

Assam CS reviews state's preparedness for June 21 NEET-UG re-exam

Guwahati Jun 09: Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota on Monday held a discussion with Chief Postmaster General Arvind Verma regarding preparedness and precautionary measures for the smooth conduct of the NEET-UG 2026 Re-Examination, scheduled in the State on June 21. The re-examination will be conducted across 88 examination centres in 17 examination districts, covering over 43,000 candidates across Assam. The Chief Secretary reviewed arrangements for the secure handling, transportation and distribution of examination materials and emphasised close coordination among all stakeholders to ensure a fair, secure and seamless examination process across the State. Ravi Kota had on May 30 reviewed the preparedness for the re-examination in accordance with the guidelines of the National Testing Agency (NTA). "Detailed instructions were issued to ensure a secure, transparent and



student-friendly examination environment without any logistical or administrative difficulties," the chief secretary said after chairing a comprehensive video conference with all district commissioners

and senior superintendents of police, jointly with the Assam DGP. Reviewing the district-wise preparedness, Kota directed the DCs and SSPs to personally oversee all arrangements.

Piyush Goyal hails Assam's GI-tagged Tezpur litchi export

Guwahati, Jun 09: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal has welcomed the first-ever export of Assam's GI-tagged Tezpur litchi to Dubai. The shipment, made during the Tezpur Litchi Festival, is expected to improve prices for farmers and widen markets in the Northeast. "Assam's renowned GI-tagged Tezpur litchi is now spreading its sweetness in foreign markets. With the support of APEDA, the first export shipment of Tezpur litchi has departed for Dubai. This step will give the region's litchi global recognition, provide farmers with better prices, and create new opportunities for agricultural products from Northeast India," the Minister wrote on X. Tezpur litchi represents the North East region's agricultural richness and connects it to the global markets for its juicy, sweet flesh and small seed. One of the popular ones is Paltan Pukhuri, or 'Lichu Pokhuri', which is about 100 years old and was planted by



the first president of the Assam Sahitya Sabha and the first chairman of Tezpur Municipality, Padmanath Gohani Baruah. Other popular varieties of litchi are grown in Porua and Na-Pam, and litchi is also exported from these places. Local growers expressed optimism that

the initiative will encourage better orchard management, post-harvest practices, and branding of Northeast produce. Officials added that the success of Tezpur litchi could serve as a model for other GI-tagged products from the region, including rice, tea, and spices.

Assam Strengthens Indo-EU Ties as Chief Minister Hosts European Union Delegation

Guwahati Jun 09: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma welcomed a high-level European Union (EU) delegation to Guwahati and held a series of discussions aimed at strengthening economic cooperation, trade partnerships and strategic linkages between India and Europe. The delegation, led by European Union Ambassador to India Herve Delphin, is visiting Assam under the "Team Europe" initiative to explore opportunities for collaboration across a range of sectors critical to sustainable economic growth and investment. During the meeting, Chief Minister Sarma highlighted Assam's growing role as an investment destination and discussed how the state can contribute to deepening India-European Union partnerships under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "We exchanged views on the advantages Assam can offer

in strengthening Indo-EU linkages and expanding co-operation in key sectors," the Chief Minister said. The discussions focused on sectors such as renewable and green energy, sustainable urban infrastructure, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, semi-conductors and electronics manufacturing, tea and agri-food processing, flavours and fragrances, and AYUSH. A major highlight of the visit was the Blue Valley Cluster Exhibition held at Hotel Radisson Blu, Guwahati. The exhibition, organised as part of the Blue Valley Cluster initiative, aims to build stronger business ecosystems and value chains between India and Europe. The exhibition showcased a diverse range of products, including agricultural produce, handloom and handicraft items, with participation from both local and international exhibitors. The initiative seeks to create new market opportunities for producers,



entrepreneurs and businesses while fostering cross-border trade and innovation. Chief Minister Sarma also held a productive interaction with the Federation of European Business in India (FEBI), which is accom-

panying the EU delegation during its Assam visit. FEBI represents more than 250 European companies operating in India, covering over 6,000 businesses across multiple sectors. During the discussions, the Chief Minister

emphasized Assam's willingness to engage with European enterprises to create employment opportunities and strengthen entrepreneurship among the state's youth, farmers and women entrepreneurs. He highlighted Assam's

skilled workforce, improving infrastructure and customized investment incentives, stating that the state is well-positioned to support enterprises in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and agri-processing. During their stay, members of the EU delegation are also expected to meet government officials, industry representatives and business leaders to identify investment opportunities and strengthen economic cooperation between Europe, Assam and the wider Northeast region. The visit is expected to further advance collaboration under the India-EU partnership framework while showcasing Assam as a gateway to Northeast India and Southeast Asia. Officials believe the engagement could pave the way for increased investment, technology transfer, business partnerships and sustainable development initiatives in the region.

Meghalaya CM flags off five e-buses under scheme

Shillong, Jun 09: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Tuesday flagged off five electric buses under the PM eBus Sewa Scheme at a programme held at Taraghar-State Guest House in Shillong. The launch marks a major step towards promoting sustainable urban mobility, reducing carbon emissions and strengthening public transport infrastructure in the State. As part of the first phase of the initiative, five electric buses have been introduced to provide citizens with cleaner, greener, and more efficient public transportation services. The newly launched buses are fully air-conditioned, zero-emission vehicles built on a safe stainless-steel chassis and are capable of covering approximately 180 to 200 kilometres on a single charge. Each bus can accommodate up to 25 passengers in addition to the driver and features a comfortable

2x2 seating layout with overhead storage facilities. Designed to be inclusive and commuter-friendly, the buses are equipped with designated wheelchair spaces and foldable ramps to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. They also feature a modern e-ticketing system aimed at providing passengers with a seamless and convenient travel experience. Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Sangma congratulated the Urban Affairs Department and thanked the Government of India for supporting Meghalaya's efforts to transform urban mobility through the PM eBus Sewa Scheme. "Today, we are witnessing the launch of the e-buses under the PM e-Bus Sewa Scheme," he said, while acknowledging the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Government of India in advancing sustainable public transportation across the country.

Security forces nab two Assam residents in Manipur with contraband

Imphal, Jun 09: Security forces arrested two residents of Assam along with suspected contraband items from T. Khullen Naka Post under Senapati police station in Senapati district of Manipur on Monday. The arrested residents are Nasimuddin (38) of Uriamghat, Devipur; and Monjit (25) of Gomariguri. According to police, 12 soap cases of suspected brown sugar were seized from their possession. The contraband items were recovered from a Grand I 10 vehicle (AS 01LC9436), which was also seized. Besides, cash amount of Rs 4,000 was also recovered from the arrested persons.

On the other hand, security forces on Monday arrested one Nongmaithem Rupu Singh (38) of Sapam Mamang Leikai in Thoubal district along with suspected contraband items from the Keithelmanbi area under New keithelmanbi-PS, Imphal West district. Five soap cases containing heroin powder, weighing 58 grams, was seized from his possession, along with a Tata Tanker Bullet. Police sources confirmed that all



three individuals have been taken into custody and cases registered under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The seized contraband and vehicles are being treated as evidence, while investigations are underway to trace the supply chain and possible cross-border links. Authorities highlighted that such seizures underscore the per-

sistent challenge of narcotics trafficking in Manipur, a state often used as a transit route due to its proximity to international borders. Security analysts note that coordinated operations by police and paramilitary forces remain crucial to curbing the inflow of drugs into the region. Local residents expressed concern over the rising number of narcotics cases, urging stricter vigilance

at checkpoints and enhanced community awareness. Officials reiterated their commitment to intensifying anti-drug drives and appealed to the public to cooperate by reporting suspicious activities. The twin arrests mark another step in the ongoing crackdown against narcotics in Manipur, reflecting the state's determination to combat drug trafficking and safeguard its communities.

Dimapur power disconnection drive begins

Dimapur, Jun 09: Nagaland Power Department has informed consumers under the electrical division Dimapur that a disconnection drive would begin from Wednesday (June 10), against defaulters and those involved in illegal activities. In a press release, executive engineer Lhuvoyi said the drive would target non-payment of electricity bills as well as meter tampering, hooking, unauthorized load alteration and other illegal practices across all categories of consumers. The drive would continue on a regular basis until further orders. Consumers with pending bills have been advised to make payments immediately to avoid disconnection and inconvenience. Further, those facing discrepancies or grievances regarding their bills have been asked to approach the office of the respective sub-divisional officer (electrical)-I, II or III at the earliest for clarification. For online payments, consumers can log in at www.dopn.gov.in using their Consumer ID to view and pay their bills, the release added.

ED teams conduct drug trafficking searches across Tripura, Mizoram borders

New Delhi, Jun 09: The Enforcement Directorate has conducted searches at multiple locations across the Mizoram-Myanmar border, the Tripura-Bangladesh border and West Bengal in a money laundering case linked to a drug trafficking network. The case is related to NCB seizure made by the Agartala Zonal Unit, in which over 49 kilograms of methamphetamine and 40 grams of heroin were recovered. The investigation has revealed an organized cross-border syndicate sourcing methamphetamine from Myanmar. The proceeds of Crime aggregating to over 142 crore rupees have been identified so far. In Tripura, ED teams on Monday conducted raids at the houses of three accused in the Kazitila area of Kulubari, a border village under Sonamura subdivision in Sepahijala district in connection with the cases of money laundering, disproportionate assets and narcotics trafficking against the three accused. In order to prevent untoward incidents, CRPF personnel accompanied the ED



teams during the operation. According to the reports, none of the house owners or accused persons were present at their residences during the raid. Sources further revealed that the ED had previously issued notices to the accused. As they reportedly failed to respond, teams from the ED's Guwahati and Agartala units launched the operation around 7am. Parallel operations were also carried out in West Bengal and Mizoram, targeting suspected safe houses and financial conduits linked to the syndicate. Officials stated that docu-

ments, digital devices, and property records are being scrutinized to trace the money trail and establish connections between local operatives and cross-border suppliers. Security analysts note that the seizures highlight the growing challenge of synthetic drug trafficking in India's Northeast, where porous borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh facilitate smuggling. The ED's involvement reflects the financial dimension of the problem, as proceeds from narcotics are laundered through shell companies, real estate, and hawala networks.

Nagaland CM creates food processing and incubation centers to boost rural economy and jobs



Kohima , June 09: On Monday, June 8, Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio inaugurated four food processing and incubation centres across the state as part of the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) 2024-25 scheme, which aims to strengthen market linkages for farmers, promote entrepreneurship, and create job opportunities for youth. The chief minister inaugurated the Food Processing Centre at the State Industrial Area in Toluvi, Dimapur, and effectively launched three other projects: the Incubation Centre for Entrepreneurs and Infrastructure Development at the Industrial Growth Centre in Ganeshnagar, Chümoukedima, the Incubation Centre for Food Processing in Tuensang, and the Modern Aggregation Centre at Longnak in Mokochung. Addressing the gathering, Rio said small-scale industries, particularly food processing, offer one of the most promising avenues for Nagaland's economic growth. He said the newly established centres align with the Centre's vision of

building a "Viksit Bharat" and have the potential to become catalysts for rural entrepreneurship and value addition. Highlighting the importance of the initiative, Rio said there has been strong demand for such projects from both farmers and the state government. Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047, he stressed the need for Nagaland to actively participate in the country's growth journey. The chief minister said the benefits of the centres would directly reach farmers once operations begin in full swing and added that the government plans to replicate similar facilities in all districts of the state.

According to Rio, district-level processing units would help regions identify crops best suited to local conditions, enhance value addition and improve income generation for farming communities. Expressing confidence in the state's youth, he said Nagaland possesses abundant talent and natural resources. He encouraged young entre-

preneurs to make use of the new infrastructure and combine innovation with traditional knowledge to build sustainable businesses. MLA and Advisor for Industries and Commerce Hekani Jakhalu described the four centres as pilot projects developed after extensive study of local resources and market opportunities. She said the department aims to establish independent processing centres in every district by 2028. Jakhalu emphasised that food processing is not merely about machinery but about building an integrated value chain connecting farmers, processors and markets. She termed the sector a crucial bridge between agriculture and manufacturing. Advisor for SCERT and Food Processing Achumbemo Kikon said the department would focus on six key pillars, Production, Processing, Preservation, Packaging, Pricing and Patenting — to strengthen the sector in a mission mode. He stressed that processing infrastructure would only be successful if backed by adequate agricultural production and called for co-operation among farmers, villages and stakeholders to strengthen Nagaland's economy. Several ministers, advisors and legislators attended the programme, including Rural Development Minister Metsübo Jamir, Advisor for Urban Development and Municipal Affairs Zhaleo Rio, Advisor for Agriculture Mhaithung Yanthan, Advisor for Science and Technology Kuzholuzo Nienu, Advisor for Sericulture and Minority Affairs Inkong L. Imchen, and MLA Dr Sukhato A. Sema.

Upper Siang MLA's house was vandalized amid SUMP protests

Itanagar, June 09: Tensions over the projected Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) rose in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district when a large number of protesters allegedly vandalised the home of Geku-Mariyang MLA Oni Panyang. According to reports, the house of the People's Party of Arunachal MP has been targeted as part of the ongoing protest to the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project. Visuals from the scene revealed severe damage to the residence, with furniture, household objects, and elements of the structure apparently destroyed. The video showed debris spread over many rooms, including broken wooden furni-

ture, overturned containers, smashed household objects, and damaged walls, indicating extensive vandalism. The incident comes against the backdrop of sustained protests by sections of local residents and organisations opposing the proposed multipurpose hydropower project on the Siang River. Protesters have raised concerns over the potential social, environmental and livelihood impacts of the project. Authorities have not yet issued a detailed statement regarding the extent of the damage or any arrests in connection with the incident.

