

CM inaugurates Assam Cricket Museum

Guwahati, May 19: Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated the Assam Cricket Museum established within the premises of the Barsapara ACA Stadium in Guwahati on Monday and also unveiled a documentary titled “The Golden Innings: Legacy of Assam Cricket.”

It may be noted that the museum has been set up to preserve the glorious history of the Assam Cricket Association, important archival records, and memorable moments from different phases of Assam’s cricketing journey. The museum stands as a proud symbol of the rich legacy of cricket in Assam. From the pre-Independence era to the present day, it commemorates the pioneers and distinguished personalities who shaped Assam cricket and reflects the deep respect and admiration of the people of Assam towards these celebrated cricketers.

The museum is expected to inspire the younger generation by acquainting them with the long and eventful journey of cricket in Assam.

Meanwhile, the documentary beautifully captures the growth of cricket in the state over the decades, highlighting the contributions of eminent cricketers and several landmark moments through rare photographs and detailed narration. The documentary serves as a unique record of the illustrious journey of the Assam Cricket Association since its establishment in 1948. The film has been directed by Samujjal Kashyap.

Chief Minister Sarma expressed his appreciation to the office-bearers and well-wishers of the Assam Cricket Association for undertaking these two significant initiatives.

BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia, Assam Cricket Association President and MLA Taranga Gogoi, along with several other distinguished guests were present on the occasion.

Senior leader Rajen Gohain resigns from Assam Jatiya Parishad

Guwahati, May 19: Senior political leader Rajen Gohain has resigned from the primary membership of the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) along with all party posts and responsibilities with immediate effect. In his resignation letter addressed to AJP State President Lurinjyoti Gogoi on May 18, Gohain stated that he was stepping down from the party due to personal reasons. He also expressed gratitude to the party leadership, workers and supporters for their support and cooperation during his association with the party. The resignation is being seen as a significant political development within the regional party, though Gohain did not elaborate further on the reasons behind his decision.

IIT-Guwahati achieves major boost in green hydrogen production efficiency through new innovation

Guwahati, May 19: Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati researchers have developed a new composite coating technology capable of improving the efficiency and durability of solar-driven water splitting systems used for green hydrogen production.

Published in the prestigious international journal, Small, the findings of this research have been reported in a paper co-authored by Prof. Uttam Manna and Prof. Mohammad Qureshi, along with Dr Hrisikesh Sarma, and research scholars, Alpana Sahu, Anshika Chaudhary, Sumanta Sarkar, Sourav Mandal and Lingaraj Sahoo from IIT Guwahati.

In recent years, green hydrogen has emerged as a significant clean energy source for reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

Conventional hydrogen production methods release large amounts of greenhouse gases as a byproduct.

On the other hand, green hydrogen is generated by splitting water into hydrogen and oxy-

gen using sunlight.

To achieve this, the Photo-Assisted Electrochemical (PAEC) process is considered one of the most advanced technologies. However, the process faces two critical challenges – (a) physically deposited catalyst layers gradually peeling off from electrode surfaces, reducing the system’s durability and efficiency over time and (b) gas bubbles sticking to the electrodes during reactions, resulting in blockage of active catalytic sites and reducing hydrogen and oxygen production efficiency.

To address these limitations, the IIT Guwahati research team designed a durable coating that repels gas bubbles by combining graphitic carbon nitride, a two-dimensional photocatalyst, with a bubble-repellent hydrogel layer on porous nickel foam.

Contrary to conventional methods that apply photocatalysts as surface layers, the research team embedded the photocatalyst inside the coating structure itself. This ar-

chitecture helped protect the catalyst from delamination and created a larger electrochemically active surface area for water-splitting reactions.

This approach resulted in significantly improved reaction performance compared to conventional systems using directly coated photocatalysts, with or without separate bubble-repellent layers.

In comparison to the conventional methods, the developed composite coating achieved 51 percent higher hydrogen production and 44 percent higher oxygen production.

Speaking about the findings of the research, Prof. Uttam Manna, Professor, Department of Chemistry, IIT Guwahati, said, “In this study, we successfully demonstrated the positive impact of incorporating a model two-dimensional catalyst, namely graphitic carbon nitride, within an extremely bubble-repellent matrix to promote bubble departure frequency and enhance photo-assisted electrochemical water-splitting performance. As a result, we



observed a significant improvement in hydrogen production. This strategy is broadly applicable, and many other catalysts may be explored in the future to further advance green hydrogen production.”

The developed technology has potential in next-generation clean energy systems, particularly for sustainable green hydrogen production through solar-assisted water splitting. The coating strategy may also benefit renewable energy stor-

age technologies and large-scale solar-to-fuel conversion devices.

Speaking about the next step of the research, Prof. Mohammad Qureshi, Professor, Department of Chemistry, IIT Guwahati, said, “We plan to extend this composite coating approach with a tweak at replacing hydrogels to other advanced photocatalysts to further improve water-splitting efficiency. Future studies will also focus on scaling the

system for larger electrodes and integrating it into practical solar hydrogen production devices.”

Conducted with grant support from ANRF, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, and the Ministry of Education, the study presents an effective strategy for improving the long-term performance of solar-driven water-splitting systems.

Manipur operations lead to arrest of six insurgent cadres

Imphal, May 19: On May 17 and 18, security forces and central agencies carried out a number of counter-insurgency operations in many Manipur districts, which resulted in the arrest of six active cadres connected to several outlawed insurgent groups. On May 18, central forces arrested three cadres of the People’s Liberation Army from a stretch between Border Pillars 77 and 79 under Moreh Police Station in Tengnoupal district.

The arrested individuals were identified as Wangthoi Nahakpam alias Lingjel (20) from Charangpat in Thoubal district, Nanaoba Nandeibam alias Angou (19) from Kongba in Imphal East district, and Malem Oinam alias Manithoiba (20) from Nambol in Bishnupur district. In another operation on the same day, security forces arrested an active cadre of the Revolutionary People’s Front/People’s Liberation Army, identified as Chinglen Athokpam alias Ibungo (30), a resident of Pungdangbam Mayai Leikai under Lamlai Police Station in Imphal East district. Earlier, on May 17, security forces arrested an active cadre of the United National Liberation Front (Koireng), identified as Thangiam Dhamendra Singh alias Wayenba alias Volume (26), from the Yairipok Bazar area under Yairipok Police Station in Thoubal district. Police said he is a resident of Leirongthel Pitra in Thoubal district and was allegedly involved in the illegal sale and trafficking of arms and ammunition. Items seized from his possession included one 9 mm magazine, one mobile phone along with two SIM cards, one power bank with a USB cable and one ATM card. In a separate operation conducted on May 17, security forces arrested two active cadres of the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup from different locations under Lamphel Police Station in Imphal West district. The arrested individuals were identified as Sorokhabam Priyochand Singh alias Sajao (39), a resident of Iram Siphai Mamang Leikai in Imphal West district, who was arrested from the vicinity of the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, and Moirangthem Naobi Singh (47) of Uripok Takhellambam Leikai in Imphal West district, who was apprehended from his residence. Security personnel seized two mobile phones and one Aadhaar card from their possession. Officials said the arrests were part of ongoing operations aimed at curbing insurgent activities and illegal arms trafficking in the state.

Meghalaya Chief Minister opens 41 Meghalaya Battalion NCC at Cherangre

Tura, May 19: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Tuesday inaugurated the newly relocated 41 Meghalaya Battalion NCC at Cherangre in Tura.

The inauguration programme began with the reception of the Chief Minister, followed by a Guard of Honour, signing of the visitors’ book, ribbon-cutting, unveiling of the commemorative plaque, and a tree-plantation ceremony.

The programme also featured a prayer dance by NCC cadets, experience-sharing sessions by former cadets, felicitation of cadets, and cultural presentations.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Sangma highlighted the NCC’s important role in instilling discipline, leadership, patriotism, and character among the youth. Describing the inauguration as a “momentous occasion,” he said, witnessing the relocation and establishment of the battalion in Tura was “almost like a dream come true.”

Sharing personal anecdotes from his childhood, the Chief Minister recalled how he had once aspired to join the armed forces and later dreamt of becoming a police officer because of the discipline, dedication, and respect associated with men and women in uniform. “As a young boy, the armed forces and police services had a tremendous impact on me because of the discipline, dedication, and aura that surrounded men and women in uniform,” he said. “There was a different feeling whenever you were around



them — a sense of commitment, respect, and purpose that deeply inspired me.” The Chief Minister said these values continue to remain relevant today and underlined the importance of the NCC in shaping responsible citizens and future leaders. “The NCC instils discipline, patriotism, hard work, and values that shape young people into responsible citizens,” he said.

Stressing the importance of youth-focused governance, the Chief Minister said the true measure of development lies not in the amount of money spent or infrastructure created, but in the number of lives positively transformed.

“The success of a government should not be measured by how many crores are spent or how many buildings are constructed. It should be measured by how many lives are transformed because of those investments,” he stated.

He further added, “Development should not be judged only by the number of stadiums we build or medals we win. It should be judged by how those stadiums improve the quality, skills,

confidence, and values of our children and youth.”

Referring to the experience shared by an NCC cadet during the programme, he noted how the NCC had helped many young people discover their talents and gain exposure that may otherwise not have been possible.

The Chief Minister assured the NCC leadership of the Government’s continued support in strengthening youth-focused initiatives and infrastructure. “This is not an expenditure — it is an investment. The returns from investing in our youth will be far greater than the money spent,” he said, while assuring support for the development of the remaining infrastructure, including the boundary wall and other facilities. The 41 Meghalaya Battalion NCC traces its origins to the raising of the 15 Assam Artillery Battery NCC on June 3, 1961. The unit was later upgraded to the 41 Meghalaya Battalion NCC in October 2020. The battalion is presently responsible for NCC training activities across five districts of Garo Hills.

Assam Chief Secretary assesses World Bank project status

Guwahati, May 19: Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota on Monday met a delegation from the World Bank in Guwahati to review the progress of ongoing World Bank-assisted projects in Assam and deliberated upon future areas of collaboration aligned with the State Government’s developmental priorities.

The World Bank delegation, led by Johannes Zutt, regional vice president, also included senior officials of the World Bank, Jen Jung Eun Oh and Arnab Bandopadhyay.

Currently, Assam is implementing seven major World Bank-assisted externally aided projects with a cumulative outlay of approximately Rs 16,648 crore, of which the World Bank assistance component accounts for nearly Rs 13,320 crore.

The projects span critical sectors including transport connectivity, river basin management, healthcare, school education, governance reforms and resilient infrastructure development.

Among the major initiatives re-



viewed during the meeting were the Assam Inland Water Transport Project with a total project cost of Rs 770 crore, which has achieved over 89 percent physical progress.

Other key projects reviewed were the Assam Integrated River Basin Management Project Phase-I with an outlay exceeding Rs 1,105 crore; Assam State Secondary Healthcare Initiative for Service Delivery Transformation (ASSIST) Project with a project size of approximately Rs. 2,567 crore; Assam Resilient Rural Bridges Programme involving an investment of over Rs. 4,706 crore; Assam Disaster Resilient Hill Area Road Development Project with an approved outlay of Rs

3,875 crore; Assam Governance and Service Delivery Programme with an outlay of Rs 875 crore and the School Education and Adolescent Wellbeing Project with an investment of Rs. 2,750 crore.

During the interaction, highlighted Assam’s focus on resilient infrastructure, digital governance reforms and citizen-centric service delivery, and emphasised the transformative impact of governance and technology-driven initiatives.

The Chief Secretary requested the World Bank to consider greater flexibility in minimum project size norms for governance, institutional reform and digital transformation projects.

Kota also sought enhanced engagement of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) for supporting Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives and infrastructure asset monetisation through technical and transaction advisory support for development of bankable PPP models across key sectors.

Other aspects discussed include the sustainable maintenance and lifecycle management of infrastructure assets created under externally aided projects.

The Chief Secretary requested support for creation of an Asset Management Fund, strengthening of institutional mechanisms and development of a digital Asset Management Information System for monitoring and maintenance of public infrastructure.

The World Bank delegation appreciated the progress of ongoing projects in Assam and reaffirmed its continued support towards the State’s developmental priorities.

Zutt reassured flexibility in designing future operations aligned with timelines and outcomes, and emphasised the need to identify sectors where PPP models can be effectively financed.

Senior officers of the Government of Assam and representatives of concerned departments attended the meeting.

Wild elephant dies under mysterious circumstances in Kaliabor

Kaliabor, May 19: A wild elephant was found dead early on May 19 at Lengtent No. 2 Basti in Kaliabor, triggering concern among local residents and forest authorities.

According to preliminary information, the elephant’s carcass was discovered by villagers early in the morning. A section of local residents alleged that unidentified miscreants may have electrocuted the animal by illegally connecting a power source, resulting in its death.

However, the exact cause of death is yet to be officially confirmed.

Following the incident, officials from the Western Range of the Salna Forest Division reached the site and initiated preliminary investigation procedures. Forest personnel are expected to examine the circumstances surrounding the death and determine whether electrocution or any other form of human intervention was involved.

The incident has raised fresh concerns over recurring cases of human-elephant conflict and the dangers faced by wildlife in areas located close to human habitation. Assam has witnessed several incidents in recent years involving elephant deaths caused by electrocution, poisoning and habitat-related conflicts.

Forest officials are likely to conduct further forensic examination and inquiry to ascertain the exact cause of death and identify those responsible if foul play is established.



Under Samriddhi 2.0, Tripura will grow more than 13,000 small businesses: Chief Minister Manik Saha

Agartala, May 19: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has announced that more than 13,000 small enterprises will be developed across different blocks of the state under a major entrepreneurship initiative aimed at boosting rural livelihoods and women's empowerment. The state government has earmarked nearly Rs 38 crore for the programme, which is expected to promote self-reliance, strengthen rural economic activity and generate large-scale employment opportunities.

The Chief Minister made the announcement while launching the Samriddhi 2.0 programme at Rabin-dra Bhavan in Agartala. Addressing the gathering, Dr Saha said women-led empowerment initiatives are bringing major social and economic changes across Tripura. He stated

that increasing participation of women in entrepreneurship and livelihood activities is helping build stronger families and communities while also contributing to the state's economic growth.

According to the Chief Minister, women in Tripura are becoming more financially independent through various government-supported welfare schemes, self-help groups and livelihood missions. "The social system in Tripura is changing positively as women are becoming more self-reliant through entrepreneurship and economic participation," Dr Saha said during the programme.

He described women as one of the most resilient and tolerant sections of society and said their empowerment plays a key role in the long-term

development of the state. The Chief Minister said the economic foundation of Tripura is gradually becoming stronger as more women enter self-employment and small business sectors.

He added that the state government is giving special attention to promoting entrepreneurship among rural women and economically weaker sections. Referring to the impact of the Grameen Jivika Mission, Dr Saha said the programme has significantly helped rural women become financially self-sufficient.

He also noted that the success of the earlier Samriddhi 1.0 campaign was made possible through joint efforts of government departments, women's groups and local communities. Dr Saha further said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has consistently stressed



Image tweeted by @DrManikSaha2

the importance of women-led development under the vision of "Viksit Bharat" aimed at building a developed India by 2047.

He said the confidence, dedication and determination shown by women are playing an important role in strengthening the country's economy and social structure. Officials said Samriddhi 2.0 has been launched with expanded targets and a wider outreach following the positive response to the first phase of the programme.

The initiative aims to improve livelihood opportunities, encourage entrepreneurship and support sustainable economic development in rural areas. The programme will focus on skill development, promotion of micro-enterprises, financial inclusion and market linkage support for small entrepreneurs across the state.

UNC denies claims that Thadou pastors were killed and asks accusers for evidence

Imphal, May 19: The United Naga Council (UNC) has rejected allegations linking Naga groups to the killing of three Thadou church leaders in Manipur and claimed that suspected Kuki militant groups operating in the area may have been involved in the attack. In a press statement issued on May 18, the UNC condemned the May 13 ambush and described the slain church leaders as "warriors of peace and understanding".

The organisation said it supported legal action against those responsible for the killings and called for a proper investigation into the incident. The statement came amid growing tension and competing allegations surrounding the killing of the three church leaders, which has drawn strong reactions from different organisations and community groups in Manipur. The UNC alleged that social media campaigns blaming Naga groups for the killings began soon after the incident.

