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Hyderabad's Mehrunissa Begum wins silver for India at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026



Hyderabad: Mehrunissa Begum, a young talent from the city, won a silver medal for India in the Logistics and Freight Forwarding category at the 48th WorldSkills Competition Shanghai 2026, one of the world's most prestigious international skills competitions. WorldSkills, one of the world's largest platforms for vocational and professional skills, is often described as the global championship for skilled professions. Competing against some of the world's best talent, Mehrunissa Begum demonstrated excellence in logistics and freight forwarding, excelling in documentation, routing, commercial decision-making, and customer handling. She completed her Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in Logistics from Begumpet Degree College, Hyderabad, and is currently employed with Cargomen Logistics India Pvt. Ltd.

At Cargomen, she manages the Thermo Fisher Scientific account, gaining hands-on experience in international logistics operations, customer coordination, documentation, and freight management. She underwent intensive training under Kamal Jain and his team, covering key aspects of international freight forwarding, including air and sea cargo, multimodal transport, freight calculations, Incoterms, cus-

toms procedures, documentation, dangerous goods handling, customer communication, and practical problem-solving. The Logistics Sector Skill Council (LSC) provided training and institutional support throughout Mehrunissa Begum's WorldSkills journey. The council plays a key role in promoting skill development and industry-aligned competencies within India's logistics sector. The 48th WorldSkills Competition was held in Shanghai, China, from September 22 to 27, 2026. Nearly 1,400 young professionals from around 70 countries and regions competed in 64 skills, covering sectors such as manufacturing, technology, services, transportation, construction, and logistics.

The competition provides young professionals with an opportunity to benchmark their knowledge and practical skills against international occupational standards. Logistics and Freight Forwarding is a critical professional discipline that supports international trade and global supply chains. Competitors are assessed on a range of areas, including freight planning, international transportation, documentation, customs compliance, cargo handling, costing, route planning, Incoterms, customer service, and operational problem-solving. Mehrunissa Begum's achievement reflects the growing competence of young Indian logistics professionals and their ability to compete successfully on the global stage. The Government of India, through the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, has been actively promoting vocational and professional skills development under the Skill India initiative. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) plays a pivotal role in coordinating India's participation in WorldSkills competitions and strengthening the country's skill development ecosystem. Through initiatives such as IndiaSkills and WorldSkills, young professionals are provided opportunities to develop industry-relevant skills and represent India on global platforms. Mehrunissa Begum's achievement is expected to inspire more young people to pursue careers in logistics and supply chain management, a sector offering significant global opportunities.

Revanth's Ram-Shiva remarks trigger backlash, draw accusations of vote-bank politics



Hyderabad: Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's comments on Lord Ram and Lord Shiva, and his attempt to draw political and regional boundaries between their devotees, have triggered a backlash from different sections, with many questioning what they described as the Congress party's vote-bank politics. At a conclave in New Delhi on Monday, the Chief Minister said, "We South Indians are Dravidians, while leaders from North India are Aryans. We are Shiva

bhakt (devotees), while North Indian leaders are Ram bhakts."

He further said, "Sri Ram is the God of the rich, while Shiva is the God of the poor." His comments, however, have not gone down well with many people. Amit Kumar Sindhi, an influencer on X, said, "Shame on Revanth Reddy. After dividing people on the basis of religion, caste and rich vs poor, the Congress is now stooping to the level of dividing even Gods."

Reacting to the Chief Minister's remarks that Lord Ram is the God of the rich and Lord Shiva is the God of the poor, he said, "I have honestly never heard such a disgusting and absurd statement from a political leader. Imagine dragging even Lord Ram and Lord Shiva into your petty political divisions. Revanth Reddy being called one of the most shameless politicians is not without reason." Writer Bala also criticised the Chief Minister's remarks on X, saying, "Division is so ingrained in the DNA of Congress that after dividing Hindus, now they even want to divide our Gods. These Congress test water with such statements and then increase the intensity of the attack if Hindus don't retaliate enough." His comments also evoked strong reactions from different political parties, with many condemning the remarks and questioning what they described as vote-bank politics.

Telangana ACB seizes Rs 7 lakh cash from NIMS barber's house



Hyderabad: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) of Telangana on Tuesday recovered Rs 7 lakh cash from the residence of a barber of Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) during searches as part of the investigation into the disproportionate assets case against Additional Medical Superintendent Dr Nori Lakshmi Bhaskar. ACB officials were conducting searches at the premises linked to five employees of the premier state-run hospital, including barber Dhanraj.

The anti-graft agency, which arrested Lakshmi Bhaskar last week following searches at his premises, found during investigations that some employees of the NIMS were acting as 'benamis' of the senior hospital official. The investigators were shocked to find Rs 7 lakh cash from the house of Dhanraj, whose job at the hospital is cutting hair.

The ACB officials were also examining land documents during searches. They were also looking into the financial transactions of the suspected 'benamis' of Lakshmi Bhaskar. The agency had carried out searches at Bhaskar's residence and other premises linked to relatives and associates on September 22. It had identified assets worth about Rs 6.13 crore, but the market value of the same was estimated to be around Rs 100 crore.

ACB said that a case was registered against Bhaskar, 56, as he had acquired assets disproportionate to his known sources of income by indulging in corrupt practices and dubious means during his service. Multiple flats, plots, luxury

cars and 517.8 grams of gold are among the assets found during simultaneous searches by ACB officials at his residence and seven other places belonging to his relatives, friends, benamis, and other associates. The officials found documents relating to one four-bedroom flat in a gated community, two triple-bedroom flats in the high-rise gated community at Kukatpally, five double room flats at Manikonda, Petbasheerabad, and Kukatpally, four open plots at Yadrali, Nandigama, Shamirpet and one 800 square yards open plot in Visakhapatnam City, Andhra Pradesh. They also found bank balances of Rs 41 lakh, deposits of Rs 12 lakh in a Post Office, Rs 35 lakh investment in private financial institutions, Rs 29.55 lakh investment in mutual funds, gold ornaments weighing about 517.8 grams, multiple vehicles and electronic gadgets worth 5 lakh.

Ujjain mosque portion removal continues for 2nd day amid tight security



Ujjain: The removal of a portion of the Shahi Masjid at Chhatra Chowk in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, continued for the second day on Tuesday amid tight security, with a heavy police deployment and senior administrative officials monitoring the situation following the previous day's stone-pelting incident. Police personnel have been deployed in large numbers around the site as a precautionary measure, while nearby markets remained closed. Regular flag marches were also conducted in the area to maintain law and order. Ujjain Collector Raushan Kumar Singh, who was present at the spot, said the situation remained peaceful and under control. "Peace and security are fully maintained here, and the law and order situation is completely under control. We are present at the spot and closely monitoring the situation," Singh told IANS. The portion of the mosque being removed falls within the alignment of a road being widened as part of preparations for Simhashta 2028.

According to the district administration, members of the Muslim community had agreed to voluntarily remove the affected portion following a meeting held on Sunday night between senior administrative and police officials and community representatives. The removal work began on Monday in the presence of administrative and police officials. However, it was briefly disrupted after a crowd gathered at the site and stones were allegedly pelted at police personnel deployed there. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd and subsequently strengthened security around Chhatra Chowk. Senior officers remained at the spot to supervise the work and maintain law and order. Eight FIRs have been registered at Mahakal, Kharakuwa and Kotwali police sta-

tions in connection with the stone-pelting incidents, naming 20 people as accused. Police said all those named in the cases related to stone-pelting had been arrested. Police have also registered an FIR under Sections 196(1), 299, 353(2) and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita over the alleged circulation of misleading messages and videos on social media. According to police, Imran Khan had posted a message on Instagram on September 27, urging people to gather at Chhatra Chowk. In another video circulated through an Instagram account, a person identified as Arif Pathan allegedly asked people to assemble near the mosque at 2 am. The road-widening project is aimed at improving connectivity and facilitating the movement of pilgrims and religious processions through congested areas of Ujjain ahead of Simhashta 2028. "We appeal to everyone to continue extending cooperation, maintain peace and refrain from believing or spreading rumours. The situation is being closely monitored," Raushan Kumar Singh said.

