and unhealthy fats.

in monsoon. The transitional shift in the weather can cause cold due to multiple strains of viruses. One can easily get infected with the common cold irrespective of their age. It includes symptoms like wheezing, sore throat, cough, cold, headache, and runny nose. The symptoms start to alleviate usually in a few days after taking the necessary precautions and medications prescribed by the doctor. Pneumonia is a serious lung infection that causes discomfort and respiratory distress. It causes the air sac to get filled with pus or fluids. The risk of developing pneumonia significantly rises during monsoon due to increased moisture, and dampness in the environment. People are advised to stay cautious as it can be transmitted through the mucus and saliva of the infected person. Bronchitis. This leads to severe inflammation in the airway passage of the lungs. Due to this inflammation, one can experience coughing, and a stuffy nose making it difficult to breathe. Bronchitis causes the airway passage to narrow down and restricts the airflow to the lungs. Asthma attacks: Monsoon can exacerbate asthma symptoms due to environmental and lifestyle factors.

## Erandwane, Dahanukar Colony hit hard as Zika cases surge

Pune has so far reported 75 cases of Zika virus infection of which 30 cases are reported from the Erandwane and Dahanukar colony areas alone, as per the area-wise data shared by Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). Experts claim both these areas have active transmission of the Zika virus due to which a higher number of patients are being reported from Erandwane and Dahanukar colony. he scientist from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune in July found virus presence in the adult mosquitoes and larvae samples collected from these areas. It is significant to cut down the transmission in this area to bring the situation under control, they said. According to Dr Mahendra Jagtap, state entomologist, Public Health Department, Erandwane and Dahanukar colony have reported a large number of cases indicating there is active transmission of Zika virus in this area and even the mosquito samples have tested positive for the virus infection. “The active transmission needs to be cut down with vector control measures. A large number of cases point out the screening programme and surveillance is done appropriately,” Jagtap said. The PMC reported its first cases of Zika virus infection in a 46-year-old doctor from Erandwane and his 15-year-old daughter.

To date, PMC has reported 75 cases which includes 33 expecting mothers. The remaining areas have reported relatively fewer cases with Kharadi (10), Ghole Road ward (7), Mundhwa (5), Pashan (5), Sukhsagarnagar (6), Ambegaon, Dhole Patil Road and Kalas (3 each) and Wanowrie – 1. Also, four suspected Zika virus deaths have been reported in the city, one each in Baner, Kharadi, Warje and Kothrud. Dr Suryakant Devkar, assistant health officer of PMC, said, the active Zika-affected areas in Erandwane and Dahanukar colony are located at a distance of one-and-half kilometres of distance.

“The population in these areas is an elite population with most of them frequent international travellers. The source of the infection was not found. Initially, due to less awareness in the public, the citizen’s participation was poor. Later additional staff was deployed for the Zika surveillance in the affected area,” he said. To curb the spread, authorities emphasize the need for immediate and focused efforts to reduce transmission in these affected areas. Public health measures are being ramped up to bring the situation under control and prevent further spread of the diseases. However, as per the experts from ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology (ICMR-NIE), Chennai the city has local transmission of Zika virus infection.

# Different Respiratory Diseases During Monsoon And How To Fight Them Expert Explains

Respiratory problems are aggravated during the monsoon season due to factors like dust mites, pollens, dirt, and dampness in the air. Hence, people are at a higher risk of developing respiratory infections like Acute rhinopharyngitis (common cold), pneumonia, bronchitis, and asthma attacks during the rainy season. Monsoon is synonymous with respiratory infections in people of all age groups. This is because the air is filled with moisture, dust particles, dirt, and pollutants that can interfere with your lungs and airway passage. A large number of people tend to experience acute rhinopharyngitis (common cold), pneumonia, bronchitis, and asthma attacks. The transitional shift in the weather and temperature creates a perfect atmosphere for germs, and bacteria to thrive. It becomes essential to take utmost care of your respiratory health, especially during monsoon. People are advised to maintain respiratory hygiene by disposing of the used tissue, frequently washing hands, and wearing masks when needed to reduce direct exposure to pathogens and toxins present in the air. Times Now Digital spoke to Dr Samir Garde, Director of Dept of Pulmonology and Lung Transplant,