It specifically referred to a statement issued by Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), which allegedly named the ZUF-Kamson Group and NSCN-IM as being involved in the killings within hours of the attack. According to the UNC, the condemnation letter circulated by KIM carried the date "6/5/2026", which was seven days before the ambush took place on May 13. The organisation questioned the timing of the document and asked KIM to provide "concrete proofs" to support the allegations made against Naga groups.

The council also criticised the response of security forces during the hostage situation that reportedly followed the ambush. It alleged that stronger intervention could have been carried out on the same day, pointing out that the headquarters of the 57 Mountain Division at Leimakhong was located close to the area where the incident took place. The UNC further claimed

that deployment of security personnel in vulnerable Naga-inhabited areas remained "discriminatory and highly inadequate", raising concerns over the security situation in parts of the state.

In its statement, the organisation called on both the Centre and the Manipur government to take stricter action against suspected Kuki militant groups functioning under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement. The UNC demanded that militants be disarmed and confined to designated camps.

It also stated that the SoO agreement should be scrapped if armed groups continued to violate the law and operate freely in conflict-affected areas. Referring to an earlier statement issued by Thadou Inpi Manipur (TIM) on May 17, the UNC alleged that there had been growing tensions between "Kuki" and "Thadou" identities. The organisation claimed that Rev Dr Vumthang Sitlhou, one of the slain leaders,

had publicly opposed the hoisting of the "Kuki Zo Flag" on May 9 and had emerged as a prominent voice for separate Thadou identity.

The UNC further alleged that the ambush took place in an area dominated by Kuki militant groups where, according to the organisation, infiltration by non-Kuki armed groups was "not possible".

The statement also referred to alleged warnings issued earlier by KLA (L) against meetings with the Manipur chief minister in Churachandpur. The UNC claimed that the visit made by the church leaders may have been viewed negatively by radical groups operating in the area. While not presenting direct evidence, the UNC alleged that the killings appeared to have "an intra-fold character" involving elements from within the broader Kuki fold. At the same time, it asserted that the involvement of non-Kuki armed groups was "beyond any doubt".

The SPARK program in Meghalaya encourages the development of soft skills and self-assurance in schools

Shillong, May 19: A classroom initiative focused on communication, emotional well-being and life skills is gaining traction across Meghalaya schools, with over 6,500 students already covered under the state-backed SPARK Meghalaya programme.

SPARK Meghalaya — School Programmes in Articulation, Resilience and Kindness — has expanded across 25 government and government-aided schools since March this year, targeting students from Classes VI to X. The programme, supported by the Meghalaya Education Department, has also been recognised nationally as an NEP 2020 best practice for foundational soft skills and recently received recognition at the Indian Education Congress & Awards 2026 for community engagement in education.

Designed around articulation, resilience and kindness, the initiative moves beyond conventional classroom teaching by introducing activities such as "Question Walls", "Kindness Walls" and peer-led public speaking sessions. The programme also integrates modules on communication, social-emotional learning, STEM engagement and employability-oriented life skills.

Students involved in the programme say it has changed how they view themselves and their future. "SPARK made me realise that staying safe isn't always the same as staying true



to yourself," said Havilah Challam, a Class 10 student from Jowai Public School. "It reminded me to never let the voices that tell us to quiet down define us."

Another student, Azareel Kharshandi from St Francis Xavier's Secondary School in Mawsynram, said the programme encouraged students to connect their interests with future careers.

"Before this, I used to think that hobbies and interests never really connected with future jobs. But now I realise that many of our interests and talents can actually become future career opportunities," he said.

The student's remarks were later shared on social media by Conrad K. Sangma, who described the initiative as an effort to help children "believe in the confidence they possess". He

linked the programme to the state's broader push towards "joyful and quality learning" and youth development.

Teachers participating in the programme said classroom behaviour and student participation have shown noticeable improvement. Sylvester Mawthoh, a teacher from Mynken RMSA Secondary School in Bhoirymbong, said SPARK encouraged teachers to rethink how students engage inside classrooms.

"We learned that silence is not always disobedience; sometimes it is confusion," he said, referring to one of the programme's classroom exercises that encouraged students to ask questions freely.

The initiative is also being linked to Meghalaya's growing creative and entrepreneurial ecosystem. According to programme organisers, 81 student talents across categories such as music, dance and visual arts have already been identified through campus and district-level showcases. There are plans to connect students with larger state-backed platforms, including PRIME Meghalaya and the Chief Minister's Meghalaya Grassroots Music Program.

Officials said SPARK Meghalaya now aims to reach more than 10,000 students this year while expanding teacher training programmes to rural campuses across the state.

Meghalaya's chief minister, Conrad K. Sangma, plans 510 sports projects by 2028

Shillong, May 19: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma has laid the foundation stone for a mini stadium at Damas in North Garo Hills district, highlighting the state government's push to expand sports infrastructure across Meghalaya.

Calling sports infrastructure crucial for nurturing young talent, Sangma said the state currently has 240 sports projects either completed or under development. The government

now aims to increase that number to 510 projects by 2028.

Sports infrastructure is key to nurturing talent and creating opportunities for our youth," the chief minister said in a post on social media.

He added that the government's vision was to ensure that "no district, no block, no locality should be left behind", with equal access to quality sporting facilities across the state. The proposed mini stadi-

um at Damas is expected to improve access to training and sporting opportunities for youths in North Garo Hills, a region where infrastructure development has remained limited compared to urban centres.

Over the past few years, Meghalaya has intensified its focus on sports development, with investments in stadiums, training centres and grassroots-level facilities aimed at encouraging participation and identifying talent from rural areas.

A major tribal body prolongs the 48-hour shutdown in the hill districts of Manipur due to the hostage situation

Imphal, May 19: The Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), one of the apex organisations of the Kuki community in Manipur, on Sunday extended its total shutdown in the hill areas for another 48 hours in protest against the alleged failure of the government to rescue the detained villagers and fulfil its demands.

Normal life continued to remain badly affected across all Kuki-Zo inhabited areas, especially in Kangpokpi district, after the

KIM had called a three-day total shutdown from midnight of May 13 following the killing of three Baptist Church leaders in Kangpokpi district.

KIM Information and Publicity Secretary Janghaolun Haokip said that in view of the continued inaction of the government and the absence of any positive development regarding the charter of demands submitted by the KIM to the Union government on May 14, the organi-

sation has decided to extend the ongoing shutdown.

He said the decision was also prompted by the failure to rescue the Kuki villagers who were allegedly taken hostage in Senapati district. "After thorough deliberation, the Kuki Inpi Manipur has resolved to extend the ongoing 48-hour shutdown for another 48 hours," Haokip said in a statement. According to him, the extended shutdown would come into effect from midnight on

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The KIM also expressed appreciation to its federating units, Civil Society Organ-

isations, and members of the Kuki-Zo community for their cooperation, solidarity and support during the agitation.

"The Kuki Inpi Manipur reiterates that the continued silence and inaction of the authorities in the face of such grave concerns is deeply unfortunate and unacceptable. The government must act with urgency and responsibility before the situation deteriorates further," the statement added.

Among the cities chosen for the phase I water metro rollout is Guwahati: Sonowal Sarbananda

Guwahati, May 19: The Centre has initiated steps towards a nationwide rollout of Water Metro services, with Guwahati identified among the cities selected for Phase I implementation, Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal announced on Monday, May 18 following a high-level review meeting on the project.

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) has also circulated the Draft National Water Metro Policy, 2026 for inter-ministerial consultations as part of efforts to establish a formal national framework for urban water-based public transport systems. Apart from Guwahati, the Phase I rollout will include Srinagar, Patna, Varanasi, Ayodhya and Prayagraj. In Assam, Tezpur and Dibrugarh have been proposed for inclusion under Phase II of the project.

The initiative is being developed on the model of the successful Water Metro project in Kochi, with the Centre aiming to expand water-based urban mobility sys-

tems across cities with navigable waterways. The proposed network is intended to provide sustainable, efficient and modern public transport alternatives while reducing urban congestion.

Addressing the meeting, Sarbananda Sonowal said the Water Metro systems would require comparatively lower capital investment as they utilise existing waterways with limited civil infrastructure requirements. He said the projects would benefit from shorter construction timelines, reduced land acquisition requirements and lower operational costs, particularly through the use of electric and hybrid ferries.

He added that the initiative would help decongest urban road networks while offering commuters a comfortable and environmentally sustainable mode of transport.

The Union Minister also stressed the need for consultations with State Governments on the Draft National Water Metro Policy, 2026 to incorporate suggestions and ensure wider participation in the pol-



icy framework.

According to the Ministry, the proposed Water Metro system is envisioned as a mass public transport solution catering to both daily commuters and tourism activities. The services are proposed to operate across all navigable waterways.

Sarbananda Sonowal said the government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has placed emphasis on the adoption of green technologies, includ-

ing hybrid and electric propulsion systems, along with periodic technological upgrades.

The proposed framework also seeks standardisation in vessel design, terminals, charging infrastructure and safety protocols while encouraging indigenous vessel construction and integration with existing multimodal transport systems.

Outlining the selection criteria, the Minister said Water Metro proj-

ects would be prioritised in regions with continuous or semi-continuous waterways and cities with populations exceeding one million, particularly where there is significant transport demand and tourism potential.

However, he stated that these criteria could be relaxed in areas where the projects are expected to reduce road congestion, improve connectivity to remote and water-locked regions, or strengthen

transport resilience during floods and disruptions.

The proposed development framework includes vessels, pontoons, jetties, charging and bunkering infrastructure, terminals, passenger amenities and navigational aids. The Centre is also considering multiple funding models, including joint Centre-State funding, fully State-funded projects, Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), and fully Centre-funded initiatives. The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) had earlier entrusted Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) with conducting feasibility studies for 18 cities on February 25, 2025. The studies include assessments of existing public transport systems, travel demand, financial and economic viability, and multimodal integration. According to the Ministry, site visits have been completed in all 18 locations. Draft feasibility reports have been submitted for 17 cities, while the report for Lakshadweep is pending. Feasibility reports for Srinagar, Patna, Guwahati, Vara-

nasi and Ayodhya have already been accepted. During the review meeting, Sarbananda Sonowal also highlighted the importance of incorporating India's maritime heritage into the design and architecture of Water Metro terminals and related infrastructure. He stressed the need for landscape assessments and the use of locally appropriate building materials to preserve regional identity.

The Minister further called for greater public engagement, particularly among students and youth, to create awareness about the transformation of India's waterways sector. He also underlined the importance of highlighting fuel savings and environmental benefits associated with Water Metro projects.

Describing the initiative as a major opportunity in India's transport sector, Sonowal said the projects should enhance the identity and urban landscape of cities while delivering sustainable and world-class mobility solutions.

New specialty wards opened at AIIMS Guwahati



Guwahati, May 19: AIIMS Guwahati has inaugurated new specialty wards and expanded its inpatient healthcare facilities, marking a major step towards strengthening tertiary healthcare services in the Northeast region. The institute inaugurated a dedicated 55-bed IPD ward, which includes ophthalmology beds, along with newly established inpatient facilities for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR), Pulmonary Medicine and Dental services. The new facilities were inaugurated by Prof (Col) Ashok Puranik in the presence of the Medical Superintendent, Heads of Departments, faculty members, nursing officers and other staff members of the institute. With the latest expansion, AIIMS Guwahati has increased its inpatient bed strength from 387 to 442 beds. The institute stated that the augmentation reflects its continued commitment towards enhancing patient care capacity, improving accessibility to specialised healthcare services and advancing state-of-the-art diagnostic and therapeutic interventions for the people of the Northeast. According to officials, the newly inaugurated facilities are expected to streamline multidisciplinary clinical services, strengthen advanced patient management and reinforce the institute's vision of delivering accessible, affordable, high-quality and patient-centric healthcare across the region.

Cong questions PM's silence on CBI probe against Arunachal CM

Itanagar, May 19: Congress MP Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday raised questions regarding why the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu is still serving as the State's CM despite the ongoing CBI investigation against him.

In a post on X, he noted that the Chief Minister's family was awarded with Rs 1,270 crore over the last ten years, after which the Supreme Court ordered the CBI investigation.

"Why is the man who once said 'Na khaunga, na khane dunga' is quiet and why has the Arunachal Pradesh CM not been asked to step down? This is a gross travesty of the Supreme Court's verdict itself," the Congress leader wrote, adding that "there are other BJP CMs as well who fall in the category of the Arunachal Pradesh CM."

It was on April 6, 2026, that a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court directed the CBI to commence a preliminary inquiry into allegations that the Arunachal Pradesh CM's family was awarded contracts worth Rs 1,270 crore over 10 years from Jan 2015 to Dec 2025 in a direct conflict of interest," he said."This is not an order of a lower court or a High Court. It is of the Supreme Court. Yet the CM continues in office. He is also the PWD Minister and controls the files that the CBI will need to conduct its inquiry," he added.

Assam suspends survey for proposed township linked to Tata semiconductor plant

Guwahati, May 19: In response to concerns by Tiwa and Bodo community organizations, the Assam government on May 18 delayed a survey for a proposed satellite township next to the future Tata semiconductor facility in Morigaon district.

Anamika Tewari, the Morigaon District Commissioner, issued a formal order stating that the survey work associated with the proposed township has been canceled immediately following protests from multiple organizations. The district administration had been conducting surveys in Sindhisar, Naldhara and Bihita villages near Jagiroad to prepare a relocation and rehabilitation proposal for the planned township project. However, the move triggered strong opposition from tribal residents, who feared eviction from villages located within the Gobha tribal belt. The All Tiwa Students' Union along with several other tribal organisations staged protest rallies over the past three days demanding complete cancellation of the proposed township project and



not merely suspension of the survey process.

Officials said the satellite township was being planned near the upcoming Tata Electronics Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facility at Jagiroad.

Landmark meningitis research features contribution from USTM academic

Shillong, May 19: In a remarkable achievement for the academic and research community of North East India, Dr Yugal Kishore Mohanta, Assistant Professor at the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), has contributed to a major international research study published in the prestigious journal, The Lancet Neurology. The study, titled "Global, regional, and national burden of meningitis, its risk factors and aetiologies, 1990–2023: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2023," presents one of the most comprehensive assessments of meningitis trends worldwide over the last three decades. The research analyses the global, regional, and national burden of meningitis from 1990 to 2023, examining its risk factors, mortality trends, and various disease-causing aetiologies. Dr Mohanta's contribution forms part of a large-scale collaborative effort involving leading scientists, researchers and institutions from across the globe under the framework of the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study. The findings of the study highlight significant progress made in reducing meningitis-related mortality in several regions while also drawing attention to continuing challenges faced by low- and middle-income countries where meningitis remains a major public health

concern.

Speaking on the significance of the study, Dr Mohanta stated, "Meningitis continues to be a serious health challenge, especially among vulnerable populations. The study emphasises the urgent need for improved vaccination coverage, early diagnosis, timely treatment, and stronger healthcare systems to effectively reduce the disease burden." The research further underscores the critical role of socioeconomic conditions, healthcare accessibility, and public health interventions in influencing disease outcomes.

The findings are expected to support policymakers, healthcare professionals, and global health organisations in formulating targeted strategies for controlling and eventually eliminating meningitis as a public health threat.

Adding another feather to his cap, Dr. Mohanta is currently serving as a GBD Senior Collaborator at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), Washington University. He has also been recognised among the World's Top 2 percent Scientists by Stanford University, as published by Elsevier, for his continuous contribution to scientific research. The University of Science and Technology Meghalaya has congratulated Dr. Mohanta on this prestigious accomplishment, stating that his involvement in



• Dr. Yugal Kishore Mohanta, Assistant Professor at the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), contributed to an international study published in The Lancet Neurology.

such a high-impact international study reflects USTM's growing footprint in global research and academic excellence. The publication is expected to become a significant reference in the field of global health policy and epidemiological research, contributing to accelerated international efforts towards the prevention and control of meningitis worldwide.