TTD cancels VIP Break Darshan on Oct 1 and 5

Sept 29 Hyderabad: The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has decided to cancel VIP Break Darshan (except for protocol VIPs) on Thursday, October 1, and Monday, October 5 in view of the expected increase in the pilgrim rush during the Peratasi month and the ensuing holidays. At present, around 80,000 devotees are having darshan of Lord Venkateswara every day. In addition, nearly 30,000 devotees arriving on the same day are being accommodated for darshan on the following day. This has resulted in longer waiting times for common devotees. To facilitate quicker darshan for a larger number of common devotees, TTD has taken the decision to cancel VIP Break Darshan on the above dates, a press release from TTD said. Consequently, recommendation letters for Break Darshan will not be accepted on the preceding days, that is, on Wednesday, September 30, and on Sunday, October 4. Devotees are requested to take note of the decision taken in view of the heavy pilgrim rush and extend their cooperation.

KTR questions move to import coal amid reports of higher costs

Hyderabad: Amid a spiralling power crisis due to short supply of coal affecting power generation in Telangana, BRS working president KT Rama Rao questioned the reported move to import coal from overseas despite the availability of Singareni coal at a much lower price. He recalled that during the 9.5-year K Chandrashekhara Rao government, 24/7 power was supplied using coal from Singareni Collieries. Say no to Singareni coal which costs Rs 3,800 per tonne. Say yes to importing coal from overseas which costs Rs 9,000 per tonne. Another Tughlaq decision of the Congress government," he said.

Reacting to media reports on proposals for coal imports, Rama Rao sought to know the reasons behind the government's alleged decision. "For whose benefit was the decision being done? Why should the people of Telangana bear this burden?" he asked. He reminded that Telangana had the largest coal blocks in south India and Singareni was supplying coal to Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Meanwhile, official sources said the Congress government was considering importing up to 50 lakh tonnes of coal from Australia and Indonesia amid shortages at thermal power plants. Domestic coal is reportedly available at around Rs 3,800-Rs 4,200 a tonne, while imported coal could cost more than Rs 10,000 a tonne.

Reports said TGGenco plants currently had only three to four days of coal stocks against the recommended 21 days. Genco officials had reportedly suggested approaching Coal India and other domestic sources, including the Naini



coal block, but efforts had not progressed beyond correspondence with Mahanadi Coalfields. Genco engineers reportedly raised concerns over the use of imported coal that could indirectly affect the operation of thermal power plants, besides imposing an additional financial burden of around Rs 3,000 crore for 50 lakh tonnes and transportation costs.

Kharge urges PM's resignation, removal of poll chief at CWC meet



Alleging irregularities in electoral rolls and the SIR process, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has sought the immediate removal of CEC Gyanesh Kumar, citing dissent from his fellow Election Commissioners. At the CWC meeting, Kharge also called on PM Narendra Modi to resign on moral grounds for allegedly pressuring the CEC.

New Delhi: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday called for Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's immediate removal over alleged SIR "irregularities" and also demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resignation on moral grounds for "pressuring" the poll panel chief. Addressing a crucial meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) here, he said the Congress party would take to the streets and raise in Parliament issues per-

taining to alleged irregularities in the electoral rolls and poll process.

Kharge put forth five major demands at the CWC, noting that all data on changes in electoral rolls be made public, all voters whose names have been deleted should get a chance to appeal and all political parties should be given electoral rolls in simple format in time. He also demanded that an independent time-bound probe should also be conducted where serious anomalies are found and the poll process should be made transparent so no one feels that information is being hidden.

"The two Election Commissioners have themselves termed the CEC's actions as 'arbitrary and unreasonable' and the entire nation now knows that he has been trying to help the ruling party. In such a situation, he does not have the right to be in his position and should be removed immediately," Kharge said. "Together with this, the prime minister should also resign on moral grounds for 'pressuring' the CEC," the Congress chief said in his inaugural address at the CWC.

"We should take a pledge at the CWC meeting that there should be transparency in electoral rolls and the poll process should be impartial. Institutions should be independent and the vote of every Indian should be protected," he said in his inaugural address. This, he said, is the core of our Constitution and the soul of our democracy and the Congress party would not be left behind in fulfilling this responsibility and will take to the streets and raise these issues in Parliament. He also thanked Congress workers and leaders for standing behind Rahul Gandhi, who raised the alleged irregularities and highlighted the role of the CEC in "supporting" the BJP.

From chai to pizza, a city learning to stay awake



Chandigarh 24x7 shops, Chandigarh 24x7 operations, Chandigarh 24x7 shops list, shops open 24 hours Chandigarh, Chandigarh night economy, Chandigarh late night shops, Chandigarh restaurants 24x7, 24x7 businesses Chandigarh, Chandigarh night-time economy, Chandigarh commercial operations, Sector 8-B Chandigarh, Chandigarh late night food, Indian Express newsroom fast-food outlets and chai counters to pharmacies, grocery stores and paan shops, the city's 24x7 commercial footprint is expanding. (Express Photo/Enhanced using AI) Chandigarh may have secured permission to stay awake, but the city's businesses are discovering that staying open through the night is another matter altogether.

Nearly two years after the administration launched its 24x7 commercial operations initiative, almost 200 establishments are now on the list: from McDonald's, pizza outlets, and chai counters to pharmacies, grocery stores, paan shops, and petrol pumps. The number of establishments opting for 24x7 operations has risen more than threefold from the initial 48. "We are encouraging people to register for 24x7 commercial operations under ease of doing business in the city. Women's safety and adherence to labour laws are two key aspects under this initiative, which we are fully ensuring by coordinating with the department concerned, including the Chandigarh Police," Nishant Yadav, Deputy Commissioner, told The list of nearly 200 establishments paints a picture of a city trying to build a late-night economy that goes well beyond traditional nightlife. Major fast-food chains feature prominently. McDonald's, KFC, Domino's, Pizza Hut and Subway have multiple outlets listed for 24x7 operations across sectors including 8-C, 15-C, 22, 35-C, 40-C, 47-C, Manimajra and the Industrial Area. Tea,

too, has found a place in the city's round-the-clock experiment. Chai Sutta Bar, along with Punjabi Chai, Desi Urban Chai, and Audi Chaiwala, features on the list, adding a distinctly local flavour to the late-night food economy. Desserts and quick-service outlets are also part of the mix, with establishments such as Baskin Robbins, Theobroma Foods, The Belgian Waffle Co and Superdonuts among those listed.

Its 24x7 establishments span a wide range of food options, from Baba Chicken, World of Wings and Tikka World to The Belgian Waffle Co, Cakes & Stuff, Superdonuts and El Mexicano. The concentration suggests that Sector 8-B could emerge as one of the city's more prominent late-night food clusters — provided there is enough customer demand to sustain these operations. Grocery and convenience stores, pharmacies and delivery-related establishments have also opted for round-the-clock operations. Blink Commerce has several establishments listed across sectors including 17-B, 34-A and 37-D, while Chandigarh Pharmacy in Sector 11-D is among the pharmacies on the list. Even paan shops and petrol pumps feature. DP Paan House in Sector 15-D, Pandey Paan and Confectioner in Sector 8-C and Nankhu Pan & Confectionery in Sector 44-D have submitted undertakings for round-the-clock operations. Indian Oil outlets in sectors 7 and 33 and a Bharat Petroleum outlet in Sector 21 are also on the list. Taken together, the entries suggest that Chandigarh's 24x7 experiment is evolving from an attempt to keep a few essential or high-demand businesses open into a wider after-midnight commercial ecosystem.