Security personnel are understood to be monitoring the situation as tensions continue in the district.



Deepak Chingakham, a BSF policeman from Manipur, has been posthumously given the Vir Chakra, and his family has been honored



Imphal, June 09: N. Biren Singh, a senior BJP leader and former Manipur

Chief Minister, paid respect to the late Deepak Chingakham, a Border Security

Force policeman who was posthumously awarded the coveted Vir Chakra on June

8, 2026, for his remarkable courage and heroic sacrifice in service to the nation. The honor was accepted by his family members during the investiture ceremony on June 8.

Sharing a message on X, Biren Singh expressed deep respect for the fallen soldier, describing him as a brave son of Manipur whose courage and dedication to duty reflected the highest traditions of service and patriotism. "I pay my deepest respects to Constable (Late) Deepak Chingakham of the Border Security Force, a brave son of Manipur, who has been posthumously awarded the Vir Chakra for his exceptional courage and supreme sacrifice in service

of the nation," Singh said. He added that the valour and unwavering devotion displayed by the late constable would continue to inspire future generations and serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made by security personnel in safeguarding the country. "Manipur stands proud of its fallen hero and salutes his sacrifice for the motherland," he stated. The posthumous award of the Vir Chakra recognises Deepak Chingakham's extraordinary courage and commitment to duty, honouring his sacrifice in the service of the nation. His contribution has been widely acknowledged as a source of pride for both Manipur and the country.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal announces the first export of Assam's GI-tagged Tezpur litchi to Dubai

Dispur, June 09: Union Minister Piyush Goyal has welcomed the sale of Assam's GI-tagged Tezpur Litchi to overseas markets, stating that the effort will assist farmers obtain higher prices and open up new markets for agricultural products from Northeast India. In a post on X, Goyal stated that Assam's famed Tezpur litchi has begun to have an impact in overseas markets. He stated that with the assistance of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, the first export consignment of Tezpur litchi was delivered to Dubai. "This step will give the region's litchi global recognition, provide farmers with better prices and create new opportunities for agricultural products from Northeast India," the minister said. The export coincides with celebrations marking 100 years of



litchi cultivation in Tezpur. The two-day Tezpur Litchi Festival 2026, organised by the Sonitpur district administration, recently concluded at the District Library in Tezpur, high-

lighting the rich heritage of the GI-tagged fruit. During the festival, one tonne of various litchi varieties was exported to Dubai, while around 600 kilograms was shipped to Singapore. The

consignments were flagged off by Anand Kumar Das in the presence of Prithviraj Rabha and other officials. Authorities said the exports represent a major milestone for Tezpur litchi,

which is known for its distinctive flavour, rich pulp and attractive colour. The fruit has gained increasing popularity in both domestic and international markets. This year, the highly sought-after Bombay variety of Tezpur litchi fetched prices ranging from Rs 40 to Rs 50 per fruit. Organisers reported that litchis worth over Rs 4 lakh were sold at the festival venue in a single day. Tezpur's litchi cultivation dates back to 1923 when noted litterateur Padmanath Gohain Baruah established litchi orchards in the town. Today, more than 150 farmers cultivate litchis across over 400 bighas of land in the region, according to local agricultural groups. The festival also showcased several popular litchi varieties, including Chahi, Bilati, Bombaiya, Piyaji, Chinese, Rongiya, Kath Bombaiya and Elaichi litchis.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma praises the release of 15 pygmy pigs into Manas National Park



Dispur, June 9: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma praised the release of 15 pygmy pigs into the wild at Manas National Park under the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme, citing it as an important milestone in the state's continuing wildlife conservation efforts. In a post on X, the Chief Minister stated that the release is another step in restoring Assam's fragile grassland ecosystems and protecting the endangered pygmy hog, one of the world's rarest wild pig species.

"A dash to freedom. The release of 15 pygmy hogs into the wild at Manas National Park under the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme marks another milestone in our efforts to restore fragile grassland ecosystems and protect one of the world's rarest wild pig," Sarma said. The Chief Minister noted that the conservation initiative reflects

Assam's commitment to preserving biodiversity and strengthening ecological balance through sustained wildlife protection measures.

The endangered Pygmy Hog is native to the grasslands of Assam and is regarded as the world's smallest and rarest wild pig species. Conservation programmes over the years have focused on breeding and reintroducing pygmy hogs into suitable natural habitats to ensure their survival. Manas National Park has emerged as a key site for the species' recovery and reintroduction, with conservationists working to rebuild wild populations while simultaneously restoring critical grassland habitats. Sarma's remarks come as Assam continues to highlight its conservation successes and efforts to protect endangered species through scientific wildlife management and habitat restoration programmes.

Ex-militants threaten a 72-hour highway and train blockade over rehabilitation package delays

Agartala , June 09: Hundreds of surrendered extremists from the now-defunct National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) threatened on Monday to launch a 72-hour blockade of highways and railway lines beginning June 12 in protest of the alleged failure to implement key provisions of a tripartite rehabilitation agreement signed with the Centre and the Tripura government. While announcing the potential blockade, surrendered militant leaders said that, despite repeated pledges, the government has yet to fulfill several obligations made under a tripartite accord agreed in New Delhi on September 4, 2024. The agreement was signed in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, senior political leaders, and officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Tripura government. Under the agreement, NLFT and ATTF militants formally surrendered before Chief Minister Saha during a ceremony held at the headquarters of the 7th Battalion of the Tripura State Rifles (TSR) at Jampuijala in Sepahijala district on September 24, 2024.

Biren Singh, former chief minister of Manipur, says the administration is doing all possible to keep unrest in the hills under control

Imphal , June 09: Former Manipur Chief Minister and senior BJP leader N. Biren Singh expressed concern on Monday, June 8, about recent incidents of violence and killings in the state's hill districts, saying that both the state and central governments are working together to restore peace and bring the situation under control. Biren Singh spoke to reporters after attending a floral tribute service for renowned journalist Okram Homendro Singh at the Manipur Press Club in Imphal. He termed the recent wave of violence in the hill districts as regrettable and stressed the need of discussion in resolving issues. The All Mani-

pur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) and the Editors' Guild Manipur (EGM) collaborated to organize the condolence ceremony in memory of the late journalist. Addressing the prevailing security situation, Biren Singh said the government has been closely monitoring developments in the hill districts and is taking necessary measures to address the challenges. He noted that central security forces which had been temporarily deployed outside the state for election-related duties in other parts of the country have returned to Manipur, as assured by the Government of India. According to him, the reinforcement of security personnel

is expected to strengthen efforts to stabilise the situation and improve law and order in the affected areas. "The unfolding incidents of violence in the hill districts over the past few months are unfortunate. Any conflict can be resolved through dialogue, and the government is doing its best to bring the situation under control," he said. Commenting on the demand for updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur, Biren Singh said the state has been significantly affected by issues related to illegal immigration and acknowledged the concerns raised by various civil society organisations. He stated that the demands

put forward by civil society groups deserve consideration while also emphasising the need to take into account administrative and practical aspects associated with any such exercise. According to Biren Singh, the Manipur Government and civil society organisations should work together to develop a common platform for addressing concerns related to illegal immigration and citizenship issues. During the programme, the former chief minister also paid tribute to senior journalist Okram Homendro Singh, recalling his long association with the veteran media professional during his own years in journalism before entering politics.

Describing Homendro Singh as a courageous, soft-spoken and dedicated journalist, Biren Singh said he had devoted his life to the profession since the early 1990s and earned widespread respect within the media fraternity. He termed the journalist's untimely demise an irreparable loss and extended his condolences to the bereaved family. "I extend my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family," Biren Singh said. The floral tribute ceremony was attended by Media Adviser to the Chief Minister Sunil Oinam, members of the journalist community, representatives of media organisations and family members of the late journalist.

14 Manipur groups stage Imphal rally against census, urge centre



Imphal, Jun 09: A massive rally demanding the postponement of the proposed Census exercise in Manipur saw participation of 14 civil society organisations (CSOs), including several student and women organisations, in Imphal on Monday.

The rally commenced from Tiddim Ground along Airport Road and proceeded through various parts of Imphal before concluding at Thou Ground, Thangmeiband. Hundreds of participants carrying placards and banners joined the procession, raising slogans against the Census exercise and urging the authorities to defer it until normalcy is restored in the State. Notably, the rally passed through several sensitive areas of the State capital without any obstruction from security personnel and remained peaceful throughout its course.

Addressing the gathering and speaking to media persons, United Committee Manipur (UCM) President Shanta Nahakpam questioned the feasibility of conducting a fair and credible Census while thousands of people affected by the ongoing ethnic conflict continue to live in relief camps across the State. “How far will the Census exercise be success-

ful when thousands of people are staying in relief camps?” Nahakpam asked, stressing that the concerns of conflict-affected communities must be addressed before the exercise is undertaken. Clarifying the organisations’ course of action, Nahakpam said they have not communicated their concerns to the state government and have instead addressed all representations directly to the Registrar General of India and the Ministry of Home Affairs. “The 14 CSOs, along with several other organisations, have already submitted representations to the Registrar General of India (RGI) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) seeking postponement of the Census exercise in Manipur,” he added. According to him, no response has been received from the RGI despite repeated appeals from various organisations.

With the Census exercise expected to commence in August, Nahakpam said the organisations would continue organising public meetings, awareness campaigns and other democratic forms of protest over the next two months to mobilise public opinion against the exercise if their concerns remain unaddressed. Concluding the rally at THAU Ground in Thangmeiband, participants renewed their demand for the Census to be postponed until conditions allow for a fair, inclusive and accurate enumeration across Manipur.

President Murmu confers seven Kirti chakras; Prasanth Nair among Honorees

New Delhi, Jun 09: President Droupadi Murmu on Monday conferred seven Kirti Chakras, including two posthumously, to personnel of the armed forces displaying raw courage, unparalleled bravery and total disregard for personal safety in the line of duty.

Air Commodore Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, an IAF pilot and a Gaganyatri, is also among the recipients of the Kirti Chakra, India’s second-highest peacetime gallantry award. Murmu conferred seven Kirti Chakras, including two posthumously; 15 Vir Chakras, including three posthumously; and 29 Shaurya Chakras, including one posthumously, to the personnel of the defence forces, Central Armed Police Forces and state or Union Territory police forces during phase-I of the Defence Investiture Ceremony hosted at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the defence ministry said. Lt Commander Dilna K and Lt Commander Roopa A of the Navy are among the Shaurya Chakras recipients. The President presented the gallantry award to them for their exemplary endurance, bravery and devotion to duty in Navika Sagar Parikrama II. Lt Commander Roopa A, along with Lt Commander Dilna K, sailed over 25,600 nautical miles through the Indian, Pacific, Atlantic and Southern Oceans.

“While navigating through the perilous Drake Passage



in stormy conditions that caused the boat to heel severely, regaining control required exceptional skill and extraordinary courage. During the expedition, they also became the first Indians to reach Point Nemo, the oceanic Pole of Inaccessibility, by sailboat,” reads the citation in a post on X by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Lance Naik Meenatchi Sundarama of Rashtriya Rifles, Naib Subedar Doleshwar Subba of Para (Special Forces), Major Arshdeep Singh of Assam Rifles and Captain Lalrinawma Sailo of Para (Special Forces) have also been conferred the Kirti Chakra, according to the list of awardees shared by the government. Sepoy Janjal Pravin Prabhakar of the Mahar Regiment of Rashtriya Rifles and Lt Shashank Tiwari of the Sikkim Scouts

have been conferred the Kirti Chakra posthumously.

The Rashtrapati Bhavan, in a series of posts on X, also shared some photos of the ceremony along with citations. “President Droupadi Murmu presents the Shaurya Chakra to Major Anshul Baltoo, The Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry, 32 Assam Rifles, for displaying bravery in the line of duty. In April 2025, during a combat and search operation in Dima Hasao, South Assam, he confronted an armed cadre at close quarters and single-handedly neutralised him. The operation resulted in the elimination of three armed cadres and the recovery of weapons and war-like stores,” it said. Another post said the President presents the Shaurya Chakra to Major Leishangthem Deepak Singh,

11 Para (Special Forces), for his exceptional bravery.” Acting on intelligence regarding the kidnapping of two innocent civilians, he neutralised a terrorist at very close range and shielded a kidnapped civilian with his own body. This resulted in the neutralisation of two hardcore cadres and the rescue of an innocent civilian,” it said. Another post said the President presents the Shaurya Chakra to Major Leishangthem Deepak Singh, 11 Para (Special Forces), for his exceptional bravery.” Acting on intelligence regarding the kidnapping of two innocent civilians, he neutralised a terrorist at very close range and shielded a kidnapped civilian with his own body. This resulted in the neutralisation of two hardcore cadres and the rescue of an innocent civilian,” it said.

Meghalaya commission confirms sexual harassment charges against MCA officials

Shillong, Jun 09: The Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW) has directed the Meghalaya Cricket Association (MCA) to initiate disciplinary action against head coach Hemant Roy and assistant manager Sanjay Mondal after finding allegations of sexual harassment made by six women cricketers of the state’s Under-23 team to be substantiated.

The Commission held that the conduct of both officials amounted to sexual harassment under the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The Commission directed the MCA to suspend Roy from coaching duties for three months and ensure that he is not assigned to coach women’s teams in the future. It also ordered that a written warning be issued to him, stating that any future misconduct could lead to termination of his services. In the case of assistant manager Sanjay Mondal, the Commission recommended his termination from service and directed him to issue a written apology to the complainants. Both officials have been barred from contacting the complainants, and any act of retaliation would invite strict action.