Mizoram government approves revised ILP norms, starts intensive electoral roll update campaign

Aizawl, May 19: The Mizoram government has approved a revised framework for the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system aimed at strengthening regulation and monitoring of non-residents entering the state, while simultaneously launching a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls ahead of upcoming elections. The decision to introduce new ILP norms was taken during a meeting of the Council of Ministers chaired by Chief Minister Lalduhoma in Aizawl. The revised ILP framework is expected to streamline procedures related to permit issuance, monitoring and enforcement under the Bengal

Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873. The ILP remains a mandatory travel document for non-tribal Indian citizens entering Mizoram. According to officials, the move comes amid growing concerns over the increasing influx of people from neighbouring states following the expansion of railway connectivity up to Sairang near Aizawl. Several civil society organisations in Mizoram had earlier urged the government to tighten the ILP system to prevent illegal influx and protect indigenous communities. During the same cabinet meeting, the government also approved the proposed Mizoram Startup Policy, 2026 and the draft

Mizoram Regulation of Fireworks Bill, 2026. Meanwhile, the Election Commission has begun the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Mizoram. Chief Electoral Officer Dr. Lalrozama, while inaugurating a training programme in Aizawl, stressed the need for officials to maintain neutrality, caution and transparency during the revision process. Dr. Lalrozama instructed Booth Level Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and other election officials to ensure that all eligible citizens are able to exercise their voting rights without facing errors or irregularities in the voter list.

North Tripura crackdown leads to seizure of Yaba tablets worth Rs 2.5 crore

Agartala, May 19: Tripura Police seized around 50,000 Yaba tablets worth an estimated Rs 2.5 crore and arrested two persons during a major anti-drug operation in North Tripura district. The operation was conducted in the Kadamtala area under Dharmanagar subdivision based on specific intelligence inputs and under the supervision of Avinash Rai. Police carried out the raid at Bagan village under Kadamtala Police Station and searched the residence of Gautam Das in Ward No. 6 of Bagan Gram Panchayat.



During the search operation, the narcotics were allegedly recovered from a cowshed located on the property. The two arrested accused

have been identified as Gautam Das and Jasimuddin. According to police officials, both are suspected to be involved in drug stor-

age and trafficking activities linked to a larger network. A case has been registered under the NDPS Act at Kadamtala Police Station. SP Avinash Rai said the accused are being interrogated to trace the source of the seized contraband and identify other members of a suspected interstate or international drug trafficking syndicate. He added that the investigation is focused on uncovering supply routes, storage networks and financial links connected to the narcotics seizure.

Cabinet clears stricter ILP monitoring rules in Mizoram



The Mizoram Cabinet approved new guidelines for the Inner Line Pass (ILP) system on May 18 to better regulate non-resident entry.

Aizawl, May 19: The Government of Mizoram Cabinet on May 18 approved fresh guidelines for the Inner Line Pass (ILP) system aimed at strengthening the regulation and monitoring of entry of non-residents into the state. The decision was taken during a meeting of the Council of Ministers chaired by Lalduhoma, officials said. While the detailed provisions of the new Mizoram Inner Line Pass Guidelines, 2026 are yet to be officially released, the revised framework is expected to streamline procedures related to issuance, monitoring and enforcement of ILPs across the state. The ILP system, implemented under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, makes it mandatory for non-tribal Indian citizens to obtain permission before entering Mizoram. The mechanism is aimed at protecting the indigenous identity, culture and demographic interests of the state. The move comes amid growing concern over alleged violations of the ILP

system and increasing influx from outside the state.

Earlier, the Central Young Mizo Association, Mizo Zirlai Pawl and merchant bodies had demanded stricter enforcement and revamp of the existing ILP guidelines. According to Tourism Department officials, Mizoram has witnessed a significant rise in tourist arrivals after the railway line up to Sairang near Aizawl became operational in September last year. The cabinet also approved several other proposals, including the Mizoram Startup Policy, 2026, the draft Mizoram Regulation of Fireworks Bill, 2026, and the formation of the Mizoram Urban Development Company under the Companies Act, 2013. In another decision, former Mizoram chief secretary Renu Sharma, who retired in October 2024, was appointed as Advisor to the Government of Mizoram on a re-employment basis. The cabinet further approved provincialisation of several Adhoc Grant-in-Aid schools, the Aizawl City Traffic Police Warden Scheme, 2026, and the draft Mizoram Engineering Service Rules, 2026.

Minister Atul Bora given additional charge of Parliamentary Affairs

Guwahati, May 19: Minister Atul Bora has been given the additional charge of the Parliamentary Affairs department as an interim arrangement, according to an order issued by Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya. "The Governor of Assam, on the advice of Chief Minister, is pleased to allow Atul Bora, Minister, Panchayat and Rural Development, Implementation of Assam Accord, Border Protection and Development, (and) Excise departments, to also look after the matters pertaining to Parliamentary Affairs Department, as an interim arrangement," stated a notification issued by Chief Secretary Ravi Kota. Bora is one of the four ministers of the new ernment who took oath on May 12 along with the Chief Minister.

Church leaders meet Manipur CM

Imphal, May 19: A team of church leaders is set to visit Kangpokpi and Senapati districts in an effort to defuse the ongoing hostage crisis triggered by the killing of three church leaders in Kangpokpi district on May 13. The initiative involves representatives from the Council for Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) and the Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC).

A 10-member delegation of church leaders called on Manipur chief minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Monday to discuss the fresh tensions arising out of the hostage stand-off between the two tribal communities. Deputy chief minister Losli Dikho also attended the meeting.

According to a release from the chief minister's secretariat, the church leaders volunteered to bro-

ker peace between the communities. The chief minister appreciated the initiative and encouraged the church leaders to engage with both sides to restore peace. "Held a meaningful interaction at the Secretariat with representatives of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) and Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC), in the presence of Deputy CM Losli Dikho, on strengthening

peace, harmony and brotherhood in the state," Khemchand said. "I appeal to all stakeholders and messengers of peace to continue fostering dialogue, reconciliation and unity among communities. The Government remains fully committed to safeguarding peace and harmony in Manipur," he said. The church leaders will work in two separate teams, with one team travelling to Kangpokpi district and

the other to Senapati district.

According to the release, the church leaders strongly felt that hostages on both sides should be released immediately on humanitarian grounds. The Kangpokpi team will meet family members of the three slain church leaders and later hold discussions with Kuki church leaders. The government has also assured ex gratia to the bereaved families.

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The Need for More Inclusive Cities

Cities are often designed around convenience for the majority while overlooking the needs of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, the elderly, and children. Broken footpaths, inaccessible public transport, and lack of ramps or safe crossings limit mobility and indepen-

dence for many citizens. Inclusive urban planning is not simply about infrastructure—it is about ensuring dignity and equal access in public life. Cities become truly modern only when they are accessible to everyone. Development must include all sections of society rather than leaving some behind.

West Bengal does not lack water; rather, it coexists with it, bargains with it, and occasionally suffers as a result. However, rather than being considered vital ecological infrastructure, the state’s wetlands are still viewed as peripheral landscapes. This is an expensive oversight. Carbon finance is becoming a viable tool to help protect and restore wetlands as climate threats increase and public resources continue to be squeezed. Verified climate outcomes are linked to monetary value through carbon finance. Only projects that show quantifiable greenhouse gas benefits in comparison to a reliable baseline scenario are eligible for carbon credits. Additionality becomes crucial at this point. A wetland intervention must demonstrate that without carbon money, conservation or restoration would not take place. The marsh terrain of West Bengal offers both potential and urgency. The state is home to a vast variety of coastal wetlands, aquaculture landscapes, riverine systems, tanks, ponds, and seasonally flooded areas in addition to the famous Sundarbans. Additionally, organic soil and peat-influenced areas in deltaic and floodplain ecosystems are receiving increasing scientific attention and should be carefully evaluated. Together, mainland systems, tidal wetlands, and possible peat landscapes provide an important but underutilized climate asset. But carbon value is not created by presence alone. The viability of long-term monitoring, methodological congruence, and demonstrable threat are all requirements for eligibility. Encroachment, altered drainage, pollution, and conflicting land uses already put strain on many wetlands throughout the state. Such constraints can serve as the founda-



tion for legitimate climate actions when they are genuine and well-documented. Additionally, it’s critical to dispel the misconception that plantation activities is the main focus of wetland carbon programs. In reality, hydrology and management-focused initiatives are frequently the most successful. More long-lasting results than isolated planting are frequently obtained by restoring tidal exchange, enhancing stream connections, stabilizing water regimes in inland wetlands, controlling invasive species, managing sediment flows, and bolstering protection systems. The transition from dispersed wetland programs to a coordinated landscape strategy is the policy problem.

Wetlands cross several departments and municipal administrations, making governance fragmentation a recurrent limitation. Even well-designed financing systems will not be able to scale without institutional convergence. Clarity on carbon rights and tenure is also crucial. In West Bengal, wetlands often have overlapping systems of community use and ownership. Investor confidence and community trust will remain precarious unless benefit-sharing and rights are clearly stated. Program design must also incorporate risk management. Cyclones, erosion, and hydrological changes pose permanent dangers in the Bengali setting. Leakage hazards also occur when shielding in one area merely shifts pressure in another. These issues highlight the necessity of meticulous, landscape-level planning rather than undermining the rationale for wetland carbon financing. The ability to monitor is where the state has a comparative advantage. It is now feasible to monitor vegetation dynamics, land-cover change, and water persistence throughout extensive wetland networks thanks to developments in remote sensing and GIS. These tools can support reliable monitoring, reporting, and verification systems in both tidal and mainland landscapes when paired with focused field verification. Policy intent is now necessary. Priority wetland clusters in West Bengal should first undergo a methodical feasibility screening. This should be followed by pilot programs that are in line with accepted standards and are backed by robust safeguards and community involvement. When utilized responsibly, carbon finance can help release sustained resources for wetland protection.

Conscientious spending during uncertain times



The production-deficit northeast region is especially susceptible to price shocks due to spiraling costs of necessities. Following an increase in fuel prices brought on by the West Asian crisis, consumers in the region are already feeling the pinch as rising commodity prices eat into their household budgets. Market analysts have raised the alarm that the ongoing crisis in West Asia may not end anytime soon, which might lead to more increases in the cost of necessities and greater financial losses for consumers. The states in the region must develop self-sufficiency in both primary farm produce and processed food in order to protect consumers from price shocks caused by increases at sources and across the supply chain in the long run. Ironically, demand driven by population development has considerably outpaced agricultural growth, so even if output of a number of basic farm items has increased, there is still a large disparity between supply and need. Due to the outrageous spike in commercial gas cylinders, which was followed by an increase in ingredient prices brought on by a rise in diesel prices, the restaurant industry in Assam and other states in the region has been severely strained financially.

In order to keep up with the growing cost of inputs, they must raise the prices of their food goods, but doing so runs the risk of reducing their clientele, which could make their business unstable and unprofitable. Bread, milk, various brands of rice, potatoes, onions, mustard oil, and other food items have already seen price increases due to manufacturers’ and traders’ inability to absorb the increase in raw material, farm produce, and transportation costs. In order to take advantage of a favorable climate and sufficient rainfall for a bountiful harvest, farmers are also facing a shortage of pesticides and fertilizers. Although the central government heavily subsidizes fertilizer prices to shield farmers from price shocks, state governments must remain vigilant to prevent hoarding and dishonest suppliers and traders from fabricating crises in order to maintain a stable level of farm production in the area. The vulnerability of consumers will only increase if local farm productivity is impacted by a shortage of fertilizer or an increase in fertilizer prices.

To guarantee fair pricing for paddy and stop an increase in rice fallows, government procurement agencies must increase paddy procurement at the minimum support price. In order to prevent young people from rural Assamese agricultural households from leaving, a steady income from farming operations is essential. Increasing food grain

production is essential to lowering reliance on imports to close the supply-demand gap, but doing so calls for prompt distribution of high-quality seeds and other inputs, as well as better farm mechanization, storage facilities, and market connectivity. Individual farmers in Assam bear a greater burden due to their small and dispersed landholdings, which make it challenging for them to distribute costs and scale up output.

To lower individual risks and create a shared pool of resources to increase farmers’ resilience against price volatility, more farmers’ collectives, such as Farmer Producer Companies, Farmer Producer Organizations, and Self-Help Groups, must be formed. Building resilience against climate change and maintaining soil health while concentrating on increasing farm production for self-sufficiency requires striking a balance between high-yielding varieties that require chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and insecticides for optimal yield and indigenous crop varieties that grow using biofertilizers, organic manure, and biopesticides. However, even if the region’s purchases of packaged and processed foods derived from the same farm products in other states are constantly increasing, post-harvest losses still plague the farm sector.

The only way to overcome this contradiction is to prioritize the food processing sector so that excess farm produce is used locally for value addition and generates more revenue than raw farm produce. The development of livelihood opportunities in the agriculture sector to lower rural outmigration is one of the main advantages of supporting the food processing industry. A highly favorable industrial climate for food processing units in the MSME sector has been created by government funding support under various flagship schemes, easy access to credit, subsidized rooftop solarization to meet affordable energy needs for processing units’ viability, and the expansion of digital marketing facilities to the region. The region’s food processing industry is expanding, but the enormous amounts of fruits and vegetables that are wasted there indicate that the region’s potential for food processing has not yet been completely realized. India cannot manage the current state of affairs in West Asia, and its reliance on imports from this part of the world will continue to cause market instability, particularly in a susceptible area like the Northeast. To control demand and attain regional food production self-sufficiency, consumers must practice responsible spending, avoid food waste, and boost investment in the farm sector.

The government must appropriately acknowledge female farmers

The fact that women’s contributions to our agricultural workforce are still mostly unnoticed in official records and government assistance programs is extremely disheartening. According to a recent article in this newspaper, the majority of women are still not formally recognized as farmers even though they perform a significant amount of agricultural labor. Despite the fact that women now outnumber men in agricultural labor nationwide—1.7 crore women and 1.3 crore men, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics’ 2024 Labour Force Survey—this exclusion continues. So why are they still not given the credit they deserve? Our reporter recently traveled to more than a dozen villages in Kishoreganj’s Nikli upazila and discovered that, in addition to their domestic responsibilities, women perform demanding tasks throughout the agricultural cycle, from weeding and irrigation to threshing, drying, and grain storage. They also took on the responsibility of protecting damaged crops during recent unplanned rains and flash floods while still doing household duties. However, their labor is frequently regarded as an extension of domestic chores rather being acknowledged as an economic activity because farming is still largely seen as a male occupation. Additionally, women are typically only listed as



farmers if they are widowed, divorced, or do not have a male family member’s national identity card. It is unacceptable to exclude someone in this way. As a result, women continue to be shut out of important government support systems. Many are excluded from farmer lists, such as the Farmers’ Cards, which grant access to incentives, subsidies, and agricultural inputs. In the pre-pilot stage of the Farmer’s Card program, 22,061 farmers from 11 upazilas in 10 districts were polled; only

15.05 percent of them were women.

Women made up a very small percentage of individuals recognized for government aid, even among farmers impacted by recent crop losses. Long-standing institutional and social constraints that continue to devalue women’s labor are reflected in the underappreciation of women in the agriculture industry. This reality is further highlighted by wage inequities, where women are paid much less for physically demanding

work.

Their susceptibility is further increased by their lack of land ownership, low representation in local agricultural committees, and limited access to financial sources. This needs to change. Formal status as farmers should be granted to women who work in agriculture, whether through cultivation, sharecropping, raising livestock, preserving seeds, or post-harvest tasks.

To guarantee that women are appropriately included in official records and support

programs, the government should resurrect and finish the abandoned digital database plan. Women should be included in local agriculture and disaster response groups, and agricultural incentives should be allocated equitably.

To lessen their load, more money must be invested in childcare assistance, contemporary farming technologies, and other rural infrastructure. The increasing role of women in agriculture must no longer go unnoticed.

NHRC and enforced disappearances are not adequately covered by draft laws

It is disheartening that the BNP government could not create appropriate legislation regarding enforced disappearances and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The proposed legislation, which was made public on Sunday, appears to undermine the NHRC’s independent monitoring and institutional strength while giving the police authority to look into disappearances. It is questionable to assign the police the task of conducting the investigation given the connection between law enforcement and the majority of enforced disappearance instances during the Awami League administration.

This clause seems to be equivalent to turning the

wolf into the shepherd. The majority of enforced disappearances during Sheikh Hasina’s tenure were known to have been carried out by security and intelligence agencies.

The police’s Detective Branch was once infamous for kidnapping businesspeople, torturing them, and then demanding ransom from their relatives to free them.