The bigger question, however, is whether the growing list of establishments translates into a sustainable late-night economy. For businesses, staying open through the night means additional manpower, higher electricity and operational costs and, in many cases, separate staff for night shifts. Several entrepreneurs who initially attempted round-the-clock operations say the limited late-night footfall did not justify those expenses. "Some people I know had also tried keeping their outlets open round the clock, but they could not sustain it for long," said Abhishek Bajaj, who owns Sindhi Sweets, a chain of shops. Some eventually stopped operating through the night after finding that revenues failed to cover the additional costs. "Delhi and Gurgaon, however, have an advantage because public transport connectivity continues through the night and several companies and offices operate round the clock, creating a steady stream of people even during late hours. Chandigarh does not have the same ecosystem yet," Bajaj added.

Mrinaltai Gore flyover's 'super smooth' surface leaves bikers slipping

The recently opened arm of the Mrinaltai Gore flyover has once again come under the scanner just two months after its inauguration. This time, locals have flagged the 'extremely smooth' surface of the bridge, which has reportedly left many bikers and two-wheelers skidding and led netizens to mock the 'advanced technology' that the citizens are not ready for. Speaking to The Indian Express, residents said Mrinaltai Gore flyover's 'super smooth' surface on the road mastic has become increasingly perilous for motorists. "The site where repeated skidding is being reported is situated on a downward slope. The mastic on the road is super smooth and everytime it rains, the roads become furthermore slippery. This patch has now become a magnet for accidents in the area," said Dhaval Shah, co-founder of Lokhandwala Oshiwara Citizen's Association (LOCA).

Karan Jotwani, co-founder of LOCA, told The Indian Express: "The smooth surface is causing the frequent skidding. To resolve the issue, the BMC must deploy rough tar on the top layer in a bid to make the roads rougher and thereby, less slippery." Inaugurated in July, the flyover provides a direct link between Ram Mandir and Goregaon, allowing motorists to directly zip through instead of taking the SV Road or Link Road. It has also garnered much attention for its cost escalation, prolonged construction period, as well as patchy road surface. Now, citizens have blamed the Mumbai civic body for carrying out shoddy work on the flyover. It has denied the allegations. The 750-metre flyover,



built for Rs 247.97 crore, took nearly eight years to complete. During this period, the project's cost rose by nearly 45 per cent from the original estimate of Rs 170.82 crore. With its 'super smooth' surface making people have the ride of their lives, social media hasn't stayed behind in having its share of fun. "Mrinal tai flyover in Mumbai also comes with the revolutionary 'smooth ride' technology that apparently improve your vehicle's mileage.. Only small issue: the technology is so advanced that the bikers haven't learnt how to use it yet.. so they keep falling," a user on social media wrote on X. Earlier in June, some videos surfaced on social media, purportedly showing a melting road surface, loose gravel, and, in one case, a portion of the road caving in under the weight of a motorcycle stand, triggering outrage.

Punjab influencer Manjit Kaur's mother seeks answers after her death



Her daughter is dead. The memorial prayer service is yet to take place. With no other support, Kanta Devi has been forced to postpone her grief, compelled instead to piece together the final weeks of her daughter, Punjabi social media influencer Manjit Kaur. Kaur, who was allegedly kidnapped and assaulted before being set on fire in a forested area near Morinda on the night of July 3-4, died at a Chandigarh hospital on August 26. Her family has accused two acquaintances of kidnapping her and the police of failing to record her statement in time. "I am all alone. No man is there to support me. My daughter's bhog (prayer service) has not taken place. I am doing everything myself with a small child to care for," Devi told s.Devi lives with her 11-year-old son, Manjit Kaur's younger brother, in their home in Kharar. Manjit moved out of her family home about a year and a half ago, relocating to New Chandigarh to build an independent life. A divorced mother of a seven-year-old son who lives with his father, she started a beauty parlour business and regularly sent financial support to her mother. Devi recalled that her daughter was planning to start a new life. "She told me she would marry soon. I didn't know much about her personal plans, only that she was preparing to settle down again." The long gap between the alleged crime and Manjit Kaur's death has made the investigation difficult. The police are trying to establish the vehicle allegedly used to take her away, while crucial CCTV footage is no longer available. According to the police, the autopsy report

revealed that she was around seven weeks pregnant when she died. For Devi, time has made one thing increasingly urgent: the need to know the truth. She does not speak of revenge, nor does she claim to have all the answers. She wants to understand what happened to the daughter whose life, she says, she only knew in fragments during her final months. "I just want to know what happened to my daughter, and the truth should come out," she said.

Second phase IT Hub construction works in Khammam delayed

Khammam: Even five years after the foundation stone was laid for the construction of the second-phase IT Hub in Khammam, the building work remains incomplete. The Congress government's alleged negligence has delayed the construction, much to the chagrin of local unemployed youth, who had hoped to find employment if IT Hub-II was established. It may be recalled that former IT and Industries Minister K T Rama Rao laid the foundation stone for IT Hub-II on April 2, 2021, following the success of IT Hub-I, which was established in December 2020 at Yellandu Circle in Khammam city to promote the information technology (IT) industry in tier-II cities. Rs 36 crore was sanctioned by the Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TIIC) for the construction of IT Tower-II, with a built-up area of 55,000 square feet and a seating capacity of 570. Speaking to Telangana Today, educationist and senior BRS leader Gundala Krishna noted that although the contractor was given a one-year deadline to complete the construction, the project remains unfinished. As a result, local engineering graduates are missing out on a valuable opportunity to secure employment within the district itself. IT Hub-II is expected to provide employment to more than 1,500 people across three shifts, with 550 people working at a time, he said.

Zomato bans analogue dairy dishes, warns of action against restaurants



New Delhi: Food delivery aggregator Zomato on Monday announced a zero-tolerance policy on the sale of dishes containing analogue dairy products, including analogue cheese and paneer, by restaurants listed on its platform, saying it reserves the right to delist non-compliant restaurants. Analogue dishes replace traditional ingredients with cheaper or alternative substitutes, such as plant oils instead of real milk or cheese, while retaining a similar look and texture.

The move comes against the backdrop of renewed focus on food safety following a reported State-wide crackdown by the Food and Drug Administration in Maharashtra and inspections by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) at five-star hotels in Delhi. With immediate effect, dishes that restaurant partners have declared as containing analogue dairy products have been delisted from the platform, Zomato said. Restaurant partners that remain non-compliant will also be delisted from the platform, it added. In a communication issued to merchants listed on the platform on Monday, Zomato said, "Our priority is to

ensure that customers receive food that is accurately represented, safe and meets the expected quality standards.

"Accordingly, we are implementing a zero-tolerance policy on the listing and supply of food products containing analogue cheese, analogue paneer and other analogue dairy products on our platform." The food delivery aggregator said the initiative was being undertaken to strengthen transparency and food quality for consumers, in line with food safety and regulatory requirements. "For restaurants that have already declared the use of analogue cheese, analogue paneer or other analogue dairy products on their menus, such items will be turned off from the platform with immediate effect," Zomato stated. It called upon restaurant partners to take immediate measures, including transitioning to natural dairy products; removing items containing analogue dairy products from their menus where such a transition is not immediately feasible; and reviewing product labels and ingredient declarations provided by suppliers to verify the ingredients being used and ensure the accurate representation of products listed on Zomato.