The case originated from a complaint filed on May 4 by six members of the Meghalaya Under-23 Women’s Cricket Team. The players

alleged repeated verbal harassment, intimidation, and inappropriate conduct by Roy, along with allegations of physical and verbal sexual harassment by Mondal during an official tournament in Agartala. MSCW Chairperson Iamonlang Syiem said the Commission reached its findings after examining testimonies, documentary evidence, email records, and WhatsApp communications submitted during the inquiry.

According to the Commission, several players corroborated allegations that Roy repeatedly made comments about their physical appearance and body features. While Roy denied the allegations, the Commission observed that multiple testimonies consistently supported the complaints. It also took note of allegations that some players were threatened with exclusion from future teams after raising concerns. Regarding Mondal, the Commission found evidence supporting allegations of physical sexual harassment during the team’s stay in Agartala in December 2025. The findings were based on the complainant’s testimony, supporting statements from teammates, documentary records, and electronic communications.

The identities of the complainants and sensitive evidence related to the case have been kept confidential in accordance with legal provisions.

Meghalaya CM flags off 5 electric buses under pm Ebus Sewa scheme

Shillong, Jun 09: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Tuesday flagged off five electric buses under the PM eBus Sewa Scheme at a programme held at Taraghar-State Guest House in Shillong.

The launch marks a major step towards promoting sustainable urban mobility, reducing carbon emissions and strengthening public transport infrastructure in the State. As part of the first phase of the initiative, five electric buses have been introduced to provide citizens with cleaner, greener, and more efficient public transportation services. The newly launched buses are fully air-conditioned, zero-emission vehicles built on a safe stainless-steel chassis and are capable of covering approximately 180 to 200 kilometres on a single charge. Each bus can accommodate up to 25 passengers in addition to the driver and features a comfortable 2x2 seating layout with overhead storage facilities.

Designed to be inclusive and commuter-friendly, the buses are equipped with designated wheelchair spaces and foldable ramps to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. They also feature



a modern e-ticketing system aimed at providing passengers with a seamless and convenient travel experience. Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Sangma congratulated the Urban Affairs Department and thanked the Government of India for supporting Meghalaya’s efforts to transform urban mobility through the PM eBus Sewa Scheme. “Today, we are witnessing the launch of the e-buses under the PM eBus Sewa Scheme,” he said, while acknowledging the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Government of India in advancing sustainable public transportation across the country.

The Chief Minister noted that public transportation has long been one of Shillong’s

biggest challenges and said the Government has been experimenting with different mobility solutions over the years. He described the launch of the electric buses as another important step towards creating a transport system that is better suited to the needs of the city. He stated that the electric bus initiative forms part of a broader strategy to reduce congestion and improve mobility in Shillong through a combination of public transportation, parking infrastructure, and urban planning interventions.

Highlighting complementary infrastructure projects being undertaken across the city, the Chief Minister informed that new parking facilities are being developed in different locations, while the upcoming

administrative city at Mawlangdiang will play a significant role in easing pressure on Shillong’s existing urban core. He said the Government is developing multiple connectivity options between Shillong and the new administrative city, including a proposed four-lane road, to facilitate the gradual relocation of administrative functions and reduce vehicle movement within the city centre. The Chief Minister also reiterated the State Government’s commitment to promoting electric mobility and informed that the policy providing exemptions on registration fees and road taxes for electric vehicles is being renewed following the completion of its initial three-year term. Clarifying recent concerns regarding registration charges for electric vehicles, he explained that the earlier exemption had automatically expired and would continue once the renewed policy receives Cabinet approval. He further informed that senior government officials and Cabinet Ministers would increasingly be encouraged to use electric vehicles, adding that the Government intends to lead by example in promoting cleaner modes of transportation.

India’s longest tunnel at zojila nears breakthrough

Srinagar, Jun 09: India’s longest road tunnel project at Zojila, a strategic infrastructure initiative valued at ₹6,500 crore, is on the cusp of achieving a landmark milestone.

On Tuesday, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari is scheduled to attend a ceremonial event marking the breakthrough of the main tunnel—an engineering achievement that underscores the scale and significance of this ambitious undertaking. According to officials, Gadkari will travel to Sonamarg, a premium resort, to trigger the breakthrough blast, a symbolic and technical moment when excavation faces advancing from opposite ends of the tunnel finally meet. This milestone represents years of complex planning and relentless work in one of the most challenging terrains in the world.

Stretching 13.15 kilometres and situated at an altitude of 11,578 feet, the Zojila Tunnel is being constructed by Hyderabad-based Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd (MEIL). With more than 13 kilometres of excavation already completed, the project has entered its final phase, with only a small stretch remaining before the two ends—driven from Baltal in Kashmir Valley and Minamarg in Ladakh—connect. This simultaneous excavation approach has been instrumental in accelerating progress despite the Himalayan region’s harsh climatic and geological conditions. Strategically located about

24 kilometres from Sonamarg and 103 kilometres from capital Srinagar, the tunnel is expected to transform connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh. Once operational, it will provide all-weather access to key strategic regions such as Drass, Kargil, and Leh, significantly enhancing civilian movement, supply chains, and military logistics. The project is widely regarded as a game-changer for the region, particularly given the frequent disruptions caused by heavy snowfall and avalanches at the Zojila Pass, which currently remains closed for several months each year.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways described the project as one of the most challenging tunnel constructions in the Himalayas. The ministry emphasised that the scheduled breakthrough blast on June 9, marks a “historic milestone” in India’s infrastructure development journey. Harpal Singh, Joint Chief Operating Officer of MEIL, noted that excavation has reached its concluding stage, with only a few metres left before the tunnel faces meet. While speaking to local news agency KNO, he highlighted that the dual-end construction strategy—working simultaneously from both Kashmir and Ladakh sides—has been critical in maintaining momentum and meeting timelines in such a demanding environment. Following the breakthrough, the project will transition into its next phase, fo-



cusing on internal works. These include concrete lining of the tunnel, installation of advanced ventilation systems, and the development of safety infrastructure. The tunnel will also feature a dedicated walkway to facilitate maintenance and emergency operations, ensuring both efficiency and safety once it becomes operational. Awarded by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL), the project has been under construction since October 2020. Engineers are employing the New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM), a globally recognised technique particularly suited for complex mountain terrains, allowing flexibility in design and execution based on ground conditions. Beyond its engineering significance, the Zojila Tunnel is expected to deliver wide-ranging economic and social benefits. Improved connectivity is likely to boost tourism, stimulate trade, and provide year-round accessibility to remote areas that have long struggled with isolation during winter months.

Modi to become India’s longest-serving PM on June 10

New Delhi, Jun 09: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to create a new political milestone on June 10 by becoming India’s longest-serving continuously elected prime minister, surpassing the record held by the country’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Modi, who first assumed office on May 26, 2014, will complete 4,399 consecutive days as prime minister on June 10. The achievement will take him past Nehru’s record of 4,398 uninterrupted days in office after being elected through elections. Nehru served continuously from May 13, 1952, following India’s first general elections, until his death on May



27, 1964. The milestone marks another important chapter in Modi’s political journey. In July 2025, he surpassed the record for the longest uninterrupted ten-

ure held by former prime minister Indira Gandhi, who served continuously from January 24, 1966, to March 24, 1977, a period spanning 4,077 days.

Modi’s tenure has been marked by several electoral achievements. He became the first non-Congress prime minister to complete two consecutive full-majority terms and the first prime minister since Nehru to secure victory in three successive Lok Sabha elections as the incumbent leader. Now serving his third term, Modi’s rise to the top of the list of continuously elected prime ministers underscores his sustained electoral success over more than a decade in office.

Earlier, in March this year, PM Modi became the longest-serving head of an elected government in the country. He surpassed

Pawan Kumar Chamling, who held office as Chief Minister of Sikkim for 8,930 days. Modi broke the record of Pawan Kumar Chamling when he completed 8,931 days as head of government, combining his tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat and as Prime Minister, thereby entering his 25th year in a leadership role. While Modi will set a new benchmark for the longest continuously serving elected prime minister, Nehru continues to hold the record for the longest overall tenure as prime minister. Nehru served for a total of 6,131 days, winning three consecutive general elections in 1951-52, 1957 and 1962.

Massive forest fire erupts across Rajouri division

Rajouri, Jun 09: A massive forest fire has erupted at multiple locations in the Rajouri forest division of Jammu and Kashmir, prompting a large-scale response from the Forest Department, the Forest Protection Force (FPF), and local residents to contain the blaze and prevent it from spreading further.

According to officials, the fire has affected forest areas in Khadian, Androla, Chakkali, Miahadi, and the Bathuni block. Firefighting operations were under way on Tuesday, with authorities deploying all available personnel to bring the situation under control.



Speaking to ANI, Forest Department official Rajesh Kumar said teams had been mobilised across the affected areas despite major logistical challenges. “The entire staff has been deployed. The fire is in the Chakkli, Khadian and Androla areas. The terrain is too remote for fire vehicles to

reach. Hopefully, the fire will be brought under control by evening,” Kumar said.

Officials said the difficult terrain and remoteness of the affected forest regions had hampered firefighting efforts, forcing teams to rely largely on manual methods to contain the flames. Residents have also joined the operation and are working alongside forest personnel to prevent the fire from spreading to nearby areas. A resident involved in the firefighting efforts said villagers had been battling the blaze continuously since the previous day.

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The Importance of Building Resilient Communities

Communities face numerous challenges, from natural disasters and economic uncertainty to public health emergencies. The ability to withstand and recover from such difficulties depends largely on resilience. Resilient communities are characterised by strong social networks, local cooperation, and a willingness to support one another during crises.

In highly individualistic environments, these community bonds can weaken, leaving people more vulnerable when difficulties arise. Building resilience requires investment not only in infrastructure but also in relationships and trust. Strong communities are often the first and most effective line of support during challenging times.

When do cockroaches start to appear

Let's face it: cockroaches have always existed, but they usually remain concealed, are rarely spotted during the day, and quickly flee when they spot people. The dark hours are their favorite times of day. However, it appears that our Bharat Mahaan is suddenly overflowing with cockroaches. Neither the NextGen nor the YoungGen are cockroaches. They should be viewed and handled like a garden of blossoming flowers. They are more important to the country than the aging GreyGen. No specific political party or ideology is required supported by this aspiring generation. The majority of young people and students are apolitical. Although it is true that young people do tilt anti-establishment at a certain age, this tendency is neither long-lasting, deliberate, or definitive. There is an evolutionary

urge to question everything at this era, and it makes sense. "Duniya ne hum kodiya kya, duniya ne humseliya kya, hum sab koparwakarekyun, sab ne hamarakiyakya" is a popular song from the 1970s. Instead of becoming cockroaches, the majority of that generation went on to become responsible adults. Young children begin life with faith in their parents and guardians as well as in adults. A belief in systems is also a result of this belief. They mainly adhere to social norms and have faith in examination systems, which are systems created for them by others and are essential to their survival and advancement in life. Due to the intense academic pressure of meeting both their own and their parents' expectations, many children endure unspeakable stress and suffering. Even though the system is

out of date, people adhere to it because they believe it to be fair and honest rather than because they respect it. Therefore, it should not be difficult for those in positions of authority to comprehend the profound disappointment and frustration that the student body feels when low-cost, dubious incidents like money scams and paper leaks undermine years of preparation and hard work, allowing scammers and cheats to take advantage of the system. The fact that the disturbance hasn't been as widespread and severe as it could have been may be explained by their innate restraint. Instead of dehumanizing our young people by calling them cockroaches, we need to show empathy for their suffering, stress, and dissatisfaction. There is no way that things could have become so bad in such a short period of time. Silently, the rot

must have begun much earlier. It appears that the public school system has been plagued by negligence and apathy for a long time. Additionally, some of it is deliberate and calculated. Supervisory organizations that are supposed to protect the industry's integrity are frequently staffed and led by people who lack morality and integrity. Access to hallowed positions appears to have been facilitated by political connection and party loyalty. Numerous reputable schools have been subject to influences and pressures that lack academic purpose or substance. The real bugs in this climate of growing unhealthy academic suffocation are not young people, but rather dishonest insiders and cheaters who are exploiting the system in concert with thugs and thieves who are disguising themselves as academic administrators. These

young people appear to be attempting to remove the vermin and clean up the dirt. In this era of widespread use of gadgets and digital media, young people worldwide are exposed to the most recent global events. They have their own global network. At any given time, they are exposed to global concepts, global music, global fashion, and global thought. It is detrimental to the country to keep them in straitjackets while secretly brainwashing them. "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed" was one of Mahatma Gandhi's favorite sayings. "I want my home to be open to the cultures of all places." But I don't waver in my beliefs. Our college institutions, which are temples of learning, need to promote the unrestricted exchange of ideas. Healthy folks with

good mental and emotional traits—not blind people—will benefit our nation's future. It is also true that inciting discontent among students and young people is a surefire way to impede a country's development. Student movements frequently serve the interests of vested interests, which are numerous in our nation today, even when they start with integrity and sincere complaints. Therefore, individuals in charge of issues pertaining to the welfare of students and young people should exercise caution. It is quite regrettable that juvenile issues are frequently disregarded in favor of more commonplace political topics. The chaos in the exam systems needs to be fixed. Those in authority and the general public should be embarrassed if we are unable to accomplish this goal.