How can a sub-inspector be expected to investigate such crimes objectively and without worrying about their superiors taking revenge? However, in contrast to the temporary regulations that assigned the NHRC the responsibility of looking into disappearances and prohibited members of a force from looking into

their own members, the new draft law on enforced disappearance suggests doing just that.

In actuality, the BNP government’s planned law on the NHRC deprives it of the authority granted by the interim government’s ordinances to look into rights breaches by disciplined forces.

According to the revised draft, when such violations take place, the NHRC is required to request a report from the government or the head of the agency. If the NHRC is not pleased with the report, it can only make recommendations and demand a response from the government. To put it another way, the NHRC’s involvement in rights breaches by law enforce-

ment would be restricted to paperwork, exactly like it was under the Hasina administration. Furthermore, according to the draft, the procedure of choosing NHRC members allows for more government control within the organization.

In contrast to the 2024 and 2025 ordinances pertaining to the NHRC, the speaker of the House will lead the member selection committee rather than a judge from the Appellate Division selected by the chief justice.

Additionally, the government has substantial control over NHRC nominations because the law and home ministers are on the selection committee. How can we be sure that the people chosen by the ministers

of the ruling party will behave impartially when looking into the state’s human rights transgressions, given our prior experiences?

One of the BNP government’s justifications for repealing NHRC regulations and letting the enforced disappearance ordinances expire was that clearer, better legislation would be drafted. But legal clarity shouldn’t come at the expense of undermining human rights organizations and giving state institutions with a track record of persecution more authority. This is not what was anticipated from this government, which was elected with the intention of enacting substantive rather than only symbolic reform.

Nifty IT extends gains for third session, up 8%; check top picks by analyst

New Delhi: The Nifty IT index extended its winning streak for the third consecutive session on Tuesday, rising 4 per cent to hit an intraday high of 29,559.85. The index has rallied 8 per cent over the past three trading sessions, reflecting renewed buying interest in technology stocks from the lows.

On a Y-T-D basis, the index is, however, still down 22 per cent, with just one constituent delivering positive returns.

As of 11 AM, the Nifty IT index was the top-performing sectoral index, trading higher by 1,115 points, or 3.9 per cent, at 29,507.Speaking on stock selection within the IT space, the analyst emphasised the need for a selective approach. According to him, only a few companies have guided for double-digit growth. After witnessing continuous selling pressure over the past few weeks, the Nifty IT Index had touched a low of 27,070 levels.

Harish Jujarey, AVP, head - technical equity research,



Prithvi Finmart, said that the index is currently witnessing a relief rally. From a technical standpoint, the index has moved closer to its 50-day moving average, which is placed around the 29,750-mark. The momentum indicator RSI, which had slipped into the oversold zone during the recent decline, has recovered towards the 50 level, indicating an improvement in near-term momentum.“Despite the ongoing recovery, the broader trend continues to remain weak as the lower top-lower bottom

formation is still intact. A decisive breakout above the 50 DMA zone of 29,750–30,000 would be crucial for a short-term trend reversal,” he said, adding that failure to sustain above this band may result in the index resuming its broader downtrend, with the possibility of revisiting the 2023 low near 26,200 levels.

Tapse added that he favours midcap counters like Coforge and Persistent Systems.

All 10 constituent stocks of the index were trading firmly in the green. Coforge and Mphasis led the gains, rising

over 5 per cent each to ₹1,428 and ₹2,262, respectively. Tech Mahindra advanced 4.8 per cent to ₹1,499, followed by Oracle Financial Services Software (OFSS) at ₹9,837, Persistent Systems at ₹5,168, LTIMindtree at ₹4,263, and Infosys at ₹1,191 - all gaining more than 4 per cent. According to Prashanth Tapse, senior vice president of research at Mehta Equities, while IT stocks have seen some improvement in price performance recently, the broader fundamentals of the sector remain challenging due to relatively subdued growth expectations. At the same time, valuations have become more attractive compared to historical levels.He added that rupee weakness has also helped IT companies from an earnings view because they do business in USD.Meanwhile, the rupee depreciated 18 paise to 96.38 against the US dollar today as market sentiments continue to dampen amid simmering West Asia tensions and continuous FPI selling.

BSE may get Nifty 50 berth rebalancing; stock gains 2%

New Delhi: BSE share price today: Shares of BSE Limited hit a new high of ₹4,202.50, rising 2 per cent on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) in Tuesday’s intraday trade on a healthy outlook. In the past two trading days, the stock price of the exchange and data platform company has rallied 5 per cent. The brokerage firm said its estimates now factor in gradual systemic volume growth on April 2026 volumes, post the implementation of higher STT and less than earlier likely gain in market share, leading to FY27E/FY28E profit after tax of ₹3,830 crore/₹4,190 crore. Upside risk will be from continuous market

Since April, the stock has zoomed 56 per cent. Thus far in the calendar year 2026, BSE shares have outperformed the markets by soaring 60 per cent, as against a 0.4 per cent rise in the Nifty 50. According to a report by analyst Janaghan Jeyakumar of Quiddity Advisors, BSE Ltd could be headed

for inclusion in NSE’s flagship Nifty 50 index at the September 2026 rebalancing. Jeyakumar, who publishes on Smartkarma, said that BSE is expected to replace Wipro in the 50-share benchmark based on current average float market capitalisation (AFMC) trends.

“BSE stands ahead of airline company InterGlobe Aviation, two-wheeler firm TVS Motor Company, ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company, Jio Financial Services, Pidilite Industries and Hyundai Motor India, data showed. Analysts at ICICI Securities said that BSE enjoys strong prospects of volume growth across segments (options, cash as well as MF platform), led by derivatives, which has been our investment thesis for the stock. This, along with the prospects of improvement in costs, has led to quarterly Ebitda (ex-SGF) ascending from ₹116 crore in Q1FY24 to ₹1,120 crore in Q4FY26.

OMCs gain after fuel price hike; Nifty Oil & Gas index rises up to 0.6%



New Delhi: Shares of oil and gas sector companies were in high demand on Tuesday, May 19, with the Nifty Oil & Gas index advancing 0.64 per cent following the hike in petrol and diesel prices in the country.At 09:28 AM, the Nifty Oil & Gas index was up 0.45 per cent at 11,212.55 levels, led by Indraprastha Gas, which was trading over 2.10 per cent higher. Among other gainers, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL), Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL), Adani Total Gas, and Chennai Petroleum Corporation were trading over 1 per cent higher each.That said, Gaurav Sharma, head of research, equity, at Globe Capital Market, expects further fuel price hikes in the near term, citing that the current increase is much smaller than what is needed. According to him, that was the reason why OMC stocks did not perform well when fuel prices were hiked for the first time. According to Sharma, OMCs are still not performing as expected even after the second price hike, as the increase remains relatively small compared to the extent of under-recoveries. “There are huge under-recoveries, and even after the second price hike, it will take a very long time to bridge the shortfall,”

he added. Reliance Industries, Aegis Logistics, Petronet LNG, and Castrol India were also trading higher by up to 0.88 per cent. In contrast, Mahanagar Gas, Aegis Vopak Terminals, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), and GAIL (India) were trading lower, with losses extending up to 0.80 per cent. Petrol and diesel prices were raised by around 90 paise per litre on Tuesday, marking the second fuel price hike in less than a week after state-run retailers ended a nearly four-year freeze on revisions. The latest revision comes after state-owned fuel retailers increased petrol and diesel prices by ₹3 per litre on Friday — the first hike in more than four years. The move followed a sharp surge in global crude oil prices amid escalating tensions in the West Asia. The only thing that can improve the situation is either a steep decline in crude oil prices or a sharp rise in petrol and diesel prices in India, which, according to him, appears quite unlikely.

However, he believes the latest revision has opened the door for further increases in fuel prices. “This time, we can expect another ₹2 to ₹3 hike, which could bring OMCs into a relatively better position,” he noted.

Analysts suggest that consumption stocks may face the greatest impact Impact of Fuel Price Increase

New Delhi: The outperformance of Nifty India Consumption index - down around 8 per cent versus Nifty 50’s near 10 per cent fall thus far in calendar year 2026 (CY26) - may be under threat amid a gradual fuel price hike, suggest analysts. From an investment perspective, the consumption-related stocks, they suggest, remain structurally resilient but face near-term headwinds. While the recent stock correction already factor in some of the margin pressure, the trajectory of crude prices will be critical going ahead. “If inflation moderates below key thresholds, companies could benefit from delayed price pass-through, aiding margins. However, a prolonged high-inflation environment may weigh on both volume growth and profitability, making margin trends and pricing discipline key monitorables in the coming quarters,” an analyst tracking the sector at Motilal Oswal said. India, according to analysts at Nomura, faces twin climatic shocks this year – an exceptional surge in temperatures owing to potentially “super” El Niño conditions, and the prospect of sub-



normal rains (92 per cent of normal), with officials attaching a 35 per cent probability to “deficient” rains (below 90 per cent of normal). If the combination of El Niño and deficient rains lead to lower food production and higher inflation, Nomura said, then some spillovers onto the broader rural economy are unavoidable.“We expect food & beverages inflation to surge to around 6 per cent y-o-y levels in FY27 (0.6 per cent in FY26), with items like vegetables, pulses, and edible oils at risk. Our baseline projection for headline inflation in FY27 is 5 per cent

(2.1 per cent in FY26),” wrote Sonal Varma, managing director and chief economist (India and Asia ex-Japan) at Nomura in a recent coauthored note with Aurodeep Nandi.Monsoon impactAnother factor fueling inflation and hence consumption levels, experts believe, is the possibility of deficient rainsThe rise in prices of petrol and diesel in the wake of West Asia war (cumulative hike of Rs 3.90 per litre in the last few days), they believe, is likely to push inflation higher, which in turn may force companies to fully pass on the rise in input costs to consumers thereby impacting consumption Companies, meanwhile, have already started to pass some of the rise in input cost to consumers. On May 13, Amul and Mother Dairy — India’s largest dairy product retailers — hiked milk prices by Rs 2 per litre. Modern Bread upped rates by Rs 5 per pack on basic variants last week. Britannia and Wibs, too, are expected to follow suit, reports suggest. While companies have started to pass on the rise in input costs to consumers, inflation, according to G Chokkalingam, founder and head of research at Equinomics Research is not become a major issue yet. Consumption (staples and discretionary) stocks will react accordingly,” Consumer United Spirits, Asian Paints and Hindustan Unilever (HUL) have slipped up to 23 per cent thus far in CY26, ACE Equity data shows.The consumer sector’s near-term outlook, analysts at Motilal Oswal, too believe, is turning cautious as a fresh inflationary cycle begins to challenge the recovery momentum seen earlier in 2026.

Adani shares rise following the dismissal of charges in the New York case; Adani Green increases by 4%

Mumbai: Adani Group stocks: Shares of Adani Group companies were in focus on Tuesday after the US Department of Justice permanently dropped all criminal charges against Indian tycoon Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar Adani. The move effectively brings the high-profile securities and wire fraud case in New York to a close, with prosecutors reportedly concluding that the allegations could not be sustained.

Around 09:40 AM, Adani Green Energy shares climbed 3.5 per cent to ₹1,407, while Adani Total Gas advanced 2.65 per cent. Adani Enterprises gained 2.5 per cent, and

New Delhi Television (NDTV) rose 2 per cent in early trade. Among others, Adani Power, Adani Energy, AWL Agri Business, Adani Ports, Ambuja Cements, and ACC were trading almost flat with a positive bias. On Monday, Adani Enterprises entered into an agreement with the United States Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) by paying \$275 million to settle its potential civil liability for apparent violations of OFAC sanctions on Iran.

“This settlement is without admitting the allegations made by OFAC,” Adani Enterprises said in an exchange filing.



Over the past few days, several US regulatory and legal probes involving the Adani Group have come to a close. Last week,

Adani’s lawyer, Robert Giuffra Jr, who also serves as personal attorney to US President Donald Trump, said in a presentation that Gautam Adani was keen to invest \$10 billion in the United States but had been unable to proceed because of the ongoing cases, according to media reports. Adani had been accused of agreeing to pay \$265 million in bribes to Indian government officials to secure approvals for developing the country’s largest solar power project. The Adani Group has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing. Gautam Adani is the founder and chairman of the conglomerate.



GIC holding substantial stakes. She noted that under Fema rules, satisfying the ownership threshold alone is insufficient if foreign investors continue to retain board nomination rights or governance control.This is an important distinction because investments made by IOCCs are treated as domestic investments, while investments by Foreign Owned and Controlled Companies (FOCCs) are treated as indirect foreign investment and are subject to sector-specific restrictions. The IOCC classification has become particularly relevant for ecommerce and quick commerce platforms because, under Press Note 2 of 2018 and subsequent FDI clarifications, foreign-funded online marketplaces cannot directly own inventory, cannot exercise control over sellers, and cannot influence pricing, and are expected to operate as neutral technology platforms connecting buyers and sellers. For quick commerce firms, these restrictions can materially affect operational models. “The AoA amendment specifically removes nomination rights of Accel and SoftBank, and restructures founders’ rights, fixing the ‘control’ test first, before the ‘ownership’ test is triggered,” Sekhri wrote in her post. Last year, Eternal, the parent company of Zomato and Blinkit, approved a proposal to cap total foreign ownership at 49.5 per cent to preserve its IOCC status. It said the move would provide greater operational flexibility to Blinkit, including the possibility of moving towards inventory ownership models in the future. Another recent example is One 97 Communications Ltd, which operates the Paytm brand, that became a majority Indian-owned and controlled

company after domestic investors increased their stake to 50.3 per cent as of March-end 2026.Legal experts say these changes reflect a deeper shift in India’s startup ecosystem. During the venture capital boom years, many startups accepted governance structures that gave foreign investors extensive board and veto rights. As companies mature and enter regulated sectors, those structures are now being reassessed.Sekhri also argued that quick commerce economics are central to the move.“The higher-margin model, what its competitors do, is inventory-led. To make that shift, amongst others, Swiggy must become IOCC,” she said.According to her, Swiggy’s domestic shareholding has risen after its IPO and subsequent qualified institutional placement, potentially bringing the company closer to the 50 per cent domestic ownership threshold required under Fema. Why Swiggy is changing board rights Swiggy’s filing to the stock exchanges clarifies that the company is first attempting to address the “control” aspect of the IOCC before “ownership”. It said the company currently lacks an identifiable promoter group with substantial board representation that can independently act as a safeguard for domestic control.What is an IOCC? Under Fema and the government’s foreign investment rules administered by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), IOCC is an entity where more than 50 per cent beneficial ownership is with resident Indian citizens or Indian-controlled entities, and where effective control over management and board decisions also lies with resident Indians.

The many shades of a bull market: What they mean for FII, retail flows

New Delhi: You can tell a person from the heroes they worship. I worship Timothy Dexter. An eccentric entrepreneur of the 1700s, he made bets that had no logic. But they turned out to be gifts of Providence.For example, he was tricked into sending coal to Newcastle. Newcastle in England was the womb of coal. It was a move of the demented. But miners in Newcastle went on a flash strike, coal prices shot up, and Dexter made a tonne.His business rivals suggested sending bed-warming pans — a winter tool — to tropical West Indies. His ship captain sold them as molasses ladles. Dexter made out again. My Dexter moment came in the spring of 1991. At the foothills of the Harshad Mehta boom, I spied an opportunity in a company called Karnataka Ball Bearings. The company did not seem to be having a great market for its ball bearings or whatever it is that it made. Hence, it was making massive losses. Then one fine day, it announced it was closing down.

PM Modi calls for 100 billion US dollar investment & 1 million jobs under India-EFTA agreement at Business & Research

London: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with his Norwegian counterpart, addressed the India-Norway Business and Research Summit yesterday in Oslo. Crown Prince Haakon and the Prime Minister of Norway, Jonas Gahr Støre, also participated in the Summit. After the successful bilateral talks, this meeting proved to be another substantive measure to improve economic cooperation between the countries. It was attended by CEOs of more than 50 companies from both countries and more than 250 participants from the Norwegian and Indian business and research communities.

Addressing the Summit, Prime Minister Modi appreciated the growth in bilateral trade and investments following the entry into force of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement, TEPA. He underlined that stakeholders on both sides should make efforts to achieve the investment target of 100 billion US dollars under TEPA and the consequent creation of one million jobs in India. PM Modi underscored the business-friendly ecosystem that exists in India. He said the talented and aspirational youth, robust business practices, and investor-friendly regulatory framework provide ample opportunities for Norwegian companies. He highlighted India's strong upward growth trajectory, demographic dividend, and the spirit of competitive federalism. With TEPA already implemented, he encouraged greater Norwegian investments in India in key sectors such as the blue economy, shipbuilding, green transition, renewable energy, health-tech, critical minerals, start-ups, healthcare innovation and green technology.