"If a restaurant is found to be non-compliant, Zomato reserves the right to delist such restaurants from the platform, in addition to taking any other action available to us under our policies and applicable law," Zomato stated. Zomato also reserves the right to recover any loss, cost, damage or expense that the company may incur or suffer if non-compliant products are delivered to customers, it added in the communication. Aditya Mangla, CEO of Zomato, said: "At Zomato, our core mission is better food for more people, and that means safeguarding customer health and upholding clear standards for what's listed and served by our restaurant partners. This policy reflects that commitment, one we're taking together with partners who share it."

IOC ramps up LPG production 30pc amid Strait of Hormuz disruptions



New Delhi: State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) ramped up liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) production by nearly 30 per cent and kept its refineries operating at more than 100 per cent utilisation as disruptions to maritime trade through the Strait of Hormuz threatened India's energy supplies, its chairman said on Monday. The company also diversified its crude sourcing, realigned refinery operations and secured alternative supplies as the escalating conflict in West Asia disrupted global energy markets, IOC Chairman Arvinder Singh Sahney said in his address at the company's 67th annual general meeting.

"For IndianOil, the priority during this unprecedented crisis has remained crystal clear — to maintain continuity of energy supplies despite constrained sourcing options and volatile international markets," he said.

India imports more than 88 per cent of its crude oil requirements, while about 45 per cent of its crude imports and nearly 90 per cent of its LPG imports are linked to the Strait of Hormuz, underscoring the exposure of the world's third-largest oil consumer to disruptions in the strategic waterway. Shopping For Authentic South Asian Apparel

"With close monitoring and guidance from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, our teams have responded with agility — diversifying crude sourcing, realigning refinery operations and strengthening supply-chain coordination to secure alternative supplies, optimise cargo movements and rebalance products across regions," he said. IOC used 24-hour control rooms, daily reviews and real-time market monitoring to respond to supply gaps, he said, adding that the company had maintained product availability despite a "significant shift away from Middle Eastern crude grades".

"Despite a significant shift away from Middle Eastern crude grades, our refineries operated at more than 100 per cent utilisation, LPG production was ramped up by nearly 30 per cent within a short period, and our gas business maintained supplies to priority sectors while securing additional LNG from diversified geographies," he said. The dis-

ruption came as IOC reported record operating performance. For the year ended March 2026, the company posted a standalone net profit of Rs 36,802 crore on a turnover of about Rs 8.86 lakh crore, with aggregate sales exceeding 105 million tonnes across petroleum products, natural gas and petrochemicals. Its refineries processed a record 75.45 million tonnes of crude during the year, while liquid pipeline throughput reached a record 102.52 million tonnes and domestic petroleum product sales rose to an all-time high of 88.97 million tonnes.

The momentum continued into the first quarter of the current financial year. IOC processed a record 19.17 million tonnes of crude at 109.4 per cent capacity utilisation, while pipeline throughput reached a quarterly record of 28.55 million tonnes. Its domestic petroleum product market share rose to 43.1 per cent, the chairman said. "While profitability during the quarter remained under pressure from higher crude costs arising from the West Asia conflict, the strength of our operating performance gives us confidence in the underlying resilience of your company," Sahney said.

The company is also accelerating investment in its core refining operations. Expansions at Panipat, Gujarat and Barauni are expected to raise IOC's group refining capacity from 80.75 million tonnes a year to about 98 million tonnes. As India expands its refining capacity towards 300 million tonnes a year, IOC expects to account for more than 40 per cent of the incremental capacity, he said.

The company is simultaneously seeking to reduce its dependence on its traditional refining business, targeting higher contributions from petrochemicals, natural gas, renewables, biofuels, green hydrogen and sustainable aviation fuel. It plans to raise its petrochemical intensity to about 15 per cent by 2030 and increase natural gas sales by 1.5 times by the same year. It also aims to raise upstream integration to more than 10 per cent by 2031. On the energy-transition front, construction has begun on a large-scale green hydrogen plant at Panipat, while IOC has received ISCC CORSIA certification for sustainable aviation fuel production through co-processing at the refinery. Its renewable energy arm, Terra Clean, is developing 1 gigawatt of capacity, with another 4.3 gigawatts under preparation. Sahney said the experience of the West Asia crisis had reinforced the need to build resilience before disruptions occur. "Resilience has to be built before it is tested," he said. "In an uncertain world, energy security depends not only on scale, but equally on agility, diversification and preparedness." He said IOC's approach would be to evolve into a more diversified and integrated energy company while keeping national energy security at the centre of its strategy.

Mettur dam to open for Cauvery delta irrigation as inflow rises



The Mettur dam will be opened on Tuesday to release water for Cauvery delta irrigation as inflow into the reservoir rose to 10,485 cusecs. Increased discharge from Karnataka's upstream reservoirs has raised hopes among farmers preparing for paddy cultivation

Salem: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, C. Joseph Vijay, will open the Mettur dam on Tuesday to release water for irrigation in the Cauvery delta, even as inflow into the reservoir increased to 10,485 cubic feet per second (cusecs). The improved inflow has brought relief to farmers preparing for paddy cultivation across the delta districts. The release is expected to support agricultural operations throughout the Cauvery basin, particularly in tail-end areas where water normally takes several days to arrive. Heavy rainfall in the Cauvery catchment areas of Karnataka has led to a steady increase in the storage levels of the Kabini and

Krishnaraja Sagar reservoirs. As the two reservoirs are filling rapidly, Karnataka authorities have increased the discharge of surplus water into the Cauvery. CM Vijay will formally open the sluice gates on Tuesday, marking the commencement of irrigation supply to the delta districts. Officials are expected to regulate the discharge after assessing the reservoir's storage, inflow from Karnataka and the requirements of farmers. The release assumes significance as cultivators have sought an adequate and uninterrupted water supply during the paddy-growing season. Farmers in tail-end districts have also appealed to the government to manage the available water carefully to ensure that it reaches all irrigation command areas. The steady rise in inflow ahead of the opening of the dam is being viewed as an encouraging development for Cauvery delta agriculture. Officials will continue to monitor rainfall in Karnataka and the discharge from upstream reservoirs to assess the likely inflow into Mettur over the coming days.

Meanwhile, 2,000 cusecs continued to be released from the reservoir to meet drinking-water requirements in districts dependent on the Cauvery. CM Vijay will formally open the sluice gates on Tuesday, marking the commencement of irrigation supply to the delta districts. Officials are expected to regulate the discharge after assessing the reservoir's storage, inflow from Karnataka and the requirements of farmers. The release assumes significance as cultivators have sought an adequate and uninterrupted water supply during the paddy-growing season. Farmers in tail-end districts have also appealed to the government to manage the available water carefully to ensure that it reaches all irrigation command areas. The steady rise in inflow ahead of the opening of the dam is being viewed as an encouraging development for Cauvery delta agriculture. Officials will continue to monitor rainfall in Karnataka and the discharge from upstream reservoirs to assess the likely inflow into Mettur over the coming days.

Sonali Kulkarni defends playing Salman Khan’s mother in Bharat



Sonali Kulkarni has had a rich and diverse filmography across multiple languages. Across her over three decade-long career, she's been a part of indie films with a heart as well as landmark mainstream films. One of those is Ali Abbas Zafar's 2019 coming-of-age period drama Bharat, in which she essayed Janki Devi, the mother of the titular protagonist, played by Salman Khan.