Due to the manipulation of our system, young people require financial assistance

While we wait anxiously for the Makerfield voters to determine the nation's destiny, the possibility of a top-level renewal offers an ideal environment for generating ideas and addressing significant issues. People with answers to this dilemma are made possible by Alan Milburn's scathing study of the first generation to ever perform worse financially than their parents did at their age. It's time to take them out. The Social Market Foundation (SMF) is presenting a creative concept this week to assist alleviate the rising disparity between the majority of young people who have little wealth and those who are gifted with some. This is just one of the ideas emerging from think tanks, the nonprofit sector, and corporate organizations. The baby boomer generation in the UK is expected to pass on £5.5 trillion over the next three decades, marking the beginning of the "great wealth transfer." Everything was free for my fortunate generation. Even though the UK has become comparatively poorer in comparison to other European and North American nations, ordinary earnings made it easy to purchase homes, and property values skyrocketed to making homeowners extremely affluent. However, according to

the Resolution Foundation, barely one-third of adults in the UK anticipate receiving any intergenerational gifts over their lifetime. In Britain, the bank of parents contributed about £10 billion in 2024, and half of first-time buyers are often the first and most effective line of support during challenging times. For people who had paid for ten years of national insurance, a year's worth would be £12,500. That would benefit those who want to work immediately rather than attend college, allowing someone who starts an apprenticeship or career at the age of 18 to draw it out at the age of 28. Graduates would have to wait until they were 31. It's contributory rather than a giveaway. A 10% deposit on an average house may be paid by a couple who each took their advance. According to surveys, both Labour and Tory supporters, as well as people of all ages, support the notion. What would they buy with it? The top three priorities were debt repayment,

rainy day savings (25% of people were unable to pay £850 for an unforeseen cost), and home deposit savings. It ought to be limited to people who make less than £50,000 annually. According to the analysis, after high-interest loans were repaid, incomes would increase and some people would be able to establish families and companies. The program would cost £1.3 billion in its first year if it were introduced this year to anyone born after 1998. Because of the perversity of Treasury regulations, it would be considered current spending even though pensions would be delayed and repayment would take several decades. Never undervalue the crippling impact of beginning with nothing at all. Labour was aware of this when it introduced the Child Trust Fund (CTF), which gave each newborn born in September 2002 a gift of £250 (£500 for the poorest), repeated at age seven, and encouraged families to donate more. (Labor intended to add more.) The last fortunate babies were born in January 2011 because it was eliminated by George Osborne's first budget. Although the average fund is only valued around £2,240, research by Abigail McKnight of the London School of Economics revealed

that even modest amounts can improve income, career opportunities, and overall health. Young people can avoid having to take the first job provided, change employment, train, purchase a car to get to work farther away, or pay a deposit to rent an apartment with even a tiny cushion. (Many families forget the CTF existed because of its dissolution; the hundreds of thousands of people who still owe it can find their missing nest egg here.) People would receive a larger amount from the citizens' advance, but they would have to claim it when they were slightly older. It's a nice notion, but instead of older people giving them what they deserve, young people are borrowing from their future selves. The financial gap between generations and the widening disparity between young people who have family support and those who do not require much more action. The wealthy parents are not to blame for financing their kids; after all, how can they sit in their own priceless mansions and watch their kids pay landlords exorbitant rent? It makes sense why some people want to contribute through equity release. However, millions of elderly individuals should downsize and free up residences for families instead of rattling



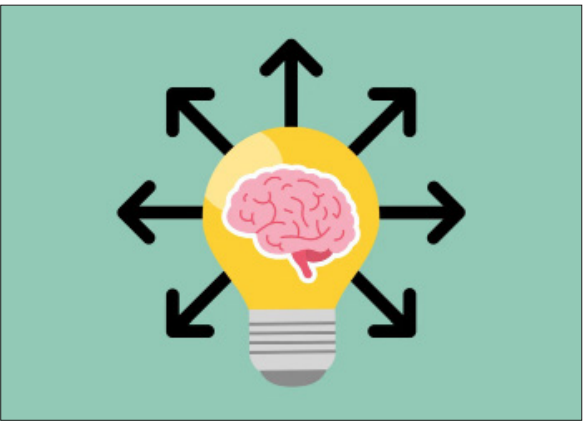
around in enormous homes while sitting on enormous riches. The scale of the enormous wealth disparity between generations is as follows: in the UK, people over 60 hold 56% of all housing wealth, while people under 40 own as little as 4%. It is insufficient for wealthier families to take care of their own; only government action can start shifting money to the two-thirds of UK

adults who do not have family presents. Businesses are reacting, according to Milburn's team, while plans are being developed in the think tank zone: Marks & Spencer recently declared that it will hire an additional 1,000 unemployed under-24s in the UK and Ireland. Labour's New Deal for young unemployed people was successful the last time it was in power because it was in

the center of No. 10, upending employers and job centers and boosting the confidence of young people. It was one of the policies that progressives of all stripes could take pride in. However, the times we live in are quite polarizing. It seems impossible to look at the relevant evidence and not conclude that one generation has failed in its obligation to another and should, however belatedly, endeavor to make reparations. However, this issue runs the risk of becoming overtaken by partisan politics, much like almost all of the basic socioeconomic challenges that governments have attempted to solve in this century and the latter parts of the previous one. Reminding wealthy individuals that they have been fortunate rather than astute or especially "hard-working" in acquiring their property riches may seem reasonable and essential, as is reminding them of their obligation to support greater transfer towards the younger generation. However, this won't deter the right, politicians, and media outliers from portraying every redistributive action as left-wing theft motivated by ideology. Let your thoughts run wild and go after the smartest, but be prepared for the challenges that lie ahead.

Divergent perspectives

There is no flowing water on Albania's single island. Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, plans to build Europe's newest luxury resort on Sazan Island (image), a rocky former military installation that enjoys the intersection of the Adriatic and Ionian seas. The island would become a posh tourist destination with hotels, villas, and wellness centers thanks to this 1.4 billion euro project, which would also strengthen links with the most influential family in the Western world. Edi Rama, the prime minister of Albania, has long used celebrity diplomacy in his leadership style. In an effort to raise awareness of his nation, he has been personally courting Americans. In one well-known instance from last year, Eric Adams, the former mayor of New York City, received honorary citizenship to Albania in a peculiar ceremony and oddly declared, "New York is the Albania of America," after withdrawing from the mayoral race due to growing federal corruption charges and unpopularity despite repeated pleas to Trump to drop the accusations. Rama has also promoted Albania as a refuge for a wide range of eccentrics, from digital nomads to crypto enthusiasts to American MAGA retirees, who are eager to find a cheap and largely unregulated safe haven. Under Rama, Albania would like to capitalise on its status as a largely unregulated, undeveloped European state. However, thousands of Albanians have protested the development of Sazan Island by Kushner and his business, Affinity Partners, in the streets throughout the past week. The environmental harm that such construction would do to the island and its neighboring wetlands has been the main focus of protests. In addition to the possible harm to the environment, the project's lack of governmental transparency is another issue. "We've never seen anything like this in Albania's protected regions," stated Aleksander Trajce, executive director of the nation's top conservation organization, the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania, in an interview with The Guardian. "It's not just



unprecedented; the rule of law has completely collapsed, with bulldozers moving in without any regard for society, the environment, or contract permits." Albania's growth as a destination for affluent foreigners, political operatives, and luxury developers did not happen suddenly. The country was closed off for nearly 50 years under the strict authority of a dictatorship that forbade travel. Albania was an exception for many years. It was one of the world's most remote countries under Enver Hoxha's communist rule. There were very few foreign visitors. There was no private investment. A large portion of the coastline was either inaccessible or militarized. Albania was mainly unaffected when neighboring Mediterranean nations became major tourism destinations. The legacy of that seclusion was unexpected. Much of the growth that had transformed the rest of the Mediterranean had not yet taken place in Albania when the nation emerged from communism in the early 1990s. Most of the beaches were still underdeveloped. The value of real estate stayed low. Compared to Europe a few decades before, entire sections of shoreline appeared less like Europe in the twenty-first cen-

tury. That was an opportunity for a lot of investors. The days of large-scale coastal development projects are pretty much over in most of Western Europe. Environmental safeguards are more stringent. Property rights are more well-established. Projects can be derailed for years by public opposition. Albania, on the other hand, provided something that was getting harder to come by: priceless territory, comparatively cheap prices, and a government ready to draw in foreign investment. Prime Minister Edi Rama has embraced that opportunity. Over more than a decade in power, he has sought to transform Albania's image from one associated with poverty and isolation into one associated with growth, tourism and investment. Under his leadership, Tirana's skyline has filled with new towers, international architects have been recruited for ambitious projects, and the country's coastline has been promoted as Europe's next great destination. The strategy has worked, at least in part. Tourism has surged. Instagram feeds are flooded with images of wild Albanian beaches with untamed horses casually trotting along turquoise waters. International attention has followed. Publications that once paid little attention to Albania now routinely describe it as an undiscovered corner of the Mediterranean. Albania is at a crossroads regarding its development, caught between fostering a frontier-like environment for investment and pursuing its European Union aspirations, which demand stronger institutions and regulations. Prime Minister Rama promotes Albania as an appealing destination for those seeking fewer regulations, while the need for economic growth must not eclipse environmental protections and public oversight. The country attracts developers and investors due to its transformative potential, yet many Albanians wish to move past the very characteristics that draw outsiders. Success in joining the EU hinges on increasing transparency and effectively enforcing regulations, challenging the current allure of Albania's dynamism.

A shared right

Gender equality and child development are still hampered by the State's silence on paternity leave, notwithstanding the Supreme Court's expansion of caregiving rights. The Code on Social Security, 2020's limitations on maternity payments for adoptive mothers have been lifted by the Supreme Court. However, being a parent is not a solitary role; a child loses out on an early opportunity for bonding if their father is absent during their formative years. Therefore, the government was encouraged by the court to implement paternity leave as a social security benefit. Mothers' rights have long been strengthened by the judiciary, but fathers have not received the same benefits from the state. The growth of a child is directly impacted by this disparity. A longitudinal study has demonstrated that in the absence of income-protected leave, parents find it difficult to spend enough time bonding and providing care, which leads to behavioral problems in children. The court also noted that a father

cannot genuinely engage in bonding during a child's infancy if he is physically present but not actively involved in his career. The legislature mostly ignored parental leave even after combining a number of labor rules into the 2020 Code. Male employees with Central jobs are currently eligible for leave benefits under Rule 43A of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972. However, by restricting leave to the time around childbirth, the regulation places severe limitations. Furthermore, there isn't a national framework. The commercial sector now has voluntary policies as a result of this gap. Although Zomato provides 26 weeks of gender-neutral leave, most employees do not have this kind of protection. Studies reveal that fathers often refrain from taking paternity leave due to concerns about household income, especially in Indian families where the breadwinner mindset prevails. This results in an unequal caregiving burden on mothers, exacerbated by significantly higher male workforce participation rates.

SpaceX IPO marks the peak of AI euphoria, says Wood of Jefferies

Mumbai: SpaceX initial public offer (IPO) could well be the peak of euphoria surrounding artificial intelligence (AI), wrote Christopher Wood, global head of equity strategy at Jefferies in his weekly note to investors, GREED & fear. The three mega IPOs of SpaceX, Anthropic and OpenAI, Wood said will suck liquidity out of other stocks, most particularly given the self-reinforcing dynamics of passive investing. SpaceX, Wood said, will be ‘fast-tracked’ into the indices at a higher weighting than the percentage of the company due to be floated. Such ‘fast tracking’ of new listings into indices, he highlights, has never happened before in the US.

It is also worth noting that MSCI’s existing methodology already includes a rule for the fast-tracking of large IPOs. This states that large IPOs are eligible for early inclusion after 10 trading days if they meet certain size thresholds and may qualify even with a low free float.

AI euphoria. It could well do. The almost infantile glee with which some grown adults rave about their experiences playing with AI clearly raises that possibility, as does the commencement of the reaction against tokenmaxxing,” Wood wrote. SpaceX is planning to sell 555.6 million shares at a fixed price \$135 per share. This will raise \$75 billion and value the company at \$1.77 trillion. The actual free float is a mere 4.2 per cent of the company, but for Nasdaq-100 index weighting calculations, it will be treated as having a 12.7 per cent float, Wood suggests.

Sai Life, Laurus Labs hit new highs; stocks rally up to 40%



Mumbai: Shares price of Contract Development and Manufacturing Organization (CDMO) companies, Sai Life Sciences (up 2 per cent at ₹1,187.65) and Laurus Labs (up 1 per cent at ₹1,449.90) hit their respective new highs on the BSE in Friday’s intra-day deals in an otherwise tepid market. In comparison, the BSE Sensex was flat at 74,371 at 02:46 PM. In the past month, Laurus Labs and Sai Life soared 23 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively. In comparison, the BSE Sensex was down 4.2 per cent during the period. Further, in the past six months, Laurus Labs (40 per cent) and Sai Life (35 per cent) zoomed up to 40 per cent, as against 14 per cent decline in the benchmark index. Sai’s management reiterated long-term guidance of 15–20 per cent revenue compound annual growth rate (CAGR) with 28–30 per cent steady state EBITDA margin over the next two to three years.

The management remained constructive on the company’s medium-term growth outlook, underpinned by a strong and diversified late-stage pipeline, increasing commercialisation of internally developed molecules and expanding capabilities in emerging modalities such as peptides, oligonucleotides and ADCs (Antibody-Drug Conjugates). The company continues to invest aggressively in manufac-

turing infrastructure to support future demand and indicated healthy visibility on capacity utilisation over the next few years. Additionally, management highlighted favourable industry dynamics with ongoing supply chain diversification away from China and increasing outsourcing by large pharmaceutical companies creating a sustained opportunity for Indian CRDMOs to gain market share and deepen customer relationships, analysts at JM Financial Institutional Securities said in the management meet update. Companies with strong exposure to commercial-stage contracts and late-stage pipelines reported healthy growth, supported by ramp-up in commercialization and contribution from newer projects. For instance, The The brokerage firm has maintained a ‘Buy’ rating on the stock as it believes the company is poised to outperform the guidance on the back of rampant capacity expansion, ramp-up of blockbuster molecules and pipeline additions on the strength of its integrated

company is also progressing on peptides and fermentation capabilities, expanding into newer modalities and diversifying its customer base across global accounts, indicating improving medium-term visibility in CDMO, analysts at Kotak Institutional Equities said in the pharma sector update.