With India-Norway relations upgraded to Green Strategic Partnership, PM Modi underlined India's ambitious green transition agenda. He emphasised India's scale, growing energy demands, climate commitments, rapid expansion in renewable energy, grid infrastructure, green hydrogen

and clean energy. He appreciated Norway's global leadership in clean energy investments, maritime decarbonisation, ocean sustainability and climate finance. He invited the business community gathered for the summit to forge a partnership utilising Norway's expertise and India's op-

portunities in the green and blue economy. Prime Minister Modi urged the business communities of both countries to forge new partnerships, identify emerging areas of collaboration and strengthen economic cooperation.

A number of business agreements between the Indian and Norwegian governments and companies were signed. It encompassed key sectors like Space, Digital public infrastructure, sustainability, tunnelling technology, health and advanced technologies.

Later in the special briefing by the Ministry of External Affairs, Sibi George, Secretary (West), highlighted the substantive growth achieved in the bilateral relations during this visit. He underscored the significance of the Green Strategic Partnership between the countries. He said the partnership in the green and blue economy would bring in more investment, create employment and achieve sustainable energy goals, including energy security for India. He said this bilateral visit delivered on the three T's required for our Viksit Bharat vision – Trade and investment, Technology and Talent. bilateral economic cooperation following the coming into force of the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement. Prior to the high-level Business and Research Summit, four roundtable sessions were organised across different locations in Oslo, the MEA added. The sessions focused on healthcare innovation, maritime cooperation, batteries and energy storage systems, digitalisation and electrification, and wind energy. In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said the Summit marked the growing momentum in

US extends sanctions waiver on Russian oil as supply crunch pushes up Brent crude price

London: The US has announced another 30-day extension of a sanctions waiver allowing purchases of Russian seaborne oil to aid “energy-vulnerable” countries hit by the Iran war, reversing plans not to grant an extension. Treasury secretary Scott Bessent said the Treasury was issuing the 30-day general license after a previous waiver lapsed on Saturday. This will allow temporary access to Russian oil and petroleum products stranded on tankers without violating severe US sanctions on Russian oil majors, he said. “This general license will help stabilize the physical crude market and ensure oil reaches the most energy-vulnerable countries,” Bessent said. Bessent, who last month told the Associated Press that no further extension of the Russian oil sanctions waiver was planned, on Monday argued that the measure would help reroute existing supply to countries most in need, allowing them to compete with China for previously sanctioned oil. The action marks the second time the Treasury has allowed the sanctions waiver to lapse and subsequently extended it. Two senior Democratic senators, Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, blasted the move as an “indefensible gift” to Russian President Vladimir Putin. “Every additional dollar the Kremlin earns from this license helps Putin finance his illegal war against Ukraine and kill innocent Ukrainians,” they said in a statement. They said the US sanctions relief was also not driving down gasoline prices at home or stabilising global energy markets. The Trump administration last year slapped sanctions on Russian oil majors Rosneft and Lukoil to pressure Russia to end its war in Ukraine by depriving vital oil revenues to Moscow. But after US-Israeli attacks on Iran drove up global oil prices, the Treasury first issued the temporary licence in March in an attempt to ease oil supply shortages and mitigate price spikes by releasing sanctioned Russian oil and petroleum products stranded in tankers. The waivers do



not apply to oil now being pumped by Russia. Analysts said the short-term waivers may help some individual countries dependent on Gulf oil supplies, but would do little to drive down US gasoline prices. “It is not yet clear whether these short-term authorizations have had any meaningful impact on U.S. gasoline prices,” said Stephanie Connor, a former policy director at the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, adding that British and European sanctions on Russian oil purchases remain in place. As in the previous waiver, the licence allowed purchases of Russian crude and petroleum products loaded on vessels as of 17 April, limiting the volume of the sales and not allowing access to Russian oil that had been more recently loaded. Charles Lichfield, deputy director of the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center, said that the waivers would boost Russia's oil revenues, already bolstered by higher oil prices, while offsetting the impact of increased Ukrainian strikes on Russian oil refineries and other infrastructure. “Given the information coming out of the Russian economy that looks bad, this might be the time to really hit them with sanctions,” Lichfield said. “But I don't see (that) the administration has come to that conclusion.” On Monday, benchmark Brent oil futures prices rose about 2.6% to close above \$112 per barrel due to growing concerns of tight supply. Bessent, who is in Paris for a Group of Seven finance leaders meeting, said he wanted G7 and other allies to enforce Iran sanctions more strongly.

Free up fertiliser supplies to avert global food crisis, Yvette Cooper urges

Washington: Global fertiliser supplies must be freed up within weeks to avoid disaster, with harvests suffering and food prices rising, the UK's foreign secretary, Yvette Cooper, has said. The war in Iran has frozen shipments of fertiliser through the strait of Hormuz, creating a supply crunch that has already damaged farming in the UK, Europe and the US and is having its worst impacts in the developing world, where farmers cannot afford the higher prices now being charged. “The world is sleepwalking into a global food crisis,” Cooper said. “We cannot risk tens of millions of people going hungry because one country has hijacked an international shipping lane.” Spring is the crucial planting time – if farmers in the northern hemisphere cannot be assured of fertiliser supplies now, the damage will play out over the next year. “Iran's continued closure of the strait of Hormuz while the agricultural clock is ticking shows why we need urgent global pressure to get the strait reopened, fertiliser and fuel moving, and ease the costs of living pressures,” Cooper said before a conference of governments in London to discuss overseas aid and development.

“This crisis is affecting developed and developing countries, the private and public sectors alike,” she said. “It shows why we need a new approach to global partnerships, to drive international development to prevent crises in the first place. The world has changed faster than the international system can support it.”

The Global Partnerships conference, jointly hosted by the UK and South African governments and supported by the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, is intended to help governments, private sector investors and civil society find new ways of working together. Despite increasing pressure on prices and rising mountains of debt in developing countries, many rich countries are reducing their overseas aid. The UK cut aid from 0.5% of gross national income under the last government – itself a cut from 0.7% under the previous Labour government – to 0.3%, while the US under Donald Trump has dismantled the USAID agency. The World Food Programme estimates that almost 45 million more people could fall into acute food insecurity if the Iran conflict does not end by the middle of this year. Cooper said overseas aid was in the UK's national interest. “Instability abroad affects us here at home, from energy prices to food security. Building resilience abroad makes the UK stronger,” she said. The UK's spy bosses warned in a report that the government has so far published only partially that the collapse of key ecosystems in developing countries, partly driven by the climate crisis, would have devastating impacts on the UK's national security. However, the government has not publicly discussed the report or its response to it. Climate finance, which helps developing countries protect their ecosystems and become more resilient to the impacts of extreme weather, has been cut to £2bn a year over the next three years. Jenny Chapman, the minister for development at the Foreign, Development and Commonwealth Office, told the Guardian that partnerships with the private sector could more than double the aid available.

“We are absolutely not backing away from our contributions and our re-



sponsibilities,” she said. “We can get more climate finance by moving the way work on it. We need to make a lot more impact than we have done.”

At the conference, British International Investment – an agency that uses public money to invest with the private sector, and a conference co-host – will announce £4.6bn for climate investment in emerging markets. There will be \$250m for the African Development Bank and an increase in the UK's shareholding in the Inter-American Development Bank. Cooper will announce a new health partnership to support children injured in Gaza, and more support for health systems to develop new medicines and vaccines more quickly, as well as a £200m investment in science and technology. The UK is to be the next president of the G20 group of developed and developing economies.

Richard Hawkes, the chief executive of Oxfam GB, said, “Unlawful attacks by the US and Israel on Iran have killed, injured and displaced civilians across the region. Retaliation from Iran, which includes the closure of the strait of Hormuz, is driving up the cost of food and fuel and putting basic necessities out of reach for millions of people.” “We urgently need a permanent and lasting ceasefire, including an immediate end to all hostilities across the wider region. UK aid cuts – set to be the steepest of any G7 country this year – also risk deepening global instability and inequalities. The government must reverse the cuts and start taxing the super-rich and biggest polluters to help pay for the fight against poverty and inequality.”

Ukraine war briefing: Chinese ship hit on way in to Odesa port, says Zelenskyy

Russian: drones hit a Chinese ship as part of strikes on civilian vessels approaching Ukraine's Odesa ports on the Black Sea on Monday, Ukrainian authorities said. The Ukrainian navy described the Ksl Deyang as a Chinese-owned cargo ship sailed by Chinese crew under the Marshall Islands flag. The Deyang was heading to load iron ore concentrate in Ukraine's Pivdennyi port in the Odesa region, Reuters reported, citing a source. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said a Russian drone hit the Chinese-owned vessel. It reportedly sailed on after the attack.

Ukraine's seaports authority said another ship sailing under the Guinea-Bissau flag was hit, while the Odesa governor, Oleh Kiper, said separately that a Russian attack hit a Panama-flagged civilian vessel heading to Ukraine's Chornomorsk port. No one was injured, the crew extinguished the resulting fire and the vessel continued on its way. Ukraine has observed attempts by Russia to export grain from occupied Crimea involving US companies, Zelenskyy said. “In particular, we have recorded attempts to organise the export of grain from the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea – and, regrettably, other forms of economic exploitation of the peninsula involving entities from the United States.” Zelenskyy said Moscow was also trying to bring investment from “democratic countries” into Russia's Arctic oil and gas projects. Ukraine's foreign ministry condemned tactical nuclear weapons drills in Belarus on Monday, blasting the deployment as an “unprecedented challenge” to global security. “By turning Belarus into its nuclear staging ground near Nato borders, the Kremlin is de facto legitimising the proliferation of nuclear weapons worldwide and setting a dangerous precedent for other authoritarian regimes,” the ministry said. Kyiv urged its western allies to tighten sanctions against Moscow and Minsk. Vladimir Putin has few good options in Ukraine, Estonia's foreign intelligence chief has said, with Moscow's armed forces unable to advance significantly on the battlefield while western sanctions are chipping away at his resources. Kaupo Rosin told Reuters that

Russia was losing more men than it was recruiting and a general mobilisation would be deeply unpopular and potentially undermine stability. “All these factors together are creating a situation where some people in Russia including in the higher levels understand that they have a big problem. Hard to say what Putin thinks about it, but I think all these factors are starting to float into his decision-making ... My message is let's push forward with [sanctions]. This is not the time to hesitate, just let's keep going.” Another European intelligence chief, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Reuters that there were growing signs of pressure on Russia, but no indication for now that was changing Moscow's calculus in the war. “It's very difficult for me to see that they [Russia] would get rid of their objective to get the whole Donbas area ... and Russia is in no hurry, basically.” The spy chief described Russian society as resilient. “It is wishful thinking that now Russia's leadership is in some way eroding, or Putin is somehow challenged [domestically].”

Democratic senators blasted an “indefensible gift” to Putin after the Trump administration waived sanctions on Russian oil for another 30 days. “Every additional dollar the Kremlin earns from this licence helps Putin finance his illegal war against Ukraine and kill innocent Ukrainians,” said a statement from Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. British and European sanctions on Russian oil purchases remain in place. The US treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, claimed the waiver – allowing purchases of Russian oil already at sea as of 17 April – would “help stabilise the physical crude market and ensure oil reaches the most energy-vulnerable countries”. Analysts said the waiver may help some individual countries starved of Gulf oil by Trump's Iran war, but would do little to drive down US gasoline prices, while the Democrats said it would also not stabilise global markets.

Russian drones struck critical infrastructure of Ukraine's energy firm Naftogaz in



the Dnipropetrovsk region over Sunday night, the company said. Among the targets was a filling station, Naftogaz said, adding that the station's premises and equipment were completely destroyed and two employees injured. Russia launched 524 drones and 22 missiles at Ukraine over Monday, the Ukrainian air force said. Air defence units shot down or neutralised 503 drones and four missiles. In Russia, drones were downed over regions such as Rostov and Belgorod in the south, the Interfax news agency said, citing the defence ministry in Moscow. Two people were killed in Belgorod, local authorities said. Explosives found on Monday near the debris of a suspected Ukrainian military drone would be disposed of by blowing them up in place, Lithuanian police said. Authorities had previously said the drone was not armed. It was found crashed in the village of Samane and was presumed to have gone off-course en route to a Russian target.

Ways to Achieve Emotional Maturity – Regardless of Age

During the pandemic, a self-help book with a rather unremarkable yet practical title – *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents* – gained significant traction on social media. Although it had been released five years prior, in 2020, as many individuals found themselves with more time to contemplate their lives, it was rediscovered. Its popularity was driven by readers who identified their own childhood experiences within its content, particularly those who had parents exhibiting uncontrolled emotional outbursts, or who were self-centered, emotionally unavailable, or lacking in empathy. According to the author, Lindsay C Gibson, these parents were emotionally stunted, functioning at a developmental level akin to that of a four- or five-year-old. Their children had surpassed them in emotional maturity and were beginning to recognize this disparity.

Gibson’s latest book, *How to Raise an Emotionally Mature Child*, is a guide for those of us who don’t want our children to experience the same kind of childhood we did. Perhaps you’ve realised – the self-awareness is key – that you’re lacking enough maturity of your own, and feel clueless about what you should be doing. “If you have an emotionally immature parent, it doesn’t mean that you’re doomed,” says Gibson, via video call from her home in coastal Virginia. “However, you’ve probably learned emotionally immature attitudes and behaviours that may pop out at times. The difference is that if you have adequate emotional maturity, you’re going to notice it and it’s going to bother you.” Perhaps the most important atti-



tude parents could start with, says Gibson, is the idea that your child is “real inside”. It will probably be obvious to other parents, but from my own experience of often viewing my children as objects to be fed, clothed and ferried around, this was a sharp reminder. “They are sensitive, sentient; they feel things just as acutely as an adult does,” she says. We may treat our children in ways we wouldn’t dream of treating a cherished friend. “We tend to think that children don’t experience humiliation or embarrassment, that children don’t have a natural sense of dignity, that we can say and do what we want with them and they’ll still love us. But what we do to them is going to register emotionally. They don’t have the language or the experience to express that, so it’s easy to miss.

We often don’t realise the hurt we’re causing.”

Gibson covers each age and stage of a child’s life, from babies to teenagers. Her advice includes taking anxieties seriously, encouraging autonomy in a supportive way and identifying emotions. A large part of it comes from understanding what children are capable of, developmentally, at each stage and what is beyond them. This, I’ve realised, almost instantly alleviates a lot of my own parental frustration. I can already see how many mistakes I’ve made. Is it too late, by the time a child reaches adolescence, if you haven’t laid that groundwork? Definitely not, says Gibson. “Is it too late for a person to ever start responding positively to being treated with respect and love? We know of people in prison who have crossed

paths with emotionally mature people who have helped them, and they’ve been able to change. So no, it’s never too late, but you do have to keep in mind that people form a model of the world – what other people are like, what you can expect from the world and other people – early in life, and part of our job as a parent is to help them build that model. That can be hard to change, but it is possible. But there is a backlog of old learning that will always have to be dealt with.”

In babyhood, for instance, much has been made of the importance of the parental bond, usually maternal, that is supposed to kick in instinctively, which puts a huge amount of pressure on mothers who don’t experience that or who have postnatal depression. Does that damage a child’s chance at

emotional maturity for ever? “No, absolutely not,” says Gibson. It can be helpful to explain it later, though, whether it’s something beyond your control, such as depression, poverty, your own upbringing, or just the inevitable mistakes in your parenting.

Gibson points to the story she includes in her book about a mother who apologised to her child, then seven, for being too harsh while potty training her as a toddler. “She said: ‘I’m so sorry that I was so strict with you, and I made you feel bad in a way that wasn’t necessary.’” The girl, says Gibson, broke down, sobbing. “When the parent goes back in and says you may have had this negative experience because of something that was going on with me, think what that does to the concept the child has of themselves. ‘Oh, it wasn’t because I’m a messy, dirty child.’ Or: ‘It wasn’t because I’m not a very interesting person that Mom didn’t respond [to me] more.’ No, it’s: ‘Oh, that’s what happened.’ Those efforts to make repairs really change the child’s narrative about themselves.”