Gleneagles Hospital, to understand these diseases and how to fight them. Common Respiratory Infections in Monsoon. Acute rhinopharyngitis (common cold): It is one of the most common types of respiratory infection experienced by people

in monsoon. The transitional shift in the weather can cause cold due to multiple strains of viruses. One can easily get infected with the common cold irrespective of their age. It includes symptoms like wheezing, sore throat, cough, cold, headache, and runny nose. The symptoms start to alleviate usually in a few days after taking the necessary precautions and medications prescribed by the doctor. Pneumonia is a serious lung infection that causes discomfort and respiratory distress. It causes the air sac to get filled with pus or fluids. The risk of developing pneumonia significantly rises during monsoon due to increased moisture, and dampness in the environment. People are advised to stay cautious as it can be transmitted through the mucus and saliva of the infected person. Bronchitis. This leads to severe inflammation in the airway passage of the lungs. Due to this inflammation, one can experience coughing, and a stuffy nose making it difficult to breathe. Bronchitis causes the airway passage to narrow down and restricts the airflow to the lungs. Asthma attacks: Monsoon can exacerbate asthma symptoms due to environmental and lifestyle factors.

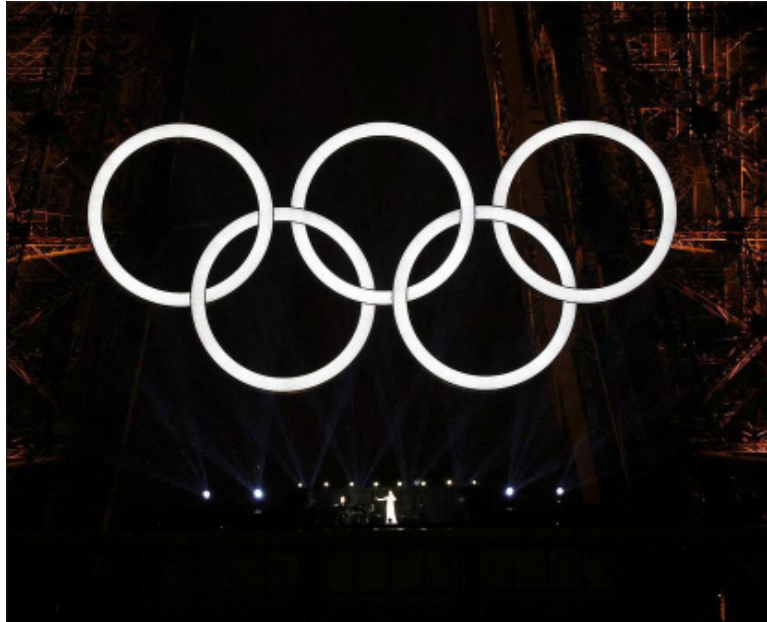
# India takes big step towards hosting 2036 Olympics, submits 'Letter of Intent' to IOC

**Ahmedabad:** India has taken the first big step towards its ambition to host the Olympics. It has officially submitted a 'Letter of Intent' to the International Olympic Committee's Future Host Commission for hosting the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games. India had several informal dialogues with the IOC regarding the matter before they took the final decision, as according to a report in PTI, the IOA submitted the letter on October 1. "This monumental opportunity could bring substantial benefits, fostering economic growth, social progress, and youth empowerment across the country," a source in the sports ministry told PTI. Enhance your career with IIT Delhi's Design Thinking & Innovation Programme. Enroll now! India Prime Minister Narendra Modi, last year, talked about his government's aspiration to host the 2036 mega sporting event in the country. He also talked about the same during his visit to New York this year in September. "...Only a few days ago, the Paris Olympics concluded. Very soon, you will witness the Olympics in India too. We are

**India has officially submitted a 'Letter of Intent' to the IOC's Future Host Commission for hosting the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games. India**

putting in all possible efforts to host the 2036 Olympics," PM Modi said in New York. India ended its campaign at the recently concluded Paris Olympics with six medals, including five bronze and a silver. A decision on the host will not be taken before the IOC elections next year and India will also have to face competition from several other nations like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, who are positioning themselves as strong contenders to host the sporting spectacle. However, with the submission of a 'Letter of Intent', the nation has progressed from "Informal Dialogue" to the "Continuous Dialogue" stage of the host election process. In this stage, the IOC conducts a "feasibility study" of the progress of projects associated with the Games in the potential host.

"As part of the Feasibility As-



essment, independent sources in a wide-ranging number of areas are taken into consideration, including in human rights, through Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), and sustainability, through the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)," the IOC states on

its official website. The next phase of the process would be "Targetted Dialogue", which would require the submission of an edition-specific formal bid, which would be assessed by the Future Host Commission. The process would finally end with a host election.