Why Sonali Kulkarni played Salman Khan's mom Interestingly, Sonali, now 51, is nine years younger than Salman, now 60, who played her son in Bharat. Sonali defends her decision of taking up that role despite the age difference between her and her onscreen son. "During casting, I said, 'I can't be playing this role,'" Sonali reveals on SCREEN Spotlight. But she recalls both Ali Abbas Zafar and

casting director Mukesh Chhabra being "very sure" about her casting because of the emphasis they placed on the flashback sequences. "The flashback meant everything to that film. That's how Bharat gets his name and reacts to situations," says Sonali, adding, "No director or casting director would like to fit in a wrong person somewhere. That would be a failure on their part also. So, I tried to understand that. So, I took it up as a challenge." Sonali Kulkarni admits it did take "a lot of convincing" from the director and the casting director to cast her. But what also helped was her own "temptation" to meet Salman Khan, whom she had heard a lot about. "We bonded very well on the sets of Bharat. One can learn from him to treat people well. He was ever gracious. And he scored a point when he gave me his cycle to ride," said Sonali, laughing.

Adding that the project, backed by Salman Khan Films, paid her "really well", Sonali also pointed out that she had "maximum scenes with the child artiste" who played the young Bharat, and "very few with the elder Bharat", essayed by Salman. But she doesn't have any regrets of tracing that arc either as she got to see Katrina Kaif dance live. "Oh god, she's such a graceful dancer, and she's beautiful. We had a gala time on set! So, no complaints from my end," says Sonali. Katrina, who played Bharat's longtime love interest Kumud Raina in Bharat, shook a leg with Salman on the popular song "Aithey Aa." Also starring Disha Patani, Sunil Grover, Tabu, Jackie Shroff, and Nora Fatehi among others, Bharat amassed over Rs 325 crore at the worldwide box office.

‘He had his own set of people’: Boman Irani on reuniting with Priyadarshan after 12 years



One of the most anticipated films of the year, Priyadarshan's Haiwaan is set to hit screens on September 11. The dark thriller stars Akshay Kumar, Saif Ali Khan, Boman Irani, Shriya Pilgaonkar and Saiyami Kher. While the trailer has already piqued curiosity, Boman says that despite Priyadarshan's filmography spanning several genres, the "comedy stamp" continues to follow both the filmmaker and him. "The comedy stamp always chases me," Boman said during an exclusive interview with SCREEN. The conversation came up while discussing Priyadarshan's body of work. Over the years, the filmmaker has explored several genres, including action, romance and drama. Yet, it is his comedies that audiences most closely associate him with.

On reuniting with Priyadarshan after 12 years SCREEN also asked Boman Irani why it took 12 years for the actor and filmmaker to reunite, despite the two being a "deadly combination" of talent. Boman and Priyadarshan

had previously worked together in the 2012 film Tezz, which starred Ajay Devgn, Anil Kapoor and Kangana Ranaut. "I think he had his own group of people whom he was comfortable with. It's like asking Raju Hirani, 'Why didn't you work with so-and-so actor?' It becomes a family kind of situation, and I think that's great. But somehow, I was made to believe that I was the first choice for this role," Boman said.

Watch the trailer of Haiwaan below: Haiwaan also brings Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan together on the big screen after more than three decades. The actors were last seen together in Main Khiladi Tu Anari (1994). Given that Akshay plays a dark character in Haiwaan, we asked Boman if audiences would accept the actor in such a role. "You watch 3 Idiots. Imagine 3 Idiots was not a good movie. Think about it. What would the acceptance of a character like Virus be? They would say, 'Irritating.' But when the movie is good, everything gets accepted. You say, 'Oh well, that was very interesting. It was pretty good advice.' Think of Munna Bhai MBBS. Sanjay Dutt was 44 years old, hardly a college-going student. Why did they accept it? The movie was good. The story was good," said the 66-year-old actor. "But if the movie was bad, then people would have questioned, 'How could they have cast Sanju?' But the movie was great. So, there was no question of age. Having said that, they (Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan) will be accepted because they are good in the film. But the movie has to be good, and the movie is good," he concluded. Haiwaan is the official remake of the Mohanlal starrer Oppam (2016), directed by Priyadarshan.

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Shankar Mahadevan reveals 21-mix story behind Dil Chahta Hai title song

Mumbai: Music composer Shankar Mahadevan has revealed that the rough mix of the title track of the iconic film Dil Chahta Hai made it to the final cut despite the team producing 21 versions of the song. Mahadevan said he, fellow composers Ehsaan Noorani and Loy Mendonsa, and sound engineer Vijay Benegal, known as Benny, had worked on 21 mixes of the track.

However, the scratch version was eventually retained after it received the most appreciation from the filmmakers and the team. In a special video for Spotify, Mahadevan sat down for a conversation with Noorani, Mendonsa, playback singer Shaan and Meiyang Chang. "Shall I reveal one more secret about this song? Benny did about 21 mixes of the song. And this, what you're hearing is the rough mix. There was something, something magical about it," Mahadevan said.

"What you're hearing is actually the first scratch that we did of the song. The bass lines and all. We had some new samples and great drums, we experimented, and it paid off. People get scared of being minimalistic," he added. Mahadevan also spoke about the importance of restraint in music production. Most people in the business want to fill it up. That shows a person's insecurity. If you're very confident about your melody, if you're confident about your groove and your bass line and that minimal thing, you don't



need stuff. If you have a good engineer who mixes it well, it fills up the space," he said. Dil Chahta Hai, directed by Farhan Akhtar in his directorial debut, became a defining film of modern Hindi cinema, particularly for its portrayal of urban friendship, romance and youthful independence. Its Goa road trip became a cultural touchstone, inspiring generations of friends to recreate the journey. The film's visual style, casual fashion and conversational storytelling also influenced Bollywood's depiction of contemporary urban India. Its soundtrack was equally influential, blending rock, pop and Indian musical elements.

Javed Akhtar ‘proud’ of Shabana Azmi for backing CJP protests: ‘Old Shabana has woken up’



Javed Akhtar says he's "proud" of wife Shabana Azmi for being one of the very few Bollywood celebrities who participated in the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) protests in New Delhi last month. While a few others extended their support online, the veteran actor was at Jantar Mantar, walking side by side with students protesting against the leak of National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) papers.

Javed Akhtar on Shabana Azmi's activism "This isn't the first time she's done this. She's aged now, so does it less now," said Akhtar, laughing, on a recent podcast. After Delhi Police hurled tear bombs on the protesters on July 20, Shabana even suffered an asthma attack. Soon after, she was diagnosed with the H1N1 virus, which prevented her from attending the student protests in Mumbai a couple of days later. "I've gone to the police station to bail her out. She's gone for a hunger strike in Mumbai. She's been quite active," Akhtar said on Lets Talk With DevnaG. "When our relationship was developing, this is what she was involved in," he added. The two began dating in the late 1970s after Javed met Shabana at the Mumbai home of his family friend and fellow legendary poet Kaifi Azmi, her father.

"She called me when I was in London to tell me she's going to Delhi for the protests. When she told me, I knew she would. It's the call of the conscience. Not once I told her to not go or think twice. The moment she told me I cannot not go, I knew the old Shabana had woken up, and nobody can stop her. And good she did! I'm proud of her," said Akhtar. Over the past few decades, Shabana has often raised voice against a wide range of issues. These included the 1993 protests at Cuffe Parade in Mumbai, when she sat with slum dwellers to protest against demolition of their homes. Mumbai Police arrested her and 16 others, and she even refused to seek bail or accept the charges against her.