Gibson did it with her own son when he was about 18 and getting ready to go to university. “I sat him down and I said: ‘I want to apologise for some of the things I did. I didn’t know what the right thing was, and I think I was too hard on you, I shouldn’t have done it that way.’ I’m hoping that changed a narrative for him. When he looks back on his life, he can say: ‘I had this experience, but Mom made a mistake. That’s what that was.’ Not: ‘I had this experience, and it proves that I’m an undesirable person.’”

Georgina Rodriguez captivates attention at Cannes 2026



Only a few weeks following her otherworldly presence at the Met Gala 2026 in New York, Georgina Rodriguez has once more taken center stage in the global fashion arena. At the 79th Cannes Film Festival, the Spanish-Argentinian model and entrepreneur transformed the iconic red carpet at the Palais des Festivals into her own personal runway.

The 32-year-old mother and longtime partner to football icon Cristiano Ronaldo arrived for the screening of *Fjord*, proving

why she remains one of the most anticipated red carpet regulars.

Georgina Rodríguez opted for a mauve gown that balanced delicate textures with heavy, high-octane glamour. Her look was defined by a stunning contrast between the soft hues of her gown and the vibrant, deep green of her jewellery.

Georgina wore a strapless, floor-length piece featuring a smoky mauve lace that exuded a romantic, antique feel. The gown was masterfully constructed, with intricate diagonal ruching across the bodice

that created a corseted effect, accentuating her figure before flaring into a semi-sheer lace skirt.

The undisputed star of the evening was her Chopard necklace. According to Chopard, the spectacular piece is a feat of craftsmanship, featuring 152 emerald beads meticulously strung to form a lush, multi-strand collar and a central 13.86-carat round emerald that served as the focal point. A cascade of brilliant Chopard diamonds added a layer of lit-from-within radiance. She complemented the necklace with a match-

ing diamond handcuff and several statement rings.

While she first rose to international prominence as Cristiano Ronaldo’s girlfriend, Georgina Rodriguez has carved out a global identity as a fashionista, entrepreneur, and media personality. Beyond the red carpet, she is a successful businesswoman and the face of numerous luxury brands. Her Netflix docuseries, *I Am Georgina* (Soy Georgina), has given millions of fans an intimate look at her life, from a luxury sales assistant to a woman managing a multi-million-dollar personal brand.

Georgina’s hair was styled in deep, classic Hollywood waves, swept to one side to ensure the emeralds remained the centre of attention. For makeup, she leaned into a soft glam aesthetic — dewy skin, a nude lip, and a subtle smokey eye.

Georgina and Ronaldo have been together for almost a decade and share a large, blended family. Following their August 2025 engagement, rumours are swirling that the couple plans to wed after the 2026 World Cup. 2026 has already been a landmark year for her style — from her custom seafoam Ludovic de Saint Sernin gown at the Met Gala to this latest appearance in Cannes, she continues to blend high-fashion risks with timeless elegance.

Addicted to cold coffee but trying to lose weight

For numerous individuals, the morning routine of enjoying a creamy, sweet cold coffee is an essential source of comfort, even if it conflicts with fitness objectives. Nevertheless, a novel trend is gaining traction on social media that offers the caffeine boost of a latte combined with the hydration benefits of a sports drink. The iced coconut water americano and cloud coffee have surfaced as the ideal options for those aiming to lose weight while still indulging in their caffeine cravings.

The ‘magical’ cold coffee recipe Nutritionist Shikha Singh share a low-calorie version of the beverage that she said can satisfy even the most stubborn coffee addiction. In a video, Shikha recounted a conversation with her friend who was struggling to lose weight due to her daily coffee habit.

She recalled: “Yesterday, my friend Meera called me and said, ‘There is only one bad habit that is not letting me lose weight. That is the addiction of cold coffee.’ Then I said, okay. Challenge accepted. Now I will make you drink cold coffee and make you lose weight.”

Shikha’s ‘magical cold coffee’ recipe focuses on substituting heavy creams and refined sugars with natural electrolytes and plant-based sweetness: “First of all, take fresh coconut water in a glass.

If it is fresh, it is better. If it is not available, you can also use packed coconut water. But make sure there is no sugar in it. Now, put coffee powder in a coffee tumbler. We will put a little stevia in it. Sugar, jaggery or honey will be avoided.”

To achieve the ‘cloud’ texture, she suggested mixing the coffee with a small amount of coconut water first: “Now take a milk frother and froth your coffee very well with it. Now put in ice cubes — and a little more coco-



nut water. Add about 50 ml of low-fat or double-toned milk. Our cold coffee is ready in just 5 minutes. It is completely guilt-free, low-calorie.” Why his cold coffee recipe works

Beyond being a low-calorie alternative, experts suggest that the combination of coffee and coconut water serves a functional purpose for the body, especially during the warmer months. She said, “This drink is a fun way to stay hydrated while getting your coffee fix. In the summer, you’re probably sweating more, which means you’re losing more water, too. Adding a source of electrolytes to your weight loss routine can help prevent dehydration and support your overall metabolism and body... essentially, this drink combines something you love — coffee — with a hydration boost.”

Timing your caffeine kick

While the drink is ‘guilt-free’, experts suggest that when you drink it

can be just as important as what is in it. Alix Turoff, a New York City-based dietitian and personal trainer, recommended consuming coconut water coffee in the morning or following exercise: “After waking up, your body is typically in a mildly dehydrated state, especially if you haven’t had water yet. Since coffee is often the first thing people reach for, pairing it with coconut water can help replenish fluids and electrolytes.”

She also highlighted the drink’s potential as a recovery tool, noting it is a ‘great alternative to traditional sports drinks, which often contain added sugars and dyes’.

Whether you are looking to break a plateau or simply want a refreshing twist on your morning brew, this ‘magical’ blend offers a way to indulge without the caloric consequences. As Shikha put it: “You can have it with your breakfast or as a mid-morning or evening snack.”

ENTERTAINMENT

Bharti Singh denies separation rumors



Mumbai: Bharti Singh has clarified that she and her husband, Haash Limbachiya, are not getting separated. In one of her recent YouTube vlogs, the Laughter Chefs host slammed those spreading rumours about her relationship with Haash and clarified that they are very much together.

“This is wrong, we cannot be separated. We will not be separated even after death,” Bharti said. The comedian-host further called out ‘small media portals’ for spreading unverified news and accused them of doing it only to create sensation. “Aisa kuch bhi nahi hai,” she stated. Bharti also clarified that Haash has rented out an apartment in the same building for his work purposes and that he isn’t living separately from her. After dating for a few years, Bharti tied the knot with Harsh in a fairytale wedding in Goa in 2017. After five years of marriage, the couple welcomed their first son, a boy named Laksh Singh Limbachiya, fondly called Gola. Later, in December 2025, Bharti gave birth to their second son, Yashveer. In a previous interview, Bharti recalled how she was trolled unabashedly after she tied the knot with Haash Limbachiya. “I became funnier because I was trolled a lot.

Tabu gifted gold bangles to Saroj Khan, cash to dancers after Rang De success

Mumbai: Tabu impressed everyone on the sets of “Rang De” from Thakshak after she gifted gold jewelry to choreographer Saroj Khan and her assistants following the song’s shoot. The actor also reportedly gave money to background dancers after completing the demanding dance number.

The story has resurfaced after dance artiste Rubina Khan recalled how hard Tabu worked on the iconic song and how emotional she became after pulling it off successfully. The track, composed by A. R. Rahman and sung by Asha Bhosle, remains one of the most remembered songs from the 1999 film Thakshak. During a conversation with Bollywood Thikana, Rubina Khan revealed that Tabu pushed herself intensely while rehearsing for the

song because the choreography designed by Saroj Khan was physically demanding. “She worked very hard to master the moves. During the rehearsals, she barely sat down. Since her body is slightly stiff, she doesn’t have the flexibility required to master such moves easily. Hence, she practised a lot and showcased her skills in the end. We completed the song in 4-5 days,” dance artiste Rubina Khan revealed during a conversation with Bollywood Thikana.

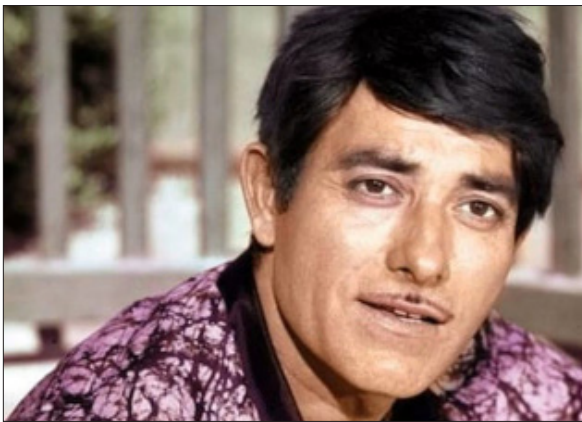
Rubina further shared that Tabu was overwhelmed after seeing the final output of the song and decided to thank the team in a grand way. Recalling the moment, Rubina said, “She was so happy, she gifted gold bangles to Saroj Khan. She also gifted a gold chain to her male assistant

and a gold bracelet to her female assistant. That was the first time I saw an artiste do something like that. She was so happy that she pulled off the dance number.” According to Rubina, Tabu also made sure the background dancers were included in the celebration. “There were about 25-30 women and almost the same number of men. She gave each of us Rs 1,000. It was such a kind gesture from her.” Rubina also remembered another incident from a different shoot where Tabu stepped in to help a dancer who got injured during rehearsals. “Once, we were recording a song that had some Kathak movement. At one point, we had to turn a particular way and stop at a specific pose. While we were doing it, one of the girls with us sprained her leg and fell.

Director Reveals Raaj Kumar called everyone ‘Jaani’ after his dog, tougher than Amitabh Bachchan

Mumbai: Raaj Kumar was known for his powerful screen presence, but filmmaker K. C. Bokadia has now shared a lighter side of the late actor during a recent chat with IndiaTV. Bokadia recalled that Raaj Kumar had a funny habit of calling almost everyone “Jaani”, a name inspired by his pet dog.

The filmmaker also opened up about how difficult it was to work with the legendary actor, even comparing him to Amitabh Bachchan. During the interview with IndiaTV, KC Bokadia shared that Raaj Kumar had an unusual but affectionate habit that people around him knew well. “His dog’s name was Jaani. So, he used to call everyone ‘Jaani.’ Fortunately, he never called me by that name and addressed



me only as ‘Bokadia saab,’” he shared during a conversation with IndiaTV.

The filmmaker said Raaj Kumar’s personality was very different from most actors of his time. According to him, the actor would often decide whether to work with someone based on personal instinct rather than scripts or business

discussions. Bokadia then recalled how he approached Raaj Kumar for Police Aur Mujrim just a day before the film’s muhurat shot. “I called him over the phone one evening. We had planned the muhurat shot for the next day. If he doesn’t know the person’s face, he won’t do the film. The story comes second for him. As soon as

he picked up the phone, I told him, ‘Raaj saab, let me share a line with you.’ He agreed. Handling him was tougher than handling Bachchan saab. Yes, Bachchan is a calculative person, but Raaj saab was moody,” the filmmaker noted.

Bokadia explained that Raaj Kumar’s decisions depended heavily on his mood at the moment. He added, “It’s easy to explain things to a calculative person. But when it comes to a moody person, it depends on their mood from time to time. The cow may give milk if it feels like it; if it doesn’t, it won’t. After hearing my scene description, he said it was good. I immediately requested him to do the movie then. His reply was that he couldn’t say no to me.”

Angelina Jolie’s daughter officially drops Pitt surname at graduation

Agency: Actor Angelina Jolie’s daughter Zahara appears to have dropped her father Brad Pitt’s last name during her graduation ceremony at Spelman College in Atlanta. According to PEOPLE magazine, Zahara graduated from the college on Sunday, May 17, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology during the institution’s 139th commencement ceremony. While her name was listed as “Zahara Marley Jolie-Pitt” in the official commencement program, it was announced as “Zahara Marley Jolie” when she walked across



the stage to receive her diploma. This is not the first time Zahara has used only her mother’s surna-

me publicly. According to PEOPLE, in November 2023, while joining the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority,

she introduced herself as “Zahara Marley Jolie.” She also used the same name during a public appearance at the Pearls of Purpose Foundation’s Dearest Mother & Daughter brunch event earlier this year.

At the event, Zahara spoke warmly about her close bond with Angelina Jolie and called their relationship “unique” and “kindred.” Speaking about her upbringing, she said, “Our love for each other is a found one. I was adopted at 6 months old and given some of the most special and loving people as my siblings,

with a mom who raised us on the value of helping others, being kind and always striving for growth as people.” Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt are parents to six children: Maddox, Pax, Zahara, Shiloh, and twins Knox and Vivienne. Over the past few years, some of the children have reportedly chosen to publicly use only Jolie’s surname. The surname change has become a recurring headline within the Jolie-Pitt family over the last few years. Zahara was reportedly among the first of the six children to stop publicly using Pitt’s

surname after Brad and Angelina’s highly publicised split in 2016. Later, daughter Shiloh Jolie also legally petitioned to remove “Pitt” from her name after turning 18. Meanwhile, youngest daughter Vivienne Jolie was credited simply as “Vivienne Jolie” while working on the Broadway musical adaptation of The Outsiders. Angelina had adopted Zahara from Ethiopia when she was seven months old. Brad later adopted her during his relationship with Angelina. The former couple, once considered one of Hol-

lywood’s most powerful celebrity pairings, were together from 2003 before separating in 2016 after two years of marriage. Since then, their split has spiralled into one of Hollywood’s longest and messiest legal battles. Although Brad and Angelina officially finalised their divorce in December 2024 after years of court proceedings, the legal war between them is far from over. The two continue to battle over Château Miraval, the French winery and estate they once jointly owned.

Snake rescued at Salman Khan’s Mumbai galaxy apartments

Mumbai: A snake was rescued from Salman Khan’s Galaxy Apartment building in Mumbai on Monday. Videos of the successful rescue operation have since surfaced and quickly gone viral online.

The reptile was spotted below the apartment building, prompting the immediate call of a snake wrangler to safely remove it from the premises. According to visuals from the location, the snake wrangler calmly approached the reptile and caught it using his hands. He was seen grabbing the snake by its tail before coiling it around his hand during the rescue process. The snake was later placed inside a bag and handed over to officials who had arrived at the apartment to assist with the operation. Based on how



the snake was handled during the rescue, it appeared to be non-poisonous. The entire rescue was carried out smoothly without any reported injuries or panic at the location. Galaxy Apartments, located in Mumbai’s Bandra area, frequently draws crowds due to Salman Khan’s residence, where the actor has lived with his family for several years.

While the rescue video has

been grabbing attention online, Salman remains busy with several film projects. After his role in Tiger 3, he starred in Sikandar, directed by AR Murugadoss, though the film did not perform as expected at the box office. This year, Salman also made a cameo appearance as Jiva Mahala in Raja Shivaji, a film directed by and starring Riteish Deshmukh. Based on the life of Chhatrapati

Shivaji Maharaj, Raja Shivaji went on to become the highest-grossing Marathi film, surpassing Sairat. Salman is currently working on Maatrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace with director Apoorva Lakhia. The film, which co-stars Chitrangada Singh, was earlier titled Battle of Galwan.

Salman plays Colonel B. Santosh Babu in the project, which will release in theatres on August 14. He will also appear alongside Sanjay Dutt in the Arabic film 7 Dogs. Salman is also shooting for an untitled film with Nayanathara, directed by Vamshi Paidipally and produced by Dil Raju. The project recently went on floors in Mumbai, where large-scale action scenes are currently being shot on specially built sets.

Aakhri Sawal crashes: day 4 box office ₹21 lakh

Mumbai: Things are not looking too great for Aakhri Sawal at the box office right now. After a slightly better weekend, the film seems to have lost steam quickly, with Monday collections taking a serious hit. And for any film in theatres, that first Monday usually says a lot about what’s coming next.

Led by Sanjay Dutt, the political psychological drama released with decent buzz but hasn’t really managed to turn that into strong ticket sales. The film also features Namashi Chakraborty, Amit Sadh, Sameera Reddy, Neetu Chandra, Tridha Choudhury and Mrinal Kulkarni in key roles. As per Sacnilk, the film collected only Rs 21 lakh net in India on Day 4 across 1,216 shows. Compared to Sunday’s Rs 80 lakh earnings, that’s



a massive 73.8 per cent drop in just one day.