## CSK will rest MS Dhoni to get best out of him

**New Delhi:** Former Australia captain and Punjab Kings' newly-appointed head coach Ricky Ponting laid out what could be the Chennai Super Kings mantra in managing the workload of MS Dhoni in IPL 2025. He hailed the former CSK captain for his longevity in the Indian Premier League for the franchise. Ponting called him crucial for the Chennai franchise, focusing on his experience and leadership being invaluable for the team. He pointed out that CSK could rest Dhoni occasionally in order to get the best out of him. MS Dhoni was retained by the Chennai Super Kings in the uncapped player category for Rs 4 crore. However, the fans were elated with Dhoni being available for another season for the 5-time champions. C. "I think it will be exactly the same now...they might not get him through the whole season. They might think about leaving him out for a game and resting him up here and there to make sure that they're getting the best out of him," Ponting told ICC.

## Harbhajan Singh reacts after medical report claims boxer

**New Delhi:** Imane Khelif, an Algerian boxer, dominated Paris Olympics 2024 after she won the gold medal in the women's 66kg category, despite her eligibility for the Games being questioned by many on social media. Khelif, who has been labelled as a biological man by many, now once again finds herself in hot waters after a leaked medical report confirmed that the boxer, is indeed a man. Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh has also now reacted to the latest development, asking the Olympics organisers to take back the gold medal. The leaked medical report, which was originally been secured by French journalist Djaffar Ait Aoudia, claims that the boxer has "internal testicles and XY chromosomes." The medical report also hints at a disorder called 5-alpha reductase insufficiency. Journalist Piers Morgan also reacted to the report, which is going viral on social media, saying, "Confirmation of what some of us said at the time: Khelif is a biological man. The gold medal should now be stripped and awarded to the



best actual woman." The medical report is believed to be drafted by experts from the Kremlin-Bicetre Hospital in Paris and the Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Hospital in Algiers. The said report originally was drafted in June 2023. The report thoroughly explains Khelif's biological traits, such as the existence of internal testicles and the lack of a uterus. An MRI report also suggests the presence of a micro penis, as reported by Redux. For the unversed, Imane Khelif was banned by the International Boxing As-

sociation (IBA) in 2023. She was barred from participating in the World Championship Gold Medal fight in New Delhi. Recently, US Presidential candidate Donald Trump had also used Imane Khelif as an example to criticise the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris administration's gender-ad sports policy. Earlier, in response to the gender dispute, Khelif had earlier declared that she is indeed a woman. "I'm a woman like any other woman. I was born as a woman, I live as a woman, and I am qualified."

## Liverpool one of Europe's best ahead of clash

**New Delhi:** Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso has hailed Liverpool as one of Europe's top teams as he prepares his side for a pivotal Champions League showdown at Anfield on Tuesday. With both teams in impressive form, the encounter is set to be a high-stakes battle as they vie for supremacy in Group C. Alonso's team currently sits sixth in the competition standings with seven points from three games. Liverpool, under the management of Arne Slot, are riding high with a perfect nine points, leading both the Champions League group and the Premier League. Speaking at a press conference on Monday, Alonso underscored the intensity of the challenge that lies ahead. "For us, it is a big challenge. Liverpool at the moment are one of the best, if not the best, in Europe," Alonso remarked. "They are showing that in the Premier League and Champions League. They have a good squad and a great coach. We're looking forward to it—let's see what happens." Alonso, a former Liverpool midfielder who made over 200 appearances for the club from 2004 to 2009 and was part of the squad that famously won the Champions League in 2005, acknowledged the formidable task Leverkusen will face. With Liverpool in exceptional form, the Spaniard

emphasized the importance of staying focused and resilient throughout the match. "You can play 70 minutes great, and in 20 minutes the game is gone, so mentally and emotionally we need to be ready," Alonso said. "In all areas, they are really strong, so the process works really well. The manager [Slot] has done a fantastic job in three months." Returning to Liverpool is always a meaningful experience for Alonso, but he's keeping his focus strictly on the task at hand. "Unfortunately, there is no time for tourism—maybe a little run or walk tomorrow," he said. "I know the city very well; I love it, but tomorrow I will focus on the game and only the game." Reflecting on Liverpool's evolution since his playing days, Alonso added, "It feels great to be back here after a few years. It's always special. You notice the development of the club; the new stand looks amazing. Tomorrow is a big game against cannot get much better than that." The game promises to be a key test for both teams as they seek to secure a place in the knockout rounds. For Alonso, however, it's also a personal return to the place where he first made his mark in European football—a narrative that adds yet another layer of anticipation to this exciting matchup.