So much so that her mother and veteran actor Shaukat Kafi had to convince the cops to escort Shabana to Tata Theatre for her performance in the popular play Tumhari Amrita during her jailtime. Shabana famously made it to the stage in the very dusty clothes she was detained in. Even-

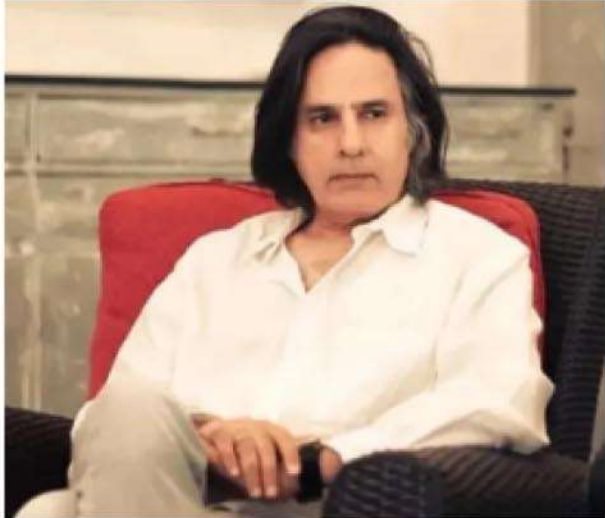
tually, Javed Akhtar had to bail out his wife. "It's not like we don't feel scared. We feel scared most of the times. But in some moments, you've to get over the fear and have to call a spade a spade. Otherwise you won't be able to look into the mirror. If I don't, I have no loyalty with either my zameen, zamana or zameer (land, time, and conscience). I don't do it much, but when your conscience is pushed against the wall, you have to do it," added Akhtar, echoing Shabana's vocal approach to injustice. When Shabana showed up at the CJP protests last month, she revealed that she and Akhtar first wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting him to discuss the issue with the protesting students. But after acknowledgement of receipt, once they didn't get a response for the next three days, Shabana chose to participate in the protests herself.

Sreeleela reveals how medical career influenced her acting journey

Mumbai: Actress Sreeleela, who is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film with Karik Aaryan, has shared how her medical career has shaped the actor in her. The actress opened up about how her exposure to real-life situations during her medical journey has helped her approach acting with greater sensitivity and perspective. Talking about whether her medical experience helps her in cinema, Sreeleela shared, "Definitely. 100 per cent. I feel it is important for an actor to have a lot of knowledge about everything around the world. General knowledge is also very important. Experiences and your sensitivity meter have to be high."

She further mentioned that her hospital postings exposed her to several deeply personal stories and emotional journeys. She went on, "Hospital stories, what I've seen in my course of being in the hospital or in my postings, was, people's emotional journeys very closely. You see life and death, you see situations, you see people having financial situations to clear bills. There are so many stories. What is cinema? It's a story and like that I've been grateful." "I mean I was exposed to around three, four stories like this every day, so it gives you so much perspective. It gives, it opens your mind up very differently. You're very sensitive about microscopic things and you're very real with that. That's what I say, that this side it's just one colourful world, dancing, there's wonderful costumes, there's so many people and there's a white coat. It's a completely different situation. You're seeing life and death, so that really matures you as an actor," she added.

Rahul Roy says struggling with speech issues after brain stroke: ‘Turned vegan, quit smoking’



Actor Rahul Roy has made a return to acting with his latest project Super Badshah, after his brain stroke in 2020. The actor, known for Aashiqui (1990) and Junoon (1992), suffered the health scare while shooting for a film in Kargil. In a recent interview, Rahul opened up about making changes in his daily routine after the stroke, like turning vegan and quitting smoking. He also revealed taking 8 medicines in a day. During an interaction with Free Press Journal, he shared, "When Karanvir Bohra and Madhavi approached me for the role, I was very excited. The only thing I was sceptical about was my speech problem because of the brain stroke which I had in 2020 when I was shooting in Kargil. But Karanvir was supportive throughout."

The actor continued, "After my brain stroke, I didn't even know if I would be able to walk or talk again. I used to be a heavy smoker and a non-vegetarian, but I've turned vegan, and am off onion, garlic and milk and am basically having Jain food. Every day after breakfast, I have 8 medicines. But things are much better now than before."

Rahul Roy suffered a severe cerebrovascular brain stroke in late November 2020 while shooting for the film LAC – Live the Battle in the high altitude and freezing weather conditions of Kargil. He was diagnosed with motor aphasia (an impairment which impacts speech and the ability to do muscular movements for talking). In April this year, Rahul Roy was in the headlines for making 'dancing reels' on so-

cial media, only to pay his fees for legal cases. The actor, who was once celebrated as a national sensation, shared Instagram reels of him dancing with a content creator on his iconic songs. The clips drew attention online, and the videos were met with widespread trolling. While addressing the backlash in a note on Instagram, Rahul wrote, "I do my work with honesty and modesty. I have some legal matters to pay for, and these are not from today, they are from before the brain stroke happened. If you mock my simplicity or make fun of my struggles, it says less about me and more about you. If you are truly so concerned, then help me find some genuine and decent work so I can pay for these cases. At least I am earning through hard work, not by mocking others."

He further added, "And after the brain stroke, it is important for me to stay active. I want to work for as long as I am alive. It keeps my mind active and gives me the sense of purpose and responsibility that I am still working today. Yes, it may hurt a little sometimes, but you cannot break me." Rahul Roy rose to fame with his debut in Aashiqui by Mahesh Bhatt. He then featured in movies like Phir Teri Kahani Yaad Aayee, Junoon, Gumrah, and Pyaar Ka Saaya. The actor also won the first season of Bigg Boss in 2007.

‘Sandeep Reddy Vanga will go to any extent for me’

Hyderabad: Stating that the love he had for ace director Sandeep Reddy Vanga was not something that he could express in words, popular Telugu star Vijay Deverakonda has said that he could go to any extent for the sake of director Sandeep Reddy Vanga. The actor, who participated in the pre-release event of director Venu Gopal Reddy's romantic drama 'Romanchakam', which is being presented by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, Vijay Deverakonda said, "I can't express the love I have for Sandeep in words. It's not just a director-actor relationship. It's not just a brother relationship or a friend relationship. It's something else." Recalling the difficulties they faced during the making of the blockbuster film 'Arjun Reddy', Vijay Deverakonda went on to say, "Back then, we went to war together. We didn't know what we were doing. Had the film not worked out, we would have gone crazy."

Sawan Barwal ends India’s 44-year-old wait for Asiad marathon silver with steady race pace

On the damp streets of Nagoya, Barwal won silver in the Asian Games marathon, ending the country’s 44-year wait for a medal in the event — and becoming the first Indian to win one outside home soil. The 28-year-old clocked 2:11:37, lowering his own national record, but there was no catching Japan’s Ichitaka Yamashita, who pulled away to win gold in 2:10:49. “This feels special. To win a medal, and set a national record doing it and ending a long wait for a marathon medal... this was my target.”For Barwal, competing in only his second marathon, the silver was the culmination of an extraordinary transformation — and not bad for someone who had taken up marathon running just a year ago.