The warning signs were there from the beginning. Aakhri Sawal had opened with Rs 40 lakh on its first day, and although the weekend numbers showed some improvement, the film couldn’t maintain the pace once the weekdays began. The journey to release wasn’t smooth either. The film was originally supposed to arrive in theatres on May 8, 2026,

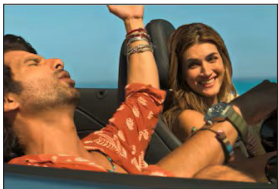
but got pushed by a week because of certification-related issues involving the Central Board of Film Certification. So far, the film’s total India net collection stands at Rs 2.16 crore, while the India gross collection has reached Rs 2.58 crore. While the film did manage to grab some attention initially because of its cast and genre, the sharp Monday drop has made its box office future look uncertain for now.

Yash credits Geetu Mohandas’ vision

Mumbai: After conquering the pan-Indian box office with the blockbuster KGF franchise, Yash is taking a bold creative leap with Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups, directed by Geetu Mohandas. While the film promises the visual grandeur and intensity expected from a Yash-led spectacle, the actor says what truly sets Toxic apart is the unique emotional depth brought by its director.

In a recent interaction, Yash spoke candidly about how collaborating with Geetu offered him an entirely different perspective on storytelling. According to the actor, her approach to characters and relationships added layers he believes are often overlooked in mainstream cinema. “We see life differently. There is always a different point of view when women look at things. We miss out on a lot of emotions or a lot of things. Maybe what matters to us may not be what they focus on in a situation. So that perspective becomes so refreshing, layered and deep,” Yash said. The actor’s comments offer a glimpse into the ambition behind Toxic, a film that appears determined to blend commercial scale with emotional sophistication. Though Toxic has been mounted as a stylish gangster drama, Yash stressed that the film is rooted in human complexity rather than genre conventions. He explained that every character carries their own emotional and moral battles, and that the story explores violence not merely as action, but as a consequence of individual choices and circumstances.

Cocktail 2 song ‘Mashooqa’ showcases Shahid Kriti chemistry



Mumbai: Maddock Films brings the hottest, most playful side of Cocktail 2 alive with “Mashooqa,” a high-energy summer track featuring Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon at their sexiest. Packed with fun beats, flirtation and carefree chemistry, the song captures the thrill of young love, spontaneous connection and the kind of glamorous chaos that defines an unforgettable summer.

With music by Universal Music, the song is composed by Pritam, written by Amitabh Bhattacharya and sung by Raghav Chaitanya, Mahmood, Ruqa Kavya with Italian Parts Written, Co-Composed And Performed by Mahmood.

“Mashooqa” blends catchy hooks with stylish energy to create a track that instantly feels celebration-ready. “Mashooqa” is all heat, movement and attitude. Kriti Sanon looks stunningly glamorous throughout the song, bringing confidence, sensuality and playful charm to every frame. Whether it’s her effortless styling, carefree energy or electric chemistry with Shahid Kapoor, Kriti completely owns the vibe of the track. Shahid matches her energy with equal ease, making the duo impossible to look away from together. Their chemistry feels spontaneous, sexy and naturally playful, giving the song its infectious pulse. Speaking about the song, Shahid Kapoor shared, “Mashooqa has a vibe that pulls you in instantly. Kriti and I genuinely had such a blast shooting this one because it doesn’t take itself too seriously.

Karisma Kapoor walks out after clash with Saroj Khan’s dancer

Mumbai: Karisma Kapoor once had a fallout with Saroj Khan after the choreographer stopped her from allegedly abusing one of her dancers. In a recent interview, dancer Rubina Khan recalled the incident and claimed that Karisma lost her cool after one of the dancers fell on her during a song sequence shoot. Karisma, allegedly, yelled and abused the dancer, which left Saroj Khan disappointed. After Khan stopped the actress, she walked off the set.

“One time, Karisma Kapoor was shooting a song with Saroj Khan. In that song, there was a sequence where the actors had to run and stop at a particular spot. The set had

a tree, and according to the sequence, some boys and girls were hiding on it. During the shot, one of the branches broke and a boy who was hiding there accidentally fell on Karisma Kapoor. She got hurt,” Rubina told Bollywood Thikana, as quoted by Hindustan Times. “Karisma became extremely angry. She started yelling and abusing him. She called him an idiot. This behaviour upset Saroj Khan because she was always very protective of her team. Saroj ji immediately intervened and told Karisma that she could not behave like that. The boy had not done it intentionally, and he had apologised too. But Karisma refused to continue shooting



and walked out of the set, which was understandable. After that, Saroj Khan never worked with Karisma Kapoor again,” the dancer added. Saroj Khan choreo-

graphed over 2,000 songs across decades, leaving an unmatched legacy in Indian cinema. She passed away in July 2020. On the other hand, Karisma Kapoor was

last seen in the film Murder Mubarak. It is now streaming on Netflix. She was recently also seen as a judge on the reality show India’s Best Dancer 4.

‘Akinfenwa had me in a headlock’: how Bournemouth’s James Hill rose to reach England’s radar

Bournemouth: “I just thought it was fake news,” says the Bournemouth defender James Hill, casting his mind back to the time Barcelona sent a scout to watch him play for Fleetwood. The game in question was a League One defeat by Burton and although the then 19-year-old was highly regarded, there were a few double-takes when the request to attend landed. “‘No, that can’t be right.’ And then afterwards someone told me they did come to the game: ‘Oh, incredible.’”

At that point Hill, who at the age of 16 became Fleetwood’s youngest player, was fresh from making his England Under-20 debut and a couple of months later an under-21 call-up followed, though a knee injury prevented him from joining Marc Guéhi, Morgan Gibbs-White, Cole Palmer and co. “I remember being on the phone to Lee Carsley,” he says.

“I’m sorry, but I’m in the scanner at the moment, I don’t think I’m going to be able to make it judging from the pain I’m in.” Premier League clubs and others across Europe noted an athletic and powerful centre-back with dozens of games under his belt, and Bournemouth acted, paying Fleetwood £1.2m, eclipsing the £1m the club received for Jamie Vardy. Leicester laughed when Fleetwood insisted on an England clause in the deal for Vardy and Fleetwood inserted one when Hill joined Bournemouth, too. Hill is being monitored by England and it is impossible not to be impressed by the progress of the 24-year-old.

Hill, who had trials at Blackpool and Everton either side of being released by Bolton at 14, reflects fondly on the days when he was playing for Fleetwood but still cleaning the captain’s

and manager’s boots and fishing stray balls out of the pond on the edge of their training base. “I’d be crawling into the pond, trying not to fall in and making sure one of the boys helping wasn’t going to push me in,” he says, smiling. “I wanted to make sure I did the best job possible to show that I’d do the same if called upon.”

It is a line that is Hill to a tee. He is thoughtful and wholehearted, the ultimate professional. “I have a massive thing of living with no regrets. Even today in training, I don’t want to be looking back thinking: ‘Hmm, could I have worked harder there? Could I have done this? Would that improve me or help me the next day? If I didn’t go in the gym before, would I be weaker when it comes to the game?’ I’m a big believer that everyone’s opportunity comes at different points. When that opportunity does arrive, I don’t want to let myself or the boys down.”

Hill joined Bournemouth approaching four and a half years ago, putting him fifth on their list of longest-serving current players, but this has been his breakthrough season. The centre-back has been a fixture in a team pushing to qualify for the Champions League thanks to a 16-match unbeaten run, the longest in Europe. Until the departing Andoni Iraola selected him at Chelsea in December, Hill had made 16 starts for the club. He previously spent five months on loan at Hearts and six at Blackburn in search of game time. Bournemouth’s coaching staff believe Hill’s indirect route to the top has allowed him to thrive in the Premier League. “One game [for Fleetwood] I was up against [Adebayo] Akinfenwa and he’s got me in a headlock. He’s headed the ball and I’m saying to the referee: ‘Surely



that’s a foul?’ ... It wasn’t.”

There was an earthiness to it all. “You understand you’re going into games not to develop, but for three points – you have to develop on the spot. League One is such a physical league and I enjoy a battle; I pride myself on aerial duels, winning tackles and keeping clean sheets.” He recalls a conversation with his father, Matt, who played more than 600 games as a defender, after reporting for his first England Under-20 camp. Hill was the only player contracted to a third-tier club. “‘Do you think that I’m missing out on category-one football?’ And he asked: ‘Well, how many of the boys are playing professional football and not under-21s?’ One or two? ‘Well, there’s your answer ... some of those boys are looking for the opportunity to play professionally in your league.’ “That changed my whole outlook:

‘I’m not the odd one out, I do belong here.’ It was a massive turning point for me and gave me confidence to hit the ground running.” Growing up, Hill also enjoyed rugby and athletics, especially the javelin, the secret behind his long throw – until this season his 54m throw, on his Premier League debut, against Liverpool in January 2024, was the longest in the division since records began. That day Hill played at left-back and he also operates at right-back, his versatility priceless.

Bournemouth have two players up for the Premier League’s young player of the season award in Eli Junior Kroupi and Alex Scott, but in Hill, who has played every minute of all 19 games since the end of last year, the club had cause for another nominee. He has seized his chance since returning to the XI at Stamford

Bridge, a place that forms part of his story. It was his performance there, in a Carabao Cup game on loan at Blackburn, that ignited his belief he could perform in the top flight. It was also where, at the start of last year while enjoying his first real run of games for Bournemouth, he sustained a hamstring injury that hampered his progress.

He has evolved into a key component in a Bournemouth machine at its best taking opposition into “deep waters”. The way Iraola uses substitutes is like a relay race – those on the field are always at full throttle. “It’s embedded in everyone in this team,” Hill says. “If you give 100% and you are knackered, then that’s when the next person [comes in].” A prime example was Crystal Palace at home [Bournemouth won 3-0]. In the 90th minute, it was like we had just

started the game. We kept going from minute one to the end – even when the lads came on from the bench, we kept pressing for more goals. That is just the mentality we have all bought into.” It is an approach that will be evident when Manchester City visit on Tuesday. Hill will probably be tasked with taming Erling Haaland. “You see a lot of teams change their tactics in terms of sitting in or playing a back five. The manager gives us that belief that every game is an opportunity to take three points. You have seen it, especially this season, beating Liverpool and Arsenal in big games.” When he [Iraola] told us he was leaving everyone was a bit gutted, but everyone’s mindset has changed because of everything he has done at the club. Where we are now, with all the noise around [qualifying for] Europe, I do believe this team could possibly go and do it – we all believe that we can. Now he’s leaving, we feel like he deserves that kind of parting gift. How many managers in the Premier League get to leave on a high?”

Bournemouth are on course to eclipse their best Premier League finish, ninth last season with 56 points. They could finish fifth. Only Arsenal and Manchester City have lost fewer league games. If Aston Villa finish fifth and win the Europa League on Wednesday, sixth will qualify for the Champions League. With two games to go, four years on from making his debut against Boreham Wood, talk of Barcelona relates to the prospect of them coming to town in the glitziest competition. “I don’t think words can describe what that would mean,” says Hill. “We’re going to do everything we possibly can to bring European football here.”

The Champ’s relegation playoff proved jeopardy resonates more than a closed shop

London: In a tense relegation play-off match between Richmond and London Scottish, the outcome was paramount, overshadowing the quality of the game itself. This scenario emerged against a backdrop of increasing discussions about franchises and closed leagues in rugby. While a prior match in the Premiership exemplified a one-sided contest with little competitive value, the playoff showcased the intensity and significance of lower-tier rugby. It contrasted sharply with the previous night’s match, underscoring the emotional stakes involved.

Richmond’s home ground, filled with passion and urgency, saw fatigue and clumsiness at times, but this only highlighted what was at stake—the survival of the season for both teams. The commitment required from Richmond, with the lowest playing budget in their league, parallels the dedication it takes to compete against full-time professionals. Acknowledging the



challenges faced throughout the season, including injuries and extensive

travel, the game became more than just an athletic contest; it was a culmination of hard work and perseverance.

As Richmond celebrated their 34-11 victory, which secured their place in the Championship for the next season, London Scottish faced the grim reality of one more game to determine their fate. This match, dubbed the “£200,000 match” due to its financial implications, reflects the significant impact of relegation, both in terms of sponsorship and squad compositions. Richmond’s success not only highlighted individual player stories—a nod to personal connections within the game—but also reinforced the idea that the stakes of competition greatly enhance the experience for fans and players alike. Ultimately, the playoff illustrated the compelling nature of rugby when the threat of relegation looms large, contrasting sharply with the comfort of assured league placement in the top tiers.

‘Consumed marijuana during pregnancy’: Mother-in-law’s explosive claims in Bhopal dowry death case

Bhopal: The 33-year-old Noida woman, who was found dead in Bhopal in an alleged dowry harassment-related case, was suffering from schizophrenia, her husband’s mother has claimed. The woman’s mother-in-law, a retired judge, said on Monday that she had undergone an abortion before her death and had also confessed to taking marijuana during her pregnancy to reverse it.

The deceased had married a Bhopal-based lawyer in December 2025. Her family has alleged dowry harassment, mental torture, and assault, while the in-laws have denied wrongdoing and raised counter-allegations regarding her mental health. When she started the first course of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP), she said she wanted to reverse this, which I knew was not possible,” the mother-in-law said during a press briefing. “She didn’t let us feel that fleeting



moment of joy. It is truly heartbreaking; young girls often take this drastic step.” She claimed that her deceased daughter-in-law had been undergoing psychiatric treatment and was prescribed medication for schizophrenia-related symptoms and that she had confessed to consuming marijuana while pregnant.

“After coming here, all her supply of drugs was out. She confessed to consuming large quantities of marijuana when she wanted to reverse her pregnancy. A counselling

session took place during that time... She was on schizophrenic drugs,” the mother-in-law claimed.

“On 7th May, she must have taken the pill; she completed the entire MTP procedure, and we had to support her,” she said. She also alleged the woman suffered from tremors and withdrawal-like symptoms. The deceased’s family has accused the in-laws of harassment related to dowry and mental torture. The parents alleged that their daughter was subjected to severe emotional distress after

marriage and confided to her mother that she felt “trapped” in her marital home and wanted to return. “Mai to bohat buri tarah phas gayi hu (I am trapped badly).” In another message, she says, “In sabko ye lagta hai ki mai drugs karti hu, isiliye mera mood kharab rehta hai (They all think I am into drugs which is why I am always in a bad mood),” and adds, “Mujhe to bohat zyada ghutan ho rahi hai maa (I am feeling very suffocated, maa).”

She also allegedly told her mother that her husband ac-

cused her of infidelity after she sought to terminate her pregnancy. “Mujhe pooch raha hai vo kiska bacha tha (He is asking me whose child I was bearing).”

The family has now alleged inconsistencies in the investigation and autopsy procedures and demanded an independent post-mortem at AIIMS Delhi. They have also alleged lapses in the handling and preservation of forensic evidence during the initial probe. A court granted anticipatory bail to the mother-in-law, while rejecting the bail plea of the primary accused, the husband, who remains absconding. Authorities have also announced a reward for information leading to his arrest. The SIT, led by senior police officials, is probing the case under dowry death and abetment provisions. While the post-mortem report indicates death by suicide, the family has alleged multiple injury marks suggesting possible foul play.

Leak of NEET-UG paper Arrested coaching centre boss was linked to ‘organised gang’, says CBI



New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested professor Shivraj Raghunath Motegaonkar, founder of a Maharashtra’s Latur-based prominent medical and engineering entrance test coaching centre, in the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak probe, with officials saying that he is part of the “organised syndicate” involved in the leak and had access to the chemistry questions on April 23 — 10 days before the examination was held on May 3.

A special court in Delhi on Monday sent Motegaonkar to CBI custody for nine days. “Another key accused prof Shivaraj Motegaonkar, owner of RCC (Renukai Career Centre) Coaching Institute Latur, has been arrested in the NEET paper leak case. He is running this institute which coaches the students for NEET-UG examination. It has nine branches with the main branch at Latur.