# Red Bull's Verstappen nears 4th straight F1 title after winning Brazilian Grand Prix under rain

**Agency:** Red Bull driver Max Verstappen took a major step toward securing his fourth straight F1 title by winning the Brazilian Grand Prix, despite starting 17th, and increasing his lead over McLaren's Lando Norris with three more races remaining. The Dutchman could secure the trophy in Las Vegas later this month. All he needs to do is to finish ahead of the McLaren driver. Other combinations could also secure the title for the 27-year-old. In one of the best drives of his career, Verstappen overcame punishments before the race as well as the wet weather at Interlagos to earn his first victory since June, and his eighth Grand Prix win of the year. He won by almost 20 seconds and also clocked the fastest lap at Interlagos 17 times during the race to receive an extra point. The Dutchman increased his lead from 44 to 62 points over Norris, who won Saturday's sprint race. Norris started in pole position but finished in a disappointing sixth position. He avoided losing more points in an investigation by stewards, who fined him and Mercedes' George Russell 5,000 euros (\$5,440) for breaching the FIA's start procedure. Verstappen had been on course for a tough weekend in Sao Paulo. He received a five-place grid punishment after changing his engine for the sixth time in the season — the maximum allowed is four. He lost one point in Saturday's sprint race because of another penalty. And then his qualifying session earlier on Sunday was interrupted when he was 12th and trying to clock a fast lap to reach the final part



of the session. "My emotions today were a roller coaster," Verstappen said after the race. "We stayed out of trouble, we made the right calls and we were flying." Verstappen said later at a press conference that winning in Brazil was "incredibly important" in his bid for a fourth title and that he had been expecting to see his overall lead reduced. "It felt like I was driving a boat," Verstappen joked. When asked about what he expects next, he said: "I just want clean races, that's all. I am not thinking about clinching the championship in Vegas or whatever." After the Las Vegas GP on Nov. 23, there are races in Qatar (Dec. 1) and Abu Dhabi (Dec. 8), with a combined total of 86 points available. The two Alpine drivers, Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly, completed the podium. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who started the race with a long shot at the drivers' title, finished fifth. F1 governing body FIA had rescheduled

the qualifying session for 7:30 a.m. local time (1030 GMT) Sunday after heavy rain on Saturday. The start of the Grand Prix was brought forward from 2 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. (1530 GMT), while many in the paddock still wondered whether the drivers would take their cockpits at all during the morning. The tense race under rain in Sao Paulo had an aborted start when Aston Martin's Lance Stroll went off on the formation lap. Norris could not hold his first position in the first turn, losing it to Russell.

The McLaren driver struggled until the end of the race to find his line under the rain, which Verstappen clearly managed to do from the start, finding grip where others couldn't in the inside of the track. The big boost for Verstappen, and possibly a key moment in the drivers' championship, came when Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg spun off in the 27th of 69 laps. A virtual safety car came in

and many drivers chose to go to their pit lanes but Verstappen, Ocon and Gasly opted not to stop and the gamble paid off. Five laps later, to the huge disappointment of about 10,000 Argentinian fans at Interlagos, Williams driver Franco Colapinto crashed. That meant a red flag, only minutes after leaders Russell and Norris had pitted. Ocon, Verstappen and Gasly changed their tires without losing their places, putting Norris under even bigger pressure to deliver. "It was the right time to box," Norris said after the race. "We were just unlucky." "I did all I could today. That's all. Max won the race. Good on him, well done but it doesn't change anything for me," he added. Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton, who finished 10th, also praised Verstappen's performance under rain in Sao Paulo. "An amazing drive, congrats," the seven-time champion said on Instagram. Hulkenberg was disqualified after receiving a rare black flag before the restart because he had gotten assistance from marshals to return to the track. The bumpy track at Interlagos was under fire from drivers, with Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso receiving treatment for back pains after the race. Earlier, in the most emotional moment of the weekend at Interlagos, many fans on the stands cried when Hamilton drove the late Ayrton Senna's title-winning car ahead of the race. The seven-time champion took some laps under falling rain in the historic McLaren MP4/5B that Senna drove during his 1990 title campaign, in which he beat Ferrari's Alain Prost.