Barwal had spent much of his career running middle- and long-distance events before coach Scott Simmons encouraged him to make the switch to the marathon. He had joined the Indian Army in 2019, having found athletics almost by accident, and began training specifically for the 42.195-kilometre distance last year. The switch demanded a different kind of runner. The speed work gave way to long sessions and punishing mileage; Barwal now runs around 190 kilometres a week, according to Simmons, and had completed three marathon simulations in the three months before the Asian Games. A training stint in Colorado Springs, after being sent there by the Athletics Federation of India, further helped him adapt to the demands of the marathon. It was all preparation for this one morning. “The plan was always to challenge for the podium. I had been training for this moment for so long, so if I didn’t win a medal, all of it would have felt like a waste of effort,” Barwal said. The race unfolded under an overcast sky, a light drizzle falling over Nagoya. The rain offered some respite from the heat, but the humidity remained, making the conditions uncomfortable for the runners. The early pace was brisk. After five kilometres, Barwal was in a six-man lead group, just a second behind China’s Feng Peiyou, who had briefly taken the lead, with the Indian clocking 15:28. The pace then ebbed and flowed. Around 15 kilometres, it dipped sharply, with the leading group covering a kilometre in 2:53-2:54. The field was already beginning to thin, but Barwal stayed tucked into the pack. At halfway, he was running shoulder to shoulder with Yamashita, both crossing in 1:05:54. The Japanese runner had the home crowd — that had lined up the city’s streets early in the morning — behind him. Barwal had Simmons’ instructions in his ears. “We didn’t want to slow down. The race went fast in the beginning. But after three-four



kilometres, it slowed down and remained up and down,” Barwal, who drank just 120ml of fluids from all eight water stations, said. “Our target was to stay with the group till the end. If we could maintain that position, the chances of winning the medal would increase.”

The strategy was less about making a move than refusing to make the wrong one. Barwal wanted to remain in the middle of the pack, never pushing beyond his limit. That patience became crucial after 30km, when the race suddenly changed. The pace rose as the runners reached an uphill stretch and the group of six began to splinter. Soon, only three or four remained. Barwal briefly lost contact as Yamashita accelerated up the hill. But he did not panic. Once the road tilted downwards again, he clawed back the lost ground. “After 30 km, when you see the hill and the pace increases, you feel a little different. I got left behind, but when we crossed it, I covered it on the downward slope,” he said. By the final 10km, there were only three runners left in contention. Barwal knew the danger of going beyond what his body could sustain. His experience at the Rotterdam Marathon earlier this year, where he had set the national record, had taught him how brutal the closing kilometres could be. “We didn’t try to go too fast. We kept the limit at 2:58 per kilometre,” he said. “Our target was not to go beyond our limit.” Yamashita eventually found another gear. By 39 kilometres, he had begun to pull away, and at 40 kilometres the gap was 26 seconds. The gold was slipping away, but Barwal’s silver was not. The Japanese runner entered the stadium to a roar from the home crowd and crossed the line in 2:10:51. Barwal followed, holding on for second and lowering the national record he had set in Rotterdam in April. That race had already been a breakthrough. Barwal had become the first Indian to break 2:12 in the marathon, bettering Shivnath Singh’s 48-year-old national record in Holland. In Nagoya, he went faster still — and added an Asian Games medal to it, ending India’s 44-year wait.

How a Bahraini’s finishing kick outclassed India’s Gulveer Singh in 10,000m

The pack bunched, stretched, re-formed and slowly shed runners, but Gulveer Singh remained exactly where he needed to be — near the front, not setting the pace but matching the rest stride for stride. Then, with one lap to go, Birhanu Balew made his move. The Bahraini runner came around the outside, taking the lead as the bell rang, and suddenly a race that had, until that point, been a test of patience became a straight fight between two men. Gulveer stayed on his shoulder. For the next few metres, there was nowhere to hide. Balew pushed, Gulveer answered. Balew held the inside, Gulveer remained within striking distance. The Indian had survived every acceleration thrown at him and now had one final question to answer: could he find enough for the finish? With 250 metres remaining, Balew found something extra. The gap began to open, and Gulveer chased, his body leaning into the effort, legs still turning after 24 and three-quarter laps of the track. But Balew had one more gear. The Ethiopia-born runner sprinted to the finish in 28:27.51, arms spread wide, with Gulveer taking silver in 28:29.38. The Indian stopped almost immediately, dropped to his knees, bent forward and kissed the track. Then he got up and sprinted out of the stadium.

He will be back on Saturday for the 1,500m heats — the second of the three events he will run in Nagoya. “I won a bronze medal last time (in Hangzhou). So coming into these Games, the plan was to change the colour of the medal,” Gulveer said. Fine margins. For Gulveer, the silver was both a reward for the work that had brought him here and a reminder of how fine the margins are at this level. Scott Simmons, his coach, believed that the Indian’s best chance of winning lay in turning the race into a quicker affair. “The only way that Gulveer had a chance for gold was, honestly, if it was a 27-minute race,” Simmons said. The reasoning was straightforward. Balew, the Diamond League 5,000m champion, had demonstrated his finishing speed at the highest level, including a commanding performance in Belgium. Even Gulveer knew what he was up against. “His finish is strong. He is faster than me. But I will try to challenge him,” he said. A faster race, Simmons felt, might have given Gulveer a better opportunity to challenge Balew over the final lap. Instead, the Indian had to rely on his finishing speed against a runner who had more in reserve. “He finished very well in 57 seconds,” Simmons said, referring to Gulveer’s



final lap. “Yeah. But (Balew’s was) 55 seconds.” Could Gulveer have taken the initiative and pushed the pace towards a 27-minute finish? Simmons was reluctant to suggest that it would have changed the outcome, particularly with the Indian still scheduled to run the 1,500m and 5,000m.

“He has a big menu for the rest of the week,” Simmons said. “And even then... You never know. This is a man who ran under 59 minutes for the half marathon. I mean, Gulveer ran very well under 60 minutes, but he is not at the same level at this point.” The two seconds that separated them over the final lap were the difference between gold and silver. But Gulveer’s ability to stay in contention against a runner of Balew’s calibre reflected how far he has come. At the 2023 Asian Games in Hangzhou, Gulveer had won bronze in the 10,000m, having only begun competing in athletics in 2019. Since then, he has rewritten the Indian national records in both the 5,000m and 10,000m, clocking 12:59.77 and 27:00.22 respectively. He went on to win both events at the 2025 Asian Athletics Championships before adding a silver in the 10,000m and a bronze in the 5,000m at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Those performances have changed the expectations surrounding him. He is no longer simply an Indian runner trying to keep pace with the leading athletes in Asia. He has become one of the men expected to challenge them, with the national records and international medals to back up those ambitions. Gulveer, though, resisted making any bold claims. “I have not set any target as such. I haven’t kept a point for me to reach. I just want to keep improving, climb up the ladder one step at a time and not lose any rhythm,” he said. The silver in the 10,000m was the first of three tests in Nagoya. On Saturday, Gulveer will return to the track for the 1,500m heats, with the 5,000m still to come. The pursuit of a different colour of medal is not over.