He is close to P Kulkarni, chemistry lecturer, who is associated with NTA,” a CBI spokesperson said. Motegaonkar was taken into custody on Sunday evening after nearly 12 hours of questioning at CBI’s Anti-Corruption

Branch office in Pune. He runs the coaching institute in Latur and its eight branches across the state. RCC’s website claims that it has produced more than 15,000 doctors and thousands of engineers over the last two decades. He also runs ‘Motegaonkar Sir’s RCC’ YouTube channel.

An official aware of the matter said the suspicion around the institute intensified after a parent informed the Latur police that multiple questions in the mock tests conducted by RCC were similar — and in some cases allegedly identical — to those asked in the actual examination. A viral video is being treated as an important piece of circumstantial evidence in the probe, the official said.

The matter gained further traction after a video circulated on social media purportedly showed Motegaonkar interacting with students after the examination and asking them how many questions from the mock tests had appeared in the actual paper.

Students in the video reportedly responded that several questions had matched. CBI, in a statement said, “Motegaonkar is close to PV Kulkarni,

the chemistry lecturer associated with the National Testing Agency,” who was arrested last week and has been called one of the kingpins in the conspiracy. The case stems from the cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 on May 12 — nine days after 2.27 million students appeared in the examination — after central agencies confirmed the question paper had been compromised.

The agency said it conducted searches at his residence and institute, which “resulted in recovery of the chemistry question bank which contained exactly the same questions which appeared in the NEET exam held on May 3”. CBI also accused him of destroying evidence after the examination by disposing off the leaked question papers and handwritten notes.

Officials familiar with the probe, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that Motegaonkar “is an active member of the organised gang involved in leakage and circulation of NEET UG exam questions 2026, that, in conspiracy with the others, he had received the question papers and answers on April 23, 10 days before the exam (May 3)”.

Four-Time Olympian Deepika Kumari Fails To Secure Her Qualification For Asian Games



New Delhi: India's archery squad for the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, was finalised on Monday after a demanding three-day selection trial in Sonapat, Haryana. The biggest headline from the trials was the omission of four-time Olympian Deepika Kumari, who failed to secure a place in the women's recurve team for the continental event. Former India No. 1 Atanu Das and decorated compound archer Abhishek Verma also missed out on the Asian Games squad after disappointing performances in the selection trials conducted at the SAI Centre. The trials, held in difficult windy conditions, were used to select India's teams for the Asian Games as well as the upcoming third and fourth stages of the Archery World Cup. While Deepika missed the

Asian Games cut, she managed to retain her place in the Indian squad for the World Cup stages as the fourth-ranked recurve archer. Teenagers Kirti Sharma and Kumkum Mohod emerged as the biggest positives from the trials in the women's recurve category. Nineteen-year-old Kirti topped the standings with 13.5 points, while Maharashtra's Kumkum finished second.

Olympian Ankita Bhakat clinched the third and final Asian Games berth after edging past Deepika Kumari in a shoot-off. Both archers had finished level on 10.75 points after three rounds spread across three days before Ankita held her nerve in the decider. This will be the second consecutive Asian Games that Deepika will miss after also failing to make the

squad for the Hangzhou Games in 2022 following the birth of her daughter. Despite being one of India's most decorated archers with multiple World Cup medals and a Commonwealth Games title, Deepika is yet to win an individual medal at the Asian Games. Her best finish remains the women's team bronze medal from the 2010 Guangzhou Games.

Kirti Sharma's rise through the ranks has been one of the standout stories from the trials. The young archer from Haryana's Jind district is the daughter of an iron gate welder and was picked during talent scouting trials conducted by coach Udham Singh in 2022 before being inducted into the SAI Hazaribagh centre in Jharkhand. Kirti made her India debut earlier this year at the Asia Cup in Bangkok and has since represented the country in three Asia Cup events. Earlier this season, she won a team bronze medal alongside Ridhi Phor and Ruma Biswas. She also impressed throughout the elimination rounds in Sonapat, defeating experienced names like Ankita Bhakat and Ridhi Phor on her way to topping the trials. "We had given out an advertisement and she came all the way from Haryana for the trials. She has been training with us for the last five years," coach Udham Singh told PTI after the trials. Kirti Sharma's rise through the ranks has been one of the standout stories from the trials.

Ukraine's Elina Svitolina Leads WTA Rankings After Historic Clay-Court Sweep At Italian Open

New Delhi: Elina Svitolina capped a remarkable fortnight for Ukrainian tennis by capturing the Italian Open title in Rome, completing a sweep of the 2026 clay-court WTA 1000 events for her country after Marta Kostyuk lifted the Madrid crown earlier this month. The 31-year-old Svitolina returned to the top tier of women's tennis with her third career title in Rome, having previously won the tournament in 2017 and 2018. It marked her 20th singles trophy overall and her biggest achievement since returning to the tour following maternity leave in 2023. The World Number One went down 1-6, 2-6, 7-6 (8-6), 3-6 in the three-hour, 26-minute encounter to the young Italian prodigy, thereby sending shockwaves around the tennis world. As a result, Djokovic's incredible 33 match winning streak comes to an end.

Astonishingly, the serb had previously lost at this tournament back in 2018.



Djokovic has enjoyed a lot of success in this tournament, winning it a record 10 times, thereby making him the most successful player ever in the Australian Open. Djokovic's exit from the tournament means that a new champion will be crowned in the men's singles trophy of this grand slam. While speaking at the post match press conference, the 36 year old Serb

conceded that his opponent outplayed him in every aspect of the game and he extended his wishes to Sinner on the much deserved victory. Disappointed by his playing standards, Djokovic expressed that this is perhaps one of the worst grand slam matches that he has ever played.

The 24 time grand slam winner admitted that he has not been playing close

to his best throughout the tournament. Sinner made a dominant start to the match, dropping only three games in the first two sets. Djokovic fought back in the third set and snatched it from the jaws of defeat after saving a match point.

Just when it seemed like the legendary Djokovic comeback is on the cards, Sinner re-grouped and showed incredible composure, closing out the fourth set 6-3. Shockingly, the top seed, who had never lost from the semi-final stage onwards in Melbourne before Friday (20-0), failed to even conjure up one break point all match on the Italian's serve. It is the first time in his career that Djokovic has failed to earn a break point in a major match. "That stat says a lot," Djokovic said. "He was serving very accurately, precisely, he was backing his serve very well. Sinner will now lock horns against the winner of the other semi-final match between Danil Medvedev.

Arsenal Edge Closer To Premier League Title Following Narrow Win Over Burnley

London: Chennai Super Kings lost thArsenal moved a step closer to the Premier League title with a narrow 1-0 victory over Burnley at the Emirates Stadium, London, on Monday.Kai Havertz scored the only goal of the match in the 37th minute, heading in from a Bukayo Saka corner to give Mikel Arteta's side a crucial lead, as per the Premier League website. Arsenal controlled much of the first half, creating several chances, with Leandro Trossard striking the post and Martin Odegaard seeing an effort deflected wide. Burnley, despite already being relegated, fought hard and limited Arsenal to a single goal before the break. In the second half, Arsenal continued to push forward, with Eberechi Eze coming close as his volley crashed off the crossbar.

However, Burnley stayed competitive and worked hard defensively, even as they struggled to threaten David Raya's goal. Havertz was later shown a yellow card for a mistimed challenge and was substituted soon after as Arsenal looked to manage the game. Burnley attempted to apply late pressure, but Arsenal's defence held firm. The closing stages were tense, with seven minutes of stoppage



time adding to the nerves around the stadium. However, Arsenal maintained their shape and saw out the result to secure three vital points. The win puts Arsenal within touching distance of the Premier League title. They now need a win in the clash against Crystal Palace on Sunday to be crowned champions, although they could clinch the title earlier depending on Manchester City's result against AFC Bournemouth on Wednesday. Arsenal currently lead the

Premier League points table with 82 points to their name, while Manchester City sit second with 77 points to their name. The Sunday's win did not come without some drama as the ruling out of Callum Wilson's 95th-minute equaliser was ruled out because of a foul on the Gunners' goalie David Raya, as per Sky Sports. The VAR spotted West Ham's Pablo's arm across Raya's neck as the latter fumbled the initial delivery into the box.

Harbouring Olympic Dreams, Puja Tomar Eyes Impact Beyond UFC Octagon For India

New Delhi: "India definitely has a huge pool of talent, and I truly believe we're just at the beginning of something special." As Puja Tomar made this statement, she stands as the current flag bearer for India in the world of MMA. A five-time Wushu national champion with a backstory built on grit, resilience and sacrifice, she created history as the first Indian fighter to secure a win in the UFC. She almost made it 2-0 before a small error in judgment ended in defeat in her second fight for the promotion.

When we first caught up with her after that historic moment, the story was all about the journey that took her to the UFC. But now, as she prepares for her third fight in the promotion at UFC Macau on May 29 against Shi Ming, the narrative has shifted towards consolidation, growth and building



something bigger beyond the octagon. Speaking to India Today exclusively, Puja said she focusses on growth rather than just results. More than a victory, she wants to show the world how much she is evolving every single time she steps into the cage. "For me, it's always about growth, not just the result. Becoming the first Indian fighter to win in the UFC was a proud moment, but every fight teaches you something new.

The last one didn't go my way, but it gave me clarity

on where I need to improve. Heading into this third fight, my focus is on delivering a complete performance, being sharper, more composed, and showing how much I've evolved as a fighter. I want to represent my country with pride, inspire others back home, and prove that I belong at this level. A win is important, of course, but more than that, I want to make a statement about my resilience, mindset and continuous progress," said Puja. Despite the growing interest

and the increasing presence of fighters like Puja, India still remains a sleeping giant in MMA. The 32-year-old, who went through the grind in ONE Championship and Matrix Fight Night, believes there is no shortage of talent in the country.

Instead, the real challenge lies in the lack of a proper ecosystem. "The challenge isn't the lack of fighters; it's more about the surrounding ecosystem. We still need stronger grassroots development, better access to world-class coaching, more exposure to international competition, and consistent support systems. When it comes to the UFC, it's the highest level of the sport and the competition there is incredibly intense. Fighters are not only skilled but also have years of structured training, international experience, and strong backing from teams and promotions," said Puja.

KL Rahul Replaces Rishabh Pant As India's Vice-Captain For The Afghanistan Test Squad

New Delhi: Flamboyant wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant was removed as vice-captain of India's Test side for the upcoming one-off match against Afghanistan, while also being left out of the ODI squad for the ensuing three-match series against the same opponents. KL Rahul has replaced Pant as vice-captain in the Test squad, which will be led by Shubman Gill. Senior all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah have been rested for the one-off Test in Mullanpur starting June 6. The Ajit Agarkar-led BCCI senior men's selection committee met on Tuesday to finalise India's squads for the home assignment against Afghanistan, which includes a one-off Test followed by three ODIs in Dharamsala, Lucknow and Chennai on June 14, 17 and 20 respectively. Pacer Gurnoor Brar and left-arm spinner Manav Suthar have earned maiden Test call-ups, while Harsh Dubey has also been included in the squad. Suthar and Gurnoor are teammates at IPL franchise Gujarat Titans. Pant, who served as Gill's deputy during the England tour earlier this year, continues in the side as a wicketkeeper-batter, but has been relieved of



leadership duties ahead of the Afghanistan Test. The squad features a mix of youth and experience, with Mohammed Siraj and Prasidh Krishna leading the pace attack, while Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav and Suthar form the spin unit. Sai Sudharsan and Nitish Kumar Reddy have retained their places after impressive domestic and India A performance, while Devdutt Padikkal and Yashasvi Jaiswal have also been included in the batting line-up. Dhruv Jurel has been named as the second wicketkeeping option alongside Pant.

India will return to Test cricket for the first time since their 2-0 home defeat to South Africa last November. Apart from Bumrah and Jadeja, Axar Patel and Akash Deep are also missing from

that squad.

India and Afghanistan have previously faced each other in only one Test match, in Bengaluru in 2018, where India secured an innings-and-262-run victory inside two days. KL Rahul has replaced Rishabh Pant as the vice-captain of the Indian Test team for the upcoming one-off match against Afghanistan. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the squad on Tuesday, confirming that Rahul will serve as the deputy to captain Shubman Gill. While Pant was relieved of his leadership duties following discussions regarding his recent performance as a captain, he remains in the squad as a wicketkeeper-batter. The selection committee, led by Ajit Agarkar, also rested senior players

Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja for the Test match scheduled to begin on June 6 in Mullanpur. Additionally, the squad features new faces such as Manav Suthar and Gurnoor Brar, who earned their maiden Test call-ups. Rishabh Pant was relieved of his leadership duties to allow him to focus on his batting and play more freely, according to a BCCI source. The selection committee and other key stakeholders believe that the additional responsibility of captaincy has led to poor decision-making at the crease and a decline in his performance.

The BCCI senior men's selection committee, led by Ajit Agarkar, officially replaced Rishabh Pant with KL Rahul as vice-captain for the upcoming one-off Test against Afghanistan starting June 6. This decision followed a difficult stint for Pant as captain of the Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL, where he struggled tactically and failed to produce high-scoring innings. Pundits and authorities noted that while his place as a wicketkeeper-batter remains secure, his batting average and strike rate have suffered under the pressure of leadership. Pacer Gurnoor Brar and left-arm spinner

Manav Suthar have received their maiden Test call-ups for the Indian squad ahead of the one-off match against Afghanistan. Additionally, Harsh Dubey has also been included in the Test side for the first time. nThe Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the squad on Tuesday for the match scheduled to begin on June 6 in Mullanpur. While new faces were introduced, senior players Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja have been rested for the assignment. In a leadership change, KL Rahul has replaced Rishabh Pant as the vice-captain of the team, which will be led by Shubman Gill. The one-off Test holds more significance considering India's troubles in the traditional format, especially at home. The batters need to find a way to tackle spin-friendly conditions. It is an aspect that has bothered them for a while now and was thoroughly exposed by South Africa in the home series last November India have also not been able to find a stable number three since Cheteshwar Pujara left the scene. Sai Sudharsan got his chances but could not deliver. And now Devdutt Padikkal is expected to be given a decent run from season.

Neymar Named In Brazil's World Cup Squad Despite Major Ongoing Fitness Doubts

Rio De Janeiro: Neymar made Brazil's World Cup squad on Monday, a selection many local analysts and former footballers deemed unlikely only days ago. The striker will appear at his fourth World Cup. The 34-year-old Neymar is Brazil's all-time top goal-scorer with 79 but has struggled to return to top fitness since he tore his left ACL in October 2023. He's played eight matches for Santos this year with four goals and two assists. "He has improved his fitness, he will be an important player in this World Cup," Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti said at a press conference in Rio de Janeiro. The coach added he preferred experienced players for some spots in his squad, including Neymar.

"He can still improve his fitness until the first match of the World Cup," Ancelotti said. "He has experience in this kind of competition, the love of our group, he can create a better environment in this group." Shortly before Ancelotti's squad was announced, Neymar changed his Instagram bio in a revealing way; he had only Santos as a reference of where he is currently playing and added Brazil to it. Brazil's 26-man squad also features its main players in recent years, Vi-



nicius Júnior and Raphinha. Ancelotti who took over in May 2025 but had not summoned Neymar until Monday. He extended his contract with the Brazilian Football Confederation last week to the 2030 World Cup but he has had a troubled spell in Brazil so far with many injured players out of his World Cup squad; strikers Rodrygo and Estevao are the ones he will miss the most in North America. Brazil opens its World Cup campaign against Morocco in New Jersey on June 13, followed by Haiti and Scotland in Group C. Heart of Midlothian endured a devastating final-day collapse as their Scottish Premiership title dream slipped away in dramatic fashion against Celtic at a charged Parkhead, with the aftermath marked by emotional scenes as grown men were reduced

to tears. A late turnaround by Celtic sealed a 3-1 defeat for Hearts, shattering hopes of a historic triumph. France coach Didier Deschamps assembled a squad with formidable attacking talent for the World Cup and rewarded goalkeeper Robin Rissner with a call-up for the showpiece tournament on Thursday following his breakthrough season. Rissner, who plays for Lens, has been one of the revelations of the French league season and won the award for the best goalkeeper earlier this week. He played a big role in making Lens the second-best defense in Ligue 1 and was selected by Deschamps in a No. 3 role behind Mike Maignan and Brice Samba. "I'm full of pride, it's something incredible," Rissner told broadcaster TF1. "I can't find the words.