## Harendra Singh on Mission 2028

**New Delhi:** There was excitement both ways when Harendra Singh returned from his stint in the USA to take over as Indian women's hockey team head coach earlier this year. For the players, it was joyous to see a familiar face. For Harendra, it was 'ghar wapsi' a chance to work again with the national setup after a while. But it was clear to him in the first few days that there was a need for a rebuild. After the highs of finishing 4th at the Tokyo Olympics, the women's team failed to even qualify for Paris 2024. Harendra's first thought was to press the reset button. He identified fitness as a primary focus area. A military-style boot camp was organised at the Indian Naval Academy in Kannur, Kerala late in July that included activities like boat-pulling, obstacle course, night camps and tugs of war. And now, ahead of the Women's Asian Champions Trophy in Rajgir, Bihar starting November 11, Harendra believes a new cycle must begin. The Indian Express caught up with the head coach for an interview



## Test cricketers to get match practice at Duleep Trophy

**Agency:** AHEAD OF the home Test season, the selection committee wanted top Indian players to get some match practice in the Duleep Trophy, as preparation for the home series against Bangladesh and New Zealand, but they refused to play the domestic tournament citing "lack of motivation", On Sunday. I know we beat Bangladesh and therefore, it looked as if it was going to be a cakewalk against New Zealand," former India captain Sunil Gavaskar told media on Sunday. Most of the senior cricketers were far from their best, especially against New Zealand. Even skipper Rohit Sharma and senior batsman Virat Kohli had an underwhelming series. In his last 10 innings, Kohli managed 192 runs, while Sharma scored just 133. The top Indian players had a month-long gap after the

ICC T20 World Cup triumph in June. According to sources, the selection committee planned for all top players to be available for the Duleep Trophy, held in Bengaluru and Anantapur from September 5 to September 22, in order to provide them some match practice before the red-ball season. According to sources, when Sharma, Kohli, Ravichandran Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah didn't participate in the Duleep Trophy, the selection committee decided to release Ravindra Jadeja, who had agreed to play in the domestic tournament. Shubman Gill, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant, Yashasvi Jaiswal, K L Rahul and Washington Sundar were among those who played in the Duleep Trophy before the home Test season, and most of them had at least one significant knock in the five Tests.

## Juniors undercooked, India at crossroads

**Stuff Reporter:** Washington Sundar stood crestfallen at the crease, his head sunk to the ground. His stumps lay shattered like the hopes of thousands in the stands. In the shocked silence of Wankhede, all you could hear were the hysterical screams of Tom Latham's men, defending a total of 147 by 25 runs, celebrating a white-wash over India, the first time a side had won all three Tests against India at the home. The fortress was breached a week ago, the first team in 12 years and 18 series to the feat. Here New Zealand scavenged the last vestiges of an era of India's infallible domination at home. In the forensic analysis of India's defeat, the quality, bravado and resourcefulness of the Latham's men should not be forgotten. As pitiable as India were in this series, the Kiwis were resolved and determined, grooved and equipped. The end was swift.



The most stinging came fifteen minutes into the second session, the moment that decided the match. One that would be dissected threadbare in the days and weeks to come. Pant was India's biggest and perhaps the only shard of hope to pull off a victory. He has breezed to 64 off 56 balls, crunching a couple of boundaries to complete his half century, when he stepped out to Ajaz Patel. The score was just 13 and intrigue made its first appearance of the day. The dismissal has been charac-

teristic of Rohit's travails this series. Often, he had looked to don the counter-attacker's role, like in white-ball cricket, and invited his own end. In the first over, he blazed down the track and slapped Henry for a four; in the next over, he reverse swept Ajaz Patel for another four. This has been a woeful series for him, not so much for the string of low scores (91 runs in six innings), but for the way he has been getting out. Twice when he was looking to pull, once when charging out to a

seamer on a green-top and repeating the same against a spinner on a turner. Six balls later, Shubman Gill, who seemed to have conquered his spin demons, fatally left a ball that didn't turn, a natural variation off Patel, whose love story with the Wankhede continued. Gill's indiscretion was appalling as he left the ball on length on a surface the ball had dubiously behaved. As though the surface was not arduous enough to bat, gift-wrapping wickets was criminal. During his fluent 90 in the first innings, he batted without preconceptions, without notions. Not here though. The sorry figure of 16/2 flared into 18/3 when Virat Kohli's forward thrust found the edge of his bat and flew to the slips, where Daryll Mitchell grabbed a low catch. It ended another harrowing series for Kohli, and with the hard truth that perhaps his best days are past him.