How Baranica Elangovan evaded pole problem en route historic Asian Games bronze

A few days before Baranica Elangovan was due to leave for Japan, there was still one question hanging over her Asian Games campaign: would her pole make it there? On Friday, the 29-year-old cleared 4.15 metres to win bronze in the women’s pole vault, becoming the first Indian to win an Asian Games medal in the event. But getting the equipment that would carry her over the bar to Nagoya had been a struggle of its own. The 4.30m pole was hardly something she could simply check in with her luggage. More than six or seven airlines were approached, emails were sent, and the answer kept coming back the same: their regulations allowed equipment only up to 3.40 metres. Baranica’s pole was 90 centimetres longer. “It was a big struggle,” said her coach Milber Bertrand Russell. “We tried more than six to seven airlines, we tried, sent emails. The problem was the length was too high.” The Athletics Federation of India then stepped in. “They explained to the airline officials that this is sports equipment and we are going to the Asian Games to represent our country,” Russell said. The clearance came a few days before Baranica’s departure. The poles would travel with her after all. For pole vaulters, transporting their equipment is a familiar logistical headache. Thankfully for Baranica, the problem was solved before she left India. In Nagoya, she had another one to deal with: clearing the bar. Her 4.15m clearance was below the 4.23m na-

tional record she set earlier this year, but it was enough to put her on the podium. She shared bronze with Kazakhstan’s Polina Ivanova, who also cleared 4.15m. Japan’s Misaki Morota won gold with a jump of 4.55m while Niu Chungue of China clinched silver after clearing 4.50m. India’s Baranica Elangovan poses for a picture after winning bronze in the women’s pole vault at the Asian Games 2026, in Nagoya on Friday. (ANI Photo) India’s Baranica Elangovan poses for a picture after winning bronze in the women’s pole vault at the Asian Games 2026, in Nagoya on Friday. (ANI Photo)

For Baranica, the medal carried the weight of a much longer struggle. She tore the ACL in her take-off leg in 2020 and spent years trying to rebuild her body and career. This year, she began finding her heights again, breaking the national record twice. On Friday, she needed two attempts to jump over 4.15m. She could not get over 4.25m, but by then the medal was secure. “I’m really feeling happy that... I’m really happy that I was able to bring a medal for my country,” she said. “It’s my dream, actually, to change it, rewrite history, and I did it today.” Over the course of a 18-year-long career, Mihir Vasavda has covered 2010 FIFA World Cup; the London 2012, Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympic Games; Asian Games in 2014 and 2022; Commonwealth Games in 2010 and 2018; Hockey World Cups in 2018 and 2023 and the 2023 ODI Cricket World Cup. .

Dhiraj Bommadevara smashes Asian Games record in recurve qualification

Okazaki: India’s Dhiraj Bommadevara smashed the Asian Games record to top the recurve individual archery qualification event at the Okazaki Chuo Sogo Park Multi-purpose Sq here. Dhiraj produced a stellar show to finish with a score of 698 out of the 720 possible and earn the top seed in the individual event, as India ended the team qualification as the second seed.

Dhiraj broke the previous Asiad record of 690 points, which belonged to Korea’s Lee Woo. Dhiraj was in top form across the two halves as he earned 348 of the 360 points. The archer then improved in the second half with a score of 350 in the final 36 arrows, dropping only 10 points out of the 360 possible. Other Indians in the fray, Neeraj Chauhan and Sanjay Yashdeep Bhoge, finished the individual event in 20th and 25th place, respectively. Neeraj collected 676 points, while Sanjay took 665 in the event.

The trio helped the team finish second in the team qualification with 2039 points, just behind the Korean side, which had 2064 points. This has given the Indian men’s team a bye into the pre-quarterfinals as they are seeded second in the 32-team draw. Dhiraj has also received a bye into the second round, being the top seed. In the women’s event,



India’s Chikitha Taniparthi topped the individual compound event with a score of 705 out of 720 in a stellar outing. She came within touching distance of breaking the Asian Games record of Chinese Taipei’s Chen Yi-hsuan, who had shot 706 in the 2018 Games. India’s Jyothi Surekha was 13th with a score of 699, while Prithika Pradeep was 20th with 695 points. In the team event, the Indian women secured a second-place finish. The trio helped India combine for 2099 points (T74;84), while China took the top spot with 2099 points (T82;76).

India to face Afghanistan in Asian Games cricket quarter-final after Nepal-Japan washout



Nisshin: India will face Afghanistan in the men’s cricket quarter-finals at the Asian Games 2026 after Nepal topped Pool A following a rain-affected washout between Nepal and Japan in Nisshin on Saturday. The quarter-final between India and Afghanistan is scheduled for September 28 in Nisshin, with Nepal’s first-place finish in the group determining the knockout-stage line-up. Japan’s abandoned match ended their campaign, while Afghanistan advanced alongside Nepal from Pool A. The equation was settled after Japan’s chase against Nepal was completely washed out. Nepal had posted 149 for four in 15 overs after being put into bat, but persistent rain prevented Japan from beginning its pursuit.

Gukesh helps India beat Germany, move to second place

Samarkand: Reigning World Classical Chess Champion Dommaraju Gukesh secured a clutch win to help India beat overnight joint-topper Germany 2.5-1.5 in the ninth round of the Open section of the 46th FIDE Chess Olympiad in Samarkand, moving up to second position in the standings. With this win, India roared back into title contention as they are in good position to challenge table toppers Uzbekistan for the title.

In the crucial clash on table 2, R. Praggnanandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi and Nihal Sarin were held to draws on the first three boards before Gukesh secured the lone victory of the match against Germany as India moved to 15 points, sharing the second spot with Uzbekistan 2 and Armenia. The main team of hosts Uzbekistan, who defeated top-seeded United States in the ninth round, lead the standings with 16 points. Praggnanandhaa, playing white, was held to a draw by top German GM Vincent Keymer, while Arjun Erigaisi drew with Bluebaum Matthias. With Nihal Sarin also being held by Frederik Svane on the third board, it appeared that India would drop points in the second successive round.

But Gukesh pulled out a grand Houdini act from a seemingly lost position to turn things in India’s favour with a fine performance to secure a crucial win on the fourth board. Playing with black against Alexander Donchenko, Gukesh was in trouble and heading for defeat before he staged a comeback with precise moves to win the day for India. In the women’s section, B Savitha Shri’s incredible run



of seven successive wins came to an end but remained unbeaten after a draw against Karimova Guldonova of Uzbekistan on the top table. Koneru Humpy, playing with white pieces, was held by top Uzbek Afruzha Khamdamova. But Women’s World Cup winner

Divya Deshmukh and Ventika Agrawal won their games to secure a 3-1 win for India. The victory took them to 15 points from nine rounds as they shared the second spot with Kazakhstan and Mongolia. Armenia went down 1-3 to leaders China while Mongolia drew 2-2 with Kazakhstan. China extended their lead to two points as they lead with 17 points, and Saturday’s 10th-round clash with defending champions India will make things clear.

Hardik Pandya suffers fresh shin injury, out of New Zealand series



Sept 29 New Delhi: Senior all-rounder Hardik Pandya has sustained a fresh injury to his right shin, which is all set to rule him out of competitive cricket for at least three weeks, including the white-ball tour of New Zealand. Pandya’s ‘Return To Play’ date was set for September 20 and, accordingly, the selectors picked him for India A for the upcoming One Day series against Australia A starting October 6.

“This is very unfortunate, but Hardik’s latest scan reports have revealed an injury to his right shin. He has been advised complete rest for a period of two weeks. BCCI’s medical panel head Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala has seen his re-

ports and, on his return from Japan, will assess him and decide when he can start his rehabilitation,” a BCCI source tracking COE developments told PTI on condition of anonymity. The New Zealand T20I series starts on October 22, followed by the ODI series. There is no chance of Hardik making a comeback by then.

It is understood that BCCI wanted Pandya to travel with the squad to Japan for the Asian Games and BCCI’s operations team had taken his passport for visa-related work. However, just before the start of the Afghanistan T20 series, he suddenly developed a shooting pain around his knee while doing his fielding drills. He, in fact, took a break and decided to take a few days’ rest. However, just as he was ready to get a fitness certificate, the pain resurfaced and scans revealed that there was an injury. The 32-year-old Pandya is based out of Bengaluru since the end of the IPL and now trains at the Centre of Excellence, having relocated to the Garden City. But over the course of the last four months, at least thrice (Afghanistan ODIs, England T20Is and now Australia A), the all-rounder has suffered a fresh niggle, which has proved to be an impediment to his comeback. With the New Zealand series also out of his way, Pandya will now have to wait for the Zimbabwe ODIs if he is fit to play, or perhaps check his fitness in the Vijay Hazare or Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.