Tata AIG bets on rising health insurance demand with MediCare Reserve launch

Kohima: Tata AIG General Insurance Company has expanded its health insurance portfolio with the launch of MediCare Reserve, a Super Top-up health plan offering coverage of up to ₹5 crore. The company is positioning the product as a flexible solution for consumers seeking higher health protection amid rising medical inflation and evolving healthcare needs.

The plan offers aggregate deductible options ranging from ₹3 lakh to ₹50 lakh and sum insured choices between ₹5 lakh and ₹5 crore.

A key feature is the ‘Waiver of Aggregate Deductible’, which allows eligible policyholders to convert their Super Top-up cover into a comprehensive health insurance policy after five consecutive policy years without fresh underwriting. The insurer has also introduced optional benefits such as TransiCare Wallet for job-transition coverage, Pocket Protect for prolonged hospitalisation expenses and Consumables Benefit for specified non-medical costs. According to Tata AIG, the product is aimed at professionals aged 18-55

years, particularly those dependent on employer-sponsored Group Medical Coverage (GMC). It also offers accident-related emergency hospitalisation coverage of up to ₹3 lakh for NRIs and OCIs visiting India. In Kohima, insurance advisors believe the growing awareness of healthcare costs and financial planning among salaried employees, business owners and professionals could support demand for flexible health insurance products. With more consumers seeking protection beyond employer-provided coverage, plans offering

long-term security and high sum insured options are expected to gain traction in the Kohima market. Pan-kaj Shrivastava, Head – Agency & Health at Tata AIG, said MediCare Reserve combines affordability with long-term protection and reflects the company’s focus on making health insurance more flexible and future-ready. Backed by more than 262 locations, over 100,000 agents and a network of 13,000 hospitals, Tata AIG aims to strengthen its presence in India’s growing health insurance market.

Rate hike not preferred course of action right Ambit’s Nitin Bhasin

Mumbai: In the latest June meeting, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept its key policy rates unchanged and maintained its neutral stance, in line with market expectations. The Governor noted that while the Indian economy entered this turbulent period with better fundamentals than in previous crises, the global environment has deteriorated significantly, increasing headwinds for India.

Concerns over inflation have intensified. In what can be interpreted as a cautious tone, the MPC revised its inflation forecasts higher while flagging persistent upside risks from global supply-chain disruptions. The Committee remains highly vigilant to inflationary pressures, particularly the risk of second-round effects on wages and inflation expectations. At present, underlying demand pressures remain benign,

with core inflation excluding precious metals at just 2.1 per cent as per latest data (April 2026). However, core inflation is projected to rise to 4.7 per cent in FY27. Headline inflation is also expected to increase from 4.6 per cent YoY to 5.1 per cent, peaking at 5.9 per cent in Q3FY26 before moderating thereafter. The outlook is largely driven by external shocks, including ongoing geopolitical tensions in West

Asia that are driving a sharp rise in energy prices. The RBI has also flagged risks to food inflation from a sub-normal southwest monsoon and potential El Niño conditions. In addition, crude oil prices averaging around \$110 per barrel—well above the earlier assumption of \$87 per barrel—are likely to intensify cost pressures and accelerate pass-through to consumers as firms adjust to higher input costs.

India’s FY26 GDP growth hits 7.7%, Q4 expansion at 7.8% surprises on the upside: SBI Research

Mumbai: India’s economy delivered a stronger-than-expected performance in the fourth quarter of FY26, with GDP growth accelerating to 7.8%, helping annual growth for FY26 rise to 7.7%, according to an SBI Research Ecowrap report. The growth momentum was supported by robust services activity, strong industrial performance, rising private investment, and improving consumption trends. The report described the Q4 performance as a “pleasant surprise,” noting that India’s economy has shown resilience despite global uncertainties and geopolitical tensions. Gross Value Added (GVA), a key measure of economic activity, grew by 7.9% in Q4 FY26 and also averaged 7.9% for the full fiscal year, while Core GVA expanded by a strong 9.7%. The services sector remained the primary growth engine, expanding 9.9% in Q4 FY26. Within services, the category comprising trade, hotels, transport, communication and broadcasting services recorded a sharp 12.5% growth, while financial, real estate and professional services grew 10.4%.

Industrial activity
Industrial activity also remained robust. Industry grew 7.3% in the



March quarter, led by 8.4% growth in construction and 7.3% growth in manufacturing. Manufacturing growth for the full year stood at 10.7%, reflecting continued strength in value-added production. SBI Research highlighted a significant improvement in investment activity. Private investment announcements rose to ₹56 lakh crore in FY26, up from ₹37 lakh crore in FY25, while total investment announcements touched a record ₹80 lakh crore. The manufacturing sector accounted for nearly 29% of new investment proposals, followed closely by the power sector. Consumption indicators also improved.

Private final consumption expenditure growth recovered to 7.7% in FY26, while gross fixed capital formation increased 8.2%, the highest level recorded under the new GDP series.

GDP methodology
According to SBI Research, the revised GDP methodology is also providing a better picture of India’s informal economy. Around 7.9 crore enterprises registered under ASUSE contribute nearly 12% of overall GVA, with formalisation, digitisation and improved credit access helping boost productivity and growth. Looking ahead, the report remains optimistic about India’s

growth prospects. High-frequency indicators for April and May suggest above-average economic acceleration, raising the possibility that Q1 FY27 growth could exceed the RBI’s forecast of 6.6%. SBI Research believes India will continue to be the world’s fastest-growing major economy in FY27, supported by strong macroeconomic fundamentals, a resilient financial sector and sustained investment momentum. The report also projected that nominal GDP growth could rise to 12.5%-13% in FY27, higher than the Budget estimate of 10%, if inflation and GDP deflator trends remain elevated.

Central bank preparing for external stress, a theme to prevail in FY27



Mumbai: India’s central bank held rates, as expected. The real story is everything else. The Reserve Bank of India’s most important concern today—and likely to remain for months to come—has little to do with interest rates. As expected, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) left the repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent and retained its neutral stance. A higher inflation forecast, a modest downgrade to growth and repeated warnings about oil, supply chains and the monsoon were largely unavoidable. None surprised markets. The real significance of the policy lay elsewhere. The RBI has quietly acknowledged that India’s biggest macroeconomic challenge is no longer domestic demand. It is the external sector. The inflation story is calmer than the headlines will suggest. Consumer-price inflation stood at just 3.5 per cent in April, comfortably below the RBI’s 4 per cent target. Yet the central bank raised its inflation forecast for the

financial year (FY27) to 5.1 per cent, with inflation projected to approach 6 per cent later in the year. The reasons are obvious. Oil prices have surged. Supply chains remain disrupted by geopolitical tensions. The monsoon outlook has deteriorated, with rainfall expected at only 90 per cent of the long-period average and El Niño risks rising. Growth itself presents a similar dilemma. The RBI lowered its FY27 growth forecast from 6.9 per cent to 6.6 per cent, reflecting higher energy costs and rising uncertainty. Yet the economy hardly looks fragile. Manufacturing and services continue to expand. Credit growth exceeds 16 per cent. Capacity utilisation remains above its long-term average. Government capital expenditure is still growing at a healthy pace. The economy is slowing at the margin, not stalling. The more consequential concern lies elsewhere: the balance of payments and the rupee.

The RBI’s own statement paints a picture of mounting external pressures.

Higher oil prices threaten to widen the current-account deficit. Foreign portfolio investors have withdrawn almost \$14 billion this fiscal year, overwhelmingly from equities. Global risk aversion remains elevated. Financing a larger external deficit may become more challenging if these trends persist. This is why today’s meeting was never really about interest rates. The repo rate is a blunt instrument against oil shocks, supply-chain disruptions and geopolitical conflict. The RBI knows this. Markets know it too.

The more important question is whether India can comfortably navigate a world of expensive oil, elevated geopolitical risk and intermittent capital outflows. The central bank’s actions suggest it is already focused on that challenge. Investors may therefore be asking the wrong question. The debate is no longer whether rates move by 25 basis points. It is whether the combination of oil, capital flows and the rupee create pressures that monetary policy alone cannot address. The hold was a foregone conclusion. RBI is deploying a broader set of instruments to ensure that external financing remains available even if global conditions deteriorate further. is not the behaviour of a central bank primarily worried about inflation. It is the behaviour of a central bank preparing for a period of external stress. Officially, the RBI continues to maintain that it targets volatility, not any particular exchange-rate level. Yet a substantial portion of the Governor’s statement was devoted to the external sector, capital flows and reserve adequacy. The message was unmistakable. The central bank sees the principal risks coming from abroad and is positioning itself accordingly.

Adani Energy Solutions soars 5%, hits over 3-year high

Mumbai: Share price of Adani Energy Solutions (AESL) hit an over three-year high of ₹1,591, surging 5 per cent on the BSE in Friday’s intra-day trade in an otherwise subdued market. In comparison, the BSE Sensex was down 0.40 per cent at 01:37 PM.

In the past three weeks, the stock price of Adani Group’s power distribution company soared 22 per cent. Further, in the past six months, it zoomed 61 per cent, while the BSE Sensex plunged 13.3 per cent during the period.

Why has Adani Energy Solutions outperformed market?

AESL’s strong execution underpinned performance, marked by commissioning of the first Mumbai’s advanced voltage-source converter (VSC) based High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) project - world’s first compact HVDC. AESL also became the first player in India to successfully install 10 million smart meters, redefining the pace of digital transformation in power distribution. For the financial year 2025-26 (FY26), AESL’s total income grew a strong 15.9 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to an all-time high of ₹28,325 crore, driven by improved operating performance and higher Service Concession

Arrangement (SCA) income, reflecting higher capex execution.

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) rose 12.7 per cent YoY to a record ₹8,726 crore, supported by strong growth in the transmission and smart metering segments and steady performance in the distribution business. The company’s profit after tax (PAT) increased by 160 per cent YoY to ₹2,393 crore in FY26 from ₹922 crore that includes one-time income adjustment including the carve-out of the Dahanu power plant in FY25. For like-for-like comparison, adjusted PAT surged 32 per cent YoY to ₹2,393 crore, aided by double-digit EBITDA growth and flat depreciation during the year, AESL said. AESL, part of the Adani Group, is a multidimensional organization with presence in various facets of the energy domain, namely power transmission, distribution, smart metering, and cooling solutions.

Looking ahead, the management said, the growth outlook across AESL’s businesses remains robust, supported by an expanding asset base across segments, a strong HVDC project pipeline, and sustained execution momentum in project devel-



opment & deployment

The energy transition continues to create a strong structural opportunity for AESL, supported by regulatory stability in India, rising electricity demand, and the broader shift towards grid modernisation and cleaner energy systems. The company remains well placed to benefit from the expected acceleration in capital expenditure across the power value chain, with a robust bid pipeline and long-term demand visibility across transmission and smart metering. The company’s transmission business continues to be backed by an ₹1.5 trillion near-term tendering opportunity. The company’s under-construction transmission pipeline of ₹71,779 crore provides strong execution visibility,

with projects such as WRSR, Khavda Phase-III-A, two HVDC projects, and various other projects supports the Company’s growth momentum, AESL said in its FY26 annual report. The smart metering business continues to represent a significant growth opportunity, given the estimated countrywide untapped market of more than 100 million meters. The company surpassed 10 million cumulative meter installations during FY 2025-26, supported by an active installation pace and a high-quality orderbook of 24.6 million meters with potential revenue of ₹29,519 crore. This provides strong revenue visibility and supports the company’s position as a major player in India’s smart metering transformation, it added.

Iran Warns Israel over Escalating Attacks

After Iran, Israel Exchange Strikes: Trita Parsi

Israel: So, Trump has spoken to Netanyahu. It's interesting that it's Iran first that says they're not going to attack Israel if Israel doesn't attack again Iran or, I presume, Lebanon. And is this Iran saying, "You can't have a side agreement that's being negotiated in Washington that excludes Hezbollah between Israel and Lebanon. It is part of the ceasefire, so-called ceasefire, with Iran"?

TRITA PARSI: Iranians have, from the outset, said that if there is to be a ceasefire and an end to the war between the U.S. and Iran, then it has to be nationwide, meaning that it has to encompass Israel, as well. If it doesn't, if Israel is unrestrained, it will have an ability to restart the war and the ability to drag the U.S. back into the war. Since the objective is to end the war and to end it in a durable manner, making sure that the Israelis cannot have the freedom of starting the war again or bombing Lebanon or other places has to be included. That is the Iranian perspective.

The question is: If now when they are signaling that they're willing to back off, are they doing so in order to put pressure on the U.S. to now deal with Israel, or are they doing so because they're regretting their attack and realizing that the Israelis would strike at them much harder? It remains to be seen exactly what the calculation is. But I don't think that the Iranian side is going to back off from its demand that any end to the war has to be nationwide and has to include Lebanon and Israel, as well. Talking about a ceasefire in Gaza and a ceasefire in Lebanon, can we still use that term, or should we be saying "increase fire"? I mean, we're talking about thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese dying since this so-called truce, in both areas. Iran and Israel exchanged fire overnight in the most serious escalation since a U.S.-Iranian truce was reached in April. Iran launched a wave of missiles at northern Israel in retali-



ation for Israeli attacks near Beirut on Sunday. Israel responded with attacks on Iran, with explosions reported in Tehran, Tabriz and Isfahan. This comes as peace talks appear stalled between the United States and Iran, largely over Iran's insistence that any agreement must include Lebanon and halt Israel's attacks on that country. President Donald Trump has also repeatedly expressed frustration with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and reports from NBC News and The New York Times indicate the Pentagon is growing increasingly concerned over Israel spying on U.S. officials."I was not surprised by the Iranian attack on Israel," says analyst Trita Parsi, who notes that Iran's leaders want to "extend their deterrence" to Lebanon. "What is perhaps a bit surprising is ... that the Israelis defied Trump's expressed wishes." AMY GOODMAN: In the most serious escalation since a U.S.-Iranian so-called truce was reached in April, Iran and Israel exchanged fire overnight. Iran launched a wave of missiles at northern Israel, saying it was in response to Israeli attacks near Beirut on Sunday. Israel responded with attacks on several areas of Iran, including the capital Tehran. Earlier today, Iran

announced it's halting strikes on Israel, but warned it will carry out a more severe response if Israel continues to attack Lebanon. Israel attacked Iran despite President Trump telling Axios on Sunday that he planned to call Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to urge him not to respond to the first wave of Iranian missiles. We're joined now by Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, author of several books, including Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran, and the Triumph of Diplomacy. His latest piece for Responsible Statecraft is "Iran Strikes Israel, proving it will use hard power on behalf of Lebanon."Why don't you elaborate on that? Were you surprised by this major violation of the so-called ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran? And what this says about how much power President Trump has over Netanyahu? He said he warned him not to do this, not to respond to Iran attacking Israel for Israel attacking Lebanon.TRITA PARSI: Thank you, Amy. Good to be with you.I was not surprised by the Iranian attack on Israel. In fact, a couple of days ago, just before Trump had his first colorful conversation with Netanyahu, the Iranians

had already signaled that they were about to strike Israel. They were probably 45 to 60 minutes away of doing so. That's when Trump intervened, and the situation was defused. So, the fact that the Iranians were going to enforce their red line in Lebanon, I don't think was a surprise, and I think the U.S. government took it seriously, as well. What is perhaps a bit surprising is the immediate reaction that Trump had, and, of course, then, that the Israelis defied Trump's expressed wishes. And where that goes from now, we will have to see.But it's important to understand that what the Iranians were trying to do, and what really worries the Israelis, is that they were trying to extend their deterrence. They had already established their own deterrence, in the sense that any attack on Iran clearly would be retaliated against, but now they were trying to say that even if the Israelis were to attack Lebanon, southern Lebanon, they would also face Iranian retaliation, which would be the first time in a very long time that a major power would put real hard power behind a warning or a deterrent against an attack by Israel on a third country. And this is part of what the Israelis are worried about, because if it suddenly means that they can no longer have that complete maneuverability in Lebanon and Gaza and elsewhere that they enjoy, that they are enjoying because the West is, more and less, enabling that to happen, they're politically defending it, etc., and for the last couple of decades it has not been challenged by any regional state in a sincere or serious way — this appears to have been an attempt by the Iranians to challenge that, to establish this extended deterrence, and this is part of the reason why the Israelis have acted so aggressively against this attempt, as they call it, to establish a new equation in the region.

White House Federal Funds for Coal Industry

Israel: The online "prediction markets" platform known as Kalshi has reported the disgraced former Republican Congressmember George Santos to federal authorities on suspicion of insider trading. Two sources familiar with the investigation say Kalshi contacted the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Department of Justice after Santos placed bets on whether or not he would attend the State of the Union address last February. Santos bet against his own attendance — after posting this video to his hundreds of thousands of social media followers.Santos was expelled from Congress in 2023 and pleaded guilty last year to wire fraud, identity theft, lying to Congress, stealing money from campaign donors and fraudulent unemployment claims. He was released from federal prison in October after President Trump commuted his seven-year sentence. It's not clear whether Santos will face new criminal charges.This comes after President Trump lashed out at prominent politicians who've sought to regulate or ban Kalshi and similar platforms. Writing on his Truth Social site after Minnesota last month became the first state to ban prediction markets, Trump called Governor Tim Walz "SCUM," along with Chris Christie, Letitia James, and JB Pritzker. Trump added, "Other Countries are after this new form of Financial Market, and we want to remain at the top. Likewise, and even more importantly, where we are currently the Crypto (Bitcoin, etc.) Capital of the World, other Countries are trying diligently to replace us in that capacity, but we won't let that happen." Democratic lawmakers are urging the Trump administration to scrap a proposal making it easier for 401(k)s and other retirement plans to offer investments in cryptocurrency, private equity and so-called alternative assets. In a letter to the Labor Department, Senators Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders and Congressman Bobby Scott warn, "This would strip long-held investor protections from retirement savers and encourage the use of more risky, complex, and expensive investments. The proposed rule is harmful to American workers."President Trump appeared to struggle to remain

awake during his appearance in the Oval Office on Thursday, closing his eyes for extended periods of time and at one point slumping in his chair at the Resolute Desk. It's the latest in a series of public events where Trump appeared to doze off in full view of the White House press corps. On Wednesday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio testified to a House committee that he'd never seen President Trump fall asleep. That prompted California Congressmember Ted Lieu to accuse Rubio of "lying to Congress." Lieu then played video from a December Cabinet meeting where Rubio praised Trump's leadership while the president appeared to fall into a slumber.The White House has announced funding for construction of what would be the first new U.S. coal plants in 13 years. On Thursday, President Trump announced \$700 million in new federal funding for the coal industry during an Oval Office gathering with Republican governors and Cabinet members.President Donald Trump: "If you look at China, if you look at so many of the successful countries, they're using coal. If you look at some of the real great failures countries, they're using wind. Just keeps blowing, blowing, blowing and puts you right out of business."

This week, attorneys general from seven states sued the Trump administration over its efforts to cancel a major offshore wind lease off the coast of New York.

In California, voters in the city of Monterey Park have approved a measure that permanently bans the construction of new data centers, defeating a proposal to build a massive new artificial intelligence site near a residential neighborhood. It's the first time a municipality has banned a data center through a direct ballot initiative.

This comes as new research from the U.N. University warns that, by 2030, global data centers are projected to consume 945 terawatt-hours of electricity — or nearly triple what Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria consume annually, combined. The report also finds data centers' water footprint will equal the basic annual domestic water needs of all 1.3 billion people in sub-Saharan Africa.

WFP Warns Strait of Hormuz Closure Has Pushed Millions into Hunger

Gaza: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps says there will be no peace in the region until Israeli forces withdraw from Lebanon, and has reaffirmed its support for Hezbollah. This comes as the World Food Programme warns millions of people face acute hunger due to soaring costs and shortages of fuel and fertilizer due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The U.N. agency warns the crisis has pushed an additional 2.5 million people in Somalia, 1.3 million in Sri Lanka and 2.3 million in Afghanistan into acute food insecurity.

Senate Republicans have rammed through a \$70 billion budget reconciliation package to fund Trump's immigration crackdown through 2029. This is in addition to the \$170 billion already approved for ICE and Border Patrol last year as part of Trump's so-

called One Big Beautiful Bill. Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska was the sole Republican to vote against the package early Friday morning. The legislation does not include language that would permanently bar the Trump administration from creating a \$1.8 billion slush fund for Trump's MAGA allies, a ban that was backed even by some Republicans. The legislation now heads to the House. This comes as detained immigrants continue to raise alarm over the inhumane, unsanitary and dangerous conditions they face in ICE jails nationwide and amid a record number of deaths in ICE custody since Trump's return to office. At least 18 immigrants have died in ICE custody since the beginning of this year alone. Meanwhile, The Washington Post reports ICE plans to stop reporting deaths of im-

migrants that occur within 30 days of being released from custody. Israeli attacks across.

Lebanon have killed at least six people so far today, despite the announcement of an extension of the U.S.-brokered so-called ceasefire. The agreement between Israeli and Lebanese diplomats seeks to create zones inside Lebanon in which Hezbollah operatives would be banned. Hezbollah has not been part of the negotiations, which the group's leader Naim Qassem has rejected as a "farce." On Thursday, Qassem also warned of more retaliatory attacks unless Israel agrees to a comprehensive ceasefire and withdraws from southern Lebanon. Over 3,500 people have now been killed and more than 10,000 injured in Israeli strikes on Lebanon since early March.

Nuclear weapons spending surges to record high of \$119bn, report says

Israel: Global spending on nuclear weapons last year rose to an all-time high of \$119bn, according to a report by nonproliferation advocates.

The world's nine nuclear-armed countries spent an additional \$16.8bn on their arsenals in 2025 compared with the previous year, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) said in its latest report released on Tuesday. The United States spent an estimated \$69.2bn, a rise of \$12.6bn, and more than all other nuclear powers combined, ICAN said. China was the second-biggest spender, with an esti-

mated \$13.5bn, followed by the United Kingdom with \$12.6bn, Russia with \$9.5bn and France with \$7.7bn, according to ICAN. India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea spent sums ranging from \$656m (by Pyongyang) to \$2.8bn (by New Delhi).ICAN said nuclear-armed states spent a combined \$471bn over the past five years, with all of them planning to retain their arsenals for decades more. "This exorbitant spending comes at a time when countries are significantly scaling back their investments in the global commons," ICAN said in a summary accompanying

the report."Whether reneging from climate change adaptation agreements or failing to pay their fair share to prevent the scourge of war through multilateral diplomacy, this overwhelming spending on nuclear weapons shows a willingness to research, develop, finance and build tools to exterminate humanity instead of save it."The report comes just a day after the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute warned that nuclear states were "sidelining" and "walking away from" nuclear disarmament commitments in favour of modernising and enhancing their arsenals.

In 2017, the United Nations adopted the first legally-binding global treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.Ninety-nine countries have signed, ratified or acceded to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which bars states from developing, testing, or acquiring weapons of mass destruction.No country with nuclear weapons has signed the treaty.Beginning in the early 1990s, the US and Russia signed a series of treaties to limit the size of their arsenals, but the last of these, New START, expired in February without any succeeding agreement.

Israeli Strike on Gaza Leaves Family of Five Burned Alive

Israel: In the Gaza Strip, Al Jazeera reports a Palestinian family of five was burned alive as they slept in their beds when Israel bombed their home in Gaza City overnight. They were among nine people killed in the attack. This is a Palestinian man who lost his daughter and his two grandchildren.Rabah Lubbad: "The war did not end. It is a hoax. The war did not end. They are fooling people. Nothing ended. There are martyrs every day. There are martyrs in all places in Gaza every day. What war ended? The war ended from one side only."Since October, when Israel agreed, on paper, to a U.S.-brokered ceasefire with Hamas, it has killed nearly 950 Palestinians in near-constant attacks on Gaza. Nearly 3,000 others have been wounded. The Trump administration has begun dismantling the Ocean Observatories Initiative, a network of ocean floor sensors that collect critical data on marine ecosystems, ocean currents and the climate crisis. The National Science Foundation said this week it will de-commission more than 900 deep-sea sensors installed a decade ago. Its closure was recommended by the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 playbook for Trump's presidency. Scientists warn the move will severely degrade efforts to monitor changing climate patterns and could negatively affect weather forecasting and extreme weather alerts. The Trump administration has proposed rule changes to the Federal Register that would give the president and his political appointees far more power to decide how billions of dollars of scientific research grants are awarded. Draft regulations released by the Office of Management and Budget would give partisan political appointees oversight over how grants are awarded to scientists researching everything from vaccine safety to LGBTQ+ health to the climate crisis. Trump appointees would also have the power to terminate active projects and could limit international scientific collaborations. The American Association for the Advancement of Science condemned the proposed rule as a "brazen power grab" and said it would make future discoveries less likely. The Union of Concerned Scientists warned, "It could also give politically connected industries a functional veto over research that might reveal risks associated with products and practices."

Iran Says It's Halting Attacks on Israel After Both Countries Exchange Fire

Israel: Iran and Israel exchanged fire overnight in the most serious escalation of fighting since a U.S.-Iranian so-called truce was declared in April. Just this morning, Iran said that it was halting its attacks on Israel, saying, "if the aggressions and acts of mischief continue — including in southern Lebanon — much more severe and crushing actions than before will follow." Earlier, Iran had launched a wave of missiles at northern Israel, claiming it was in response to Israeli attacks near Beirut on Sunday. Israel responded with attacks on Iran, with explosions reported in Tehran, Tabriz and Isfahan. The Israeli army also confirmed it struck a petrochemical plant in Mahshahr. Israel attacked Iran despite President Trump telling Axios news on Sunday that he planned to call Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to urge him not to respond to the first wave of Iranian missiles. President Trump also told the Financial Times that Netanyahu had no choice but to accept a deal with Iran, saying, "I call all the shots. He doesn't call the shots." This morning, President Trump posted on Truth Social, "Israel and Iran must immediately stop 'shooting.'"This after the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency recently raised the counterintelligence threat assessment for Israel to "critical" amid growing concerns that Israeli spy agencies are eavesdropping on American negotiators working on a ceasefire deal with Iran. Israeli airstrikes hit Beirut's suburbs on Sunday despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire that was renewed just days earlier. On Saturday, Israeli attacks across southern Lebanon killed at least 10 people, including a brigadier general, a captain and a Lebanese soldier. Since March, Israeli attacks have killed more than 3,500 people and displaced over a fifth of Lebanon's population. President Trump stormed out of an interview with NBC News's Kristen Welker on Friday, after she questioned him about compensating the January 6 insurrectionists who attacked police, as well as whether he had any evidence for "rigged" elections. Trump had agreed to record the sit-down interview for "Meet the Press" ahead of an event in Wisconsin.

In Gaza, at least seven Palestinians were killed and 15 others injured on Saturday when Israel's military bombed a large tent

encampment in the heart of Gaza City. Children were among the dead and wounded. On Sunday, an Israeli strike on a police station and a vehicle killed at least nine people and wounded 20 others. The attacks come despite last October's U.S.-brokered ceasefire. Since then, Israeli attacks have killed about 950 Palestinians. This is Abdul Salam Joudah, the uncle of a Palestinian killed in an Israeli strike over the weekend.Abdul Salam Joudah: "We are ordinary citizens. We are looking for and asking for peace. We are neither calling for war nor destruction, nor anything else. We are people who believe in a just peace."

In Ukraine, a Russian drone struck a nuclear fuel storage facility inside the Chernobyl exclusion zone on Sunday, heavily damaging a fuel reception building close to where large amounts of nuclear material are stored. Ukrainian officials say radiation levels remained within normal range and no injuries were reported. The IAEA called the strike deeply concerning and said inspectors would visit the site. Meanwhile, in the Zaporizhzhia region, Russian guided bombs hit a public transit stop in Balabyne, killing three civilians and wounding three others. This is the principal of a local school.Zhanna Vynnychenko: "A guided bomb was dropped near the education institution. The explosion was very powerful, as there were casualties. The school was severely damaged." A federal lawsuit filed Saturday is seeking to block an Ultimate Fighting Championship event scheduled for June 14 on the White House South Lawn, which happens to be President Trump's 80th birthday. The White House is branding the UFC event as part of the United States' 250th anniversary celebrations. The suit, brought by the Public Integrity Project on behalf of a Vietnam War veteran and a civic activist, argues the UFC fights would financially benefit President Trump and UFC President Dana White through promotional opportunities and stock holdings. The lawsuit cites a report that Trump bought \$50,000 in stock in UFC's parent company. It also argues the Trump administration's approval violated National Park Service regulations prohibiting commercial sporting events on specific federal parklands, that Congress did not authorize the construction of a



towering 600-ton steel arch on the South Lawn and that no environmental review was conducted.In France, U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth used a D-Day anniversary ceremony at the American military cemetery in Normandy to attack European immigration policies, saying the continent was facing a new "invasion."Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth: "Sadly, today, different European beaches are stormed by different dangerous ideologies. Beaches in Spain, in Italy, in Greece and Bulgaria, boats and men arrive. When will European capitals do something about that invasion? Or is it too late? I pray not, and I believe not."This comes as Pope Leo condemned rising European military spending, to its highest levels since the end of the Cold War, calling it a betrayal of diplomacy.

Dyson Supersonic Nural review: can a hair dryer really save your scalp from heat damage

Tell most hair-care enthusiasts you want to upgrade your hair dryer, and I’d bet good money you’ll be asked, “Will you buy a Dyson?” That would have been a ludicrous question more than a decade ago when the brand specialised in vacuum cleaners, but not since it took the luxury hair-care market by storm in 2016 with its Supersonic hair dryer. The Supersonic ripped up the hair-dryer rulebook, with its distinctive design, lightweight feel and quiet operation. Eight years after the original, Dyson launched the Supersonic Nural: an upgraded version with new tricks up its sleeve.

Upgrading to one of the best hair dryers is still one of my top beauty tips: they’re better at controlling heat levels and dry hair faster. All the same, is there really any need to spend up to £400? Having put the Supersonic Nural hair dryer through its paces and compared it with 19 other hair dryers that I tested, I was mostly impressed. Still, a few niggles ensure it’s not a recommendation without caveats. Over the month I tested the Supersonic Nural, I took note of the look, feel and finish of my hair. I timed how long it took to rough-dry hair and achieve a smooth blow-dry, and judged the effectiveness of the scalp-protect mode, as well as the versatility and intuitiveness of the controls for more precise styling. I also used all of the attachments. In each case, I was hoping to dry my hair quickly, leaving it with minimal frizz and feeling healthy. Comfort was also a factor:

I didn’t want my arms to ache or to feel any wrist strain in use. For more quantitative test results, I used an anemometer to measure the Supersonic Nural’s top wind speed, plus a sound meter to assess noise levels from 15cm away. I popped this data into my comparison spreadsheet to see how the hair dryer measured up to the competition. Dyson hair dryers are notoriously expensive. Prices start at £219 for the original Supersonic with its concentrator nozzle attachment, and climb to £450 for the latest Supersonic R hair dryer – the smallest, lightest and most powerful model that Dyson offers. Sitting slightly below the Supersonic R is the £400 Supersonic Nural.

As with its stablemates, it comes with intelligent heat control to prevent the excessive temperatures that can damage hair, and uses Dyson’s patented Air Multiplier technology



to draw in surrounding air through the ring shape, for a claimed three times more airflow over models with a conventional shape.

The Nural uses the Dyson Digital Motor V9, the same motor as the original Supersonic. This is marginally heavier and less powerful than the Hyperdymium motor in the brand’s Supersonic R hair dryer, but still spins at a whopping 110,000 RPM. That’s plenty fast enough for most people. On a basic level, the Nural has three speed levels, three heat settings and a continuous cool shot. All these can be controlled by small buttons on the rear of the dryer, alongside a button that turns scalp-protect mode on and off. On the handle, there’s a dedicated cool shot button and a power switch. It has a 2.62m cord, which is perfect for home use. The most tangible difference between the original and the Nural is its scalp-protect mode. This sees the device adjust the temperature of the air based on the dryer’s proximity to the scalp: the closer it gets, the lower the temperature goes. This means you never burn your scalp or frazzle any of the delicate new strands as they grow. Dyson claims this strengthens the scalp bar-

rier, balances oils on the scalp, and reduces visible flakes and shedding. Another clever addition is pause detect, which automatically slows the dryer down when it’s placed on a surface. This is ideal for those who section their hair while drying, or place the dryer down during a round-brush blow-dry. Dyson offers eight different magnetic attachments for the Nural. Whether you buy the version for straight and wavy or for curly and coily hair, you’ll find five attachments in the box, with others available to buy separately.

All the Nural’s attachments have RFID tags that are programmed with the ideal heat and speed settings, eliminating any guesswork on the user’s part. If you prefer to tweak the settings, it will then remember these the next time you use that attachment. That, alongside the high-end design, is one of the main reasons to invest in a Dyson hair dryer over other high-end options. Most of its competitors only include a concentrator nozzle and diffuser, with the closest equivalent in attachment range being the £220 Shark Speed-Style Pro. The Shark also features a Scalp Shield mode, but it’s not automatic or proximity-based like the

Nural’s. Instead it’s activated via a button on the handle (so no different from simply reducing the temperature on any old dryer). There’s much to like about the Supersonic Nural. Its design is attractive – it’s made from a lightweight-but-sturdy plastic, with a metallic finish that screams high-end.

I tested the Nural in the limited-edition Amber Silk colour, but it’s also available in blush pink, navy or dark blue. There have been various limited-edition colours, too, so it’s always worth checking the Dyson website before you buy. Its vegan leather presentation case – which is free in some limited editions, but costs £60 separately – is another luxury. It houses all the attachments – bar one, which I’ll moan about momentarily. If you prefer to ditch the case, the dryer is compact enough to fit in most vanity drawers. The Nural is staggeringly quiet, with volume levels ranging between 75 and 81dB in my tests. That makes it the second quietest hair dryer I’ve tested, just a touch louder than the Cloud Nine Airshot Pro on its fastest settings. I adored the scalp-protect mode, which made drying my hair comfortable and allowed me to

disengage during the process. This isn’t a luxury I get with most hair dryers, which require me to manually lower the temperature at the scalp, or suffer the consequences. The dryer took about seven minutes to rough-dry my hair, which is a few minutes slower than the most powerful hair dryers I’ve tested. However, my hair was left feeling smooth and healthy, with the flyaway attachment quickly handling any rogue hairs for an effortless finish that lasted until my next wash. The magnetic attachments were easy to swap, and the automatic settings meant I could make the most of them without faff. I’m not a fan of doing round-brush blow-drys:

I haven’t quite got the knack of using a round brush, so I’m often left sweating profusely, with my arms feeling as if I’ve done 40 reps by the end. But the Supersonic Nural’s lightweight, evenly weighted design made sure my arms and wrists didn’t feel the strain, even when tackling the tricky spots on the top of my head.

And when sectioning my hair, the pause detect was an invaluable little luxury that I’ll miss when I’m using a different hair dryer. The results from the blow-dry were beautifully smooth, with plenty of volume where I wanted it. The Dyson’s speed settings provided extra control when styling the shorter hairs that frame my face, and the cool shot set the style quickly. My hair felt noticeably smoother than usual, thanks to having been dried with more gentle heat. Let’s start with the obvious: the Supersonic Nural is expensive. At full price, you’ll be splashing out about £400 (although you could find one for about £300 at the time of writing). There’s definitely no need to spend that much, with plenty of equally powerful options available for less in our test of the best hair dryers.

If you have a sensitive scalp and are tired of accidentally scorching it, no other hair dryer offers the same automation as Dyson’s scalp-protect mode. That said, the sensor isn’t flawless. During testing, it would sometimes lower the temperature when there was no need to. Mercifully, it never incorrectly increased the temperature in my tests, but I found the random lower temperatures slightly frustrating, since this added to overall drying times. You can easily disable scalp protect mode, of course, but you’d be missing out on one of the key selling points. Another

gripe was that the presentation case – as gorgeous as it looks – didn’t have enough space to store all the attachments. No matter how much rejigging I did, I couldn’t get the diffuser attachment to fit, meaning I had to let it gather dust on top of the case. For a case this expensive, that isn’t good enough. Finally – and this is nitpicking – when I unboxed the hair dryer, I was prompted to download the MyDyson app. Now, I’m not a fan of having random apps clogging up my phone, but I will be happy to do so if useful features are on offer. Sadly, all you get with the Supersonic Nural is styling and maintenance advice – which is available online.

If you buy the Nural, do yourself a favour and skip the app. All Dyson hair-care products, including the Supersonic Nural, are covered by a two-year warranty. During that time, Dyson will repair or replace your hair dryer if it stops working. You can also buy spare parts and replacement attachments from Dyson, which arrive with a one-year warranty. As with all Dyson hair stylers, the Nural has a filter that needs cleaning once a month, or when you see the LED cleaning light switch on. If necessary, you can use soapy water, but you’ll need to wait for the filter to fully dry before reassembling.

Dyson also has a helpline (0800 298 0298) where you can book a repair if your model is under warranty. If your Dyson kicks the bucket after its warranty expires, all isn’t necessarily lost. Secondhand sites such as Sell My Dyson will buy old Dyson hair dryers, to stop all the parts from going to waste. There’s no getting past it – the Supersonic Nural is a brilliant hair dryer that is well suited to people with sensitive scalps. Scalp burn and frazzled hair will be a thing of the past; it’s staggeringly quiet with an attractive design, a clever pause-detect feature and a brilliant range of attachments.

It’s a clear cut above hair dryers of old. Whether that’s worth £400 will, of course, depend on your budget. I’m not convinced. In fact, you can get a very good hair dryer for far less. For less than £150, you can buy the Head Jog Futaria hair dryer, which is lighter and faster. Or you could opt for the reliable Hershesons hair dryer, which is my top pick for most people. However, if you want to splash out on a luxury hair dryer and you have a sensitive scalp, you certainly won’t regret buying the Supersonic Nural.

5 Reasons Why Eye Examinations Must Be A Part Of Your Annual Health Check-ups

Eye health is one of the most neglected areas when it comes to the annual health check-up, whereas many vision-threatening conditions are known to develop silently and become difficult to reverse when diagnosed late. Data from India’s National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment highlight the scale and scope of prevention through timely care. According to the report, around 117,55,185 people benefited from annual eye exams in 2024-2025, which then led to 9,893,679 timely cataract operations, 12,14,395 free spectacles distribution among school-children and 6,47,111 treated for other eye diseases like diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. These figures go beyond merely reflecting the scale of the programme. It highlights the widespread prevalence of undiagnosed eye conditions in the community and reinforces why preventive eye examinations should be part of every annual health check-up. Dr Vasant

Sapovadia, Senior Cataract & Refractive Surgeon at Netraddeep Maxivision Super Speciality Eye Hospitals, says, “Most people associate eye check-ups with blurred vision or the need for spectacles, but many serious eye diseases progress silently without causing any visual complications in the early stages. Glaucoma and retinal conditions can progress silently for years, and by the time symptoms become noticeable, irreversible vision loss may already occurred. Annual eye examinations help us to detect these subtle changes at the initial stages, monitor risk factors, and intervene before vision is compromised. Regular screening is one of the most effective ways to preserve eyesight over a lifetime.”

Early Detection of Silent Eye Diseases

Several significant eye diseases can occur without any initial warning signs. For instance, glaucoma, sometimes called the ‘silent thief of sight’, can continually damage the optic nerve without any noticeable effects on vision until it is

very advanced. Similarly, the retina may be affected due to ageing or systemic diseases, which can go undetected for a long time. Regular eye check-ups help the ophthalmologists to measure eye pressure and examine the condition of the optic nerve and the retina, enabling them to spot the onset of the disease before vision is noticeably impaired.

Family History and Preventive Screening

Family history is a major factor that increases the risk for specific eye disorders, especially glaucoma and hereditary retinal disorders. Most people are not aware of the risk until their vision starts to deteriorate. Eye check-ups at least once a year are a chance to identify genetic risk factors and promote screening among immediate family members, particularly those over the age of forty. An easy and effective way to preserve eyesight in the future is to have the eyes checked during the annual medical check-up. Regular eye screening is the key to early diagnosis and timely

treatment of eye diseases, which can therefore help to maintain good eye health, lowering the chances of losing vision from conditions that are preventable or treatable.

Impact of Systemic Health on the Eyes

The eyes remain one of the major indicators of a person’s overall health condition. For example, ophthalmologists can non-invasively examine the blood vessels and nerves in the eyes, which are often directly affected by conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and thyroid disorders. Sometimes, for instance, diabetic retinopathy can still develop despite good blood sugar control based on one’s blood sugar levels. Awareness about including eye examinations as part of the regular health check-up can help prevent systemic diseases from silently affecting eyesight while enabling timely and coordinated care between the physicians and ophthalmologists.

Age-Related Changes Need Regular Monitoring

With age, the chances of



cataracts, glaucoma, and macular conditions increase. Such changes are gradual and can easily go unnoticed. Routine eye check-ups provide a baseline for normal changes caused by ageing and help to determine if ageing is

accompanied by a disease and allow for timely treatment if necessary. In most cases, early interventions result in good visual outcomes and less dependence in the later stages of life.

Improving Productivity and Quality of Life

Good vision plays a vital role in daily functioning, mobility, and workplace productivity. When vision problems are not correctly diagnosed, they can interfere with activities such as reading, driving, and using a screen. Having eyes test-

ed regularly can contribute to sustaining clear and comfortable sight, it can also lessen the occurrence of eye strain, and these benefits can be very productive over a long time, especially for working adults and the elderly.

ENTERTAINMENT

Sunny Deol's Lahore 1947 Renamed Batwara 1947, Release Date Announced



Mumbai: The producers of Sunny Deol's eagerly anticipated historical drama have formally announced a significant alteration following months of rumours. The movie will now be released under the title *Batwara 1947* instead of *Lahore 1947*. In addition to the announcement, the team unveiled an eye-catching motion poster that confirms the film's theatrical release date and provides the first look at the Partition-era drama.

The title announcement

teaser was posted on social media by Aamir Khan Productions and Sunny Deol, along with the message, "In times of hatred and fear, he chose courage." Watch 'Batwara1947' in theatres starting on August 14, 2026.

Batwara 1947, which was first conceived under the working title *Lahore 1947*, is formally introduced in the recently released motion poster. "In times of hatred and fear, he chose courage" is the opening phrase of the video. Shortly after, the

words and the map are both severed by a searing red gash that rips across the screen.

The flaming split establishes the scene for the main conflict of the movie and produces a striking visual depiction of partition. Then, amid scenes of chaos, fires, and fleeing crowds, viewers catch a glimpse of Sunny Deol's character rushing behind a steam locomotive. Preity Zinta, Shabana Azmi, and Karan Deol are among the other characters who momentarily emerge through

the flames.

The motion poster ends with a striking picture of Sunny in the middle with a flaming torch. Preity and a terrified-looking Karan are behind him. After that, the title *Batwara 1947* is disclosed.

The renowned drama *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, O Jamiya E Nai by Asghar Wajahat, which examines identity, relocation, and humanity in the wake of Partition, served as the inspiration for the movie. Rajkumar Santoshi

is the director of *Batwara 1947*, which is produced by Aamir Khan through Aamir Khan Productions. Santoshi and Sunny Deol, who previously worked together on critically acclaimed films like *Ghayal*, *Damini*, and *Ghatak*, are also making a significant reunion.

Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Shabana Azmi, Karan Deol, and Ali Fazal are among the ensemble cast members. Javed Akhtar wrote the lyrics, and AR Rahman created the music.

Esha Deol Gets Candid About Parenting After Divorce



Mumbai: Bollywood actress Esha Deol and businessman Bharat Takhtani divorced in 2024 after 12 years of marriage, but they still have a close relationship and are proud parents to their two kids, Radhya and Miraya. They still routinely catch up and share enjoyable times, demonstrating their love for one another.

In a recent interview, Esha talked about her long-lasting relationship with Bharat and how they continue to be involved parents who support one another and their kids. The star noted that despite the divorce, she still doesn't feel like a "single mum" because

They welcomed Miraya in 2019 after becoming parents to Radhya in 2017. In 2024, they made their split public.

Esha Deol went into additional detail about why she doesn't like to call herself a "single mother" in an interview last year. She said that term doesn't fit her. "I don't like to think of myself as a single mother because I don't act like one and I don't allow others to act that way around me."

"It's just that in life, sometimes, due to certain things, roles change," she went on. And if it doesn't work out in a particular equation of what two people were at one point, you have to figure it out on your own. This is especially true when you have kids; the two adults must figure out a different dynamic while maintaining the unit for the benefit of the kids. And Bharat and I do just that.

Esha Deol had a casual lunch on a Sunday afternoon in May with Bharat Takhtani and a few other close friends. The picture from the event that she posted on social media shows how friendly and at ease the former couple were with one another.

Vedang Raina's Film with Two Leading Ladies Nears Completion



Mumbai: A major part in an untitled Maddock Films project directed by Jagdeep Sidhu and starring Vedang Raina and Naamika Saran has been confirmed for actor Pragati Srivastava. Sources claim that Pragati would play one of Vedang's two love interests in the movie, which is billed as a romantic comedy thriller with two main female characters and a multi-layered plot. This movie marks Naamika Saran's big-screen debut; she was earlier rumoured to be the other leading lady opposite Vedang.

Pragati had already worked on productions in the south, therefore this is her third major Hindi feature before her big-screen debut in the language. She will also play the lead in the Anand L. Rai-backed *Nakhrewaalii* and Prakash Jha's *Janaadesh*.

"While the news is abuzz about Naamika and Vedang, it's been revealed that there's another leading lady in the film," a person connected to the production stated. Pragati will play a crucial role in opposition to Vedang. There will be two new pairings for this movie. The majority of the shoot is now complete, although there are still a few days left. Vedang Raina has gained recognition for his roles in *Jigra* and *The Archies*. Maddock Films is producing the untitled movie, which is anticipated to be released in late 2026.

'Dhamaal 4' Promises Big Laughs, Bigger Treasure Hunt



Mumbai: The makers of *Dhamaal 4* have now increased anticipation by revealing a series of captivating character posters from the eagerly anticipated comic film. The posters, which were released recently, tease what looks to be the gang's largest treasure quest to date while giving viewers a first look into the exciting and chaotic world of the fourth edition of the well-known franchise.

The movie's main ensemble is shown in their distinctively eccentric avatars in the recently unveiled posters, which allude to an exciting journey full of humour, perplexity, and surprising turns. The graphics imply that the movie will take place against a backdrop of thick forests, picturesque beaches, and pirate-inspired exploits, even if the filmmakers have kept important plot information carefully under wraps. The images also suggest that the story may revolve around a treasure quest, which promises a lot of chaos and thrills along the way.

Since the release of its first film in 2007, the *Dhamaal* franchise has gained a devoted fan base because to its reputation for producing

distinctive characters and hilarious scenes. The series has become one of Bollywood's most popular comedy franchises over the years, with each movie featuring an ensemble cast and fantastical scenarios.

With a star-studded cast that includes Ajay Devgn, Riteish Deshmukh, Arshad Warsi, Sanjay Mishra, and Jaaved Jaaferi, *Dhamaal 4* carries on that legacy. Esha Gupta, Sanjeeda Shaikh, Anjali Anand, Upendra Limaye, Vijay Patkar, and Ravi Kishan join them, contributing to the film's varied cast. It is anticipated that the mix of newcomers and seasoned comedians would further increase the entertainment value.

Dhamaal 4, which is overseen by Indra Kumar, the director of the franchise's earlier films, is marketed as a full-fledged family comedy that is full of humour, adventure, and mayhem. The movie is already one of the most eagerly awaited comedic releases of 2026 and is likely to appeal to a wide range of age groups. Ajay Devgn, Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Ashok Thakeria, Indra Kumar, Anand Pandit, and Kumar Mangat Pathak are the film's producers.

Harshvardhan Kapoor on His Screen Hiatus

Mumbai: In response to rumours about his seeming disappearance from the screen, actor Harshvardhan Kapoor said that he has been working on a new project for the past few years rather than quitting acting. Recently, a social media user started the discussion by asking why the actor seemed to have removed himself from acting while being praised for his roles.



Although his films may not have been huge commercial successes, the user commented that his work was well-received and that viewers would like to see him make a comeback. Harshvardhan responded to the post by refuting the idea that he had given up acting and outlining the long process that goes into the kinds of projects he decides to work on.

"I haven't stopped working on a new project since the day Thar was released. It took five years to make Thar, it took many years for Bhavesh to make, and it has taken me two to three years to finish this film, which I will

finish filming on June 30. He wrote, "I'm also producing it. The actor also noted that viewers are frequently used to prominent celebrities releasing several films annually. He claims that films like Bhavesh Joshi Superhero, Thar, AK vs. AK, and Ray take a lot longer to create and finish.

"If you want films like Bhavesh and Thar and Ak vs. Ak/ Ray, it's not going to happen once or twice a year, that's

Shilpa Shetty shares light-hearted video on 51st birthday

Mumbai: Actress Shilpa Shetty celebrated her birthday with a humorous and light-hearted greeting that reflected her carefree attitude toward life. As she celebrated her big day, she expressed her emotions on social media, writing that "growing up was never part of the plan" and adopting a light-hearted and carefree approach.

Shilpa shared a funny video of herself where she can be seen grinning while sitting on her lap. The actress added, "Birthday or no, growing up was never part of the plan", next to the video.

Shilpa Shetty's sister Shamita Shetty, husband Raj Kundra, and other close friends

and family sent her emotional birthday wishes on social media on her 51st birthday. In a unique film montage, Raj Kundra emphasised the traits that Shilpa exemplifies in his life.

"A different Birthday post this year... Not about celebrations or moments," he said as the caption for the photo. But about what you really stand for and signify in my life. Fortitude in the face of adversity, grace when feelings run high, faith in the face of uncertainty. And even in the darkest moments, there is light. Happy birthday, my dear. You have always exuded the caring, protective, forgiving, and fiercely strong spirit of a Devi. May Maa grant you all that you deserve."

FIFA World Cup 2026: Why Somali referee Omar Artan was denied US entry despite valid visa

A FIFA World Cup referee, Omar Artan, was denied entry into the United States despite holding a valid visa, according to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP). CBP confirmed Monday that a Somali national arriving at Miami International Airport from Istanbul on June 6 was denied admission following additional screening. While the agency did not identify the traveler by name, the Associated Press identified the individual as Omar Artan, Somalia's only FIFA World Cup referee.

FIFA later confirmed that Artan would not be permitted to participate in preparations for the tournament and would not officiate World Cup matches unless his immigration status changes. According to CBP, Artan underwent secondary inspection after arriving in Miami from Turkey. "During processing, the traveler underwent additional inspection, a routine part of CBP's inspection process when officers need to verify information or determine admissibility," the agency said in a statement. The agency added that after the review, the traveler was found inadmissible.



"Following inspection, the traveler, a referee for the FIFA World Cup, was determined to be inadmissible due to vetting concerns and was denied entry," CBP said. Officials did not specify what those vetting concerns were, citing standard immigration procedures. US authorities emphasized that all travelers, including athletes, coaches, referees and support staff, remain subject to inspection upon arrival.

"CBP officers have the

authority to question travelers, conduct inspections, and determine admissibility consistent with U.S. law," the statement from CBP read. FIFA acknowledged the situation and stressed that it has no authority over a host country's immigration determinations.

"FIFA is not involved in host country immigration processes, including visa adjudications, and has been informed by authorities that Mr. Artan's status will

not be changed at present," the governing body said in a statement. The organization added that, as with previous international tournaments, the final decision regarding entry into a country rests with the host government.

"In line with previous FIFA events, a host government ultimately determines who receives a visa and who is admitted into their country." Artan is one of Somalia's most prominent football officials and the country's only referee selected for FIFA World Cup duties. His appointment represented a significant milestone for Somali football and for African officiating representation on the global stage.

At the CAF ceremony in Morocco, Artan was named Africa's Best Referee for 2025, adding considerable recognition to his career overseeing important games, including those in the CAF Champions League. According to the CSR Journal, it is expected that Artan's absence will affect the event's refereeing quality because he is an award-winning referee who is regarded as a key figure in the sport.

World Cup is 'full circle' for London-raised US striker Balogun

Raised in London by Nigerian parents, Folarin Balogun didn't quite know what to expect when he signed up to play for the United States at the World Cup. "I didn't realize at that moment how big football soccer was out here in America," admitted the striker, who was born in New York, but left the States at just one month old.

"I feel like my individual journey is a bit full circle now approaching the World Cup," he told a press conference, five days before the co-hosts' opener against Paraguay.

Balogun is expected to lead the line for coach Mauricio Pochettino's men, playing as a lone striker, inside Christian Pulisic on the left, and in front of Weston McKennie and Tyler Adams.

Expectations are high for the co-hosts, who have markedly improved under Pochettino, boast arguably their most talented ever roster, and with home advantage are favorites to top Group D over Paraguay, Turkey and Australia.

For the US to match its best World Cup run of modern times and reach at least the quarter-finals, Balogun will have to play a pivotal role.

His journey to the US starting XI has been more complex than most. Balogun came up through the Arsenal academy ranks, representing both England and the United States in age-group teams. Struggling for minutes at Arsenal, he went first on loan to Middlesbrough then Reims. It was in France that his career came to life, and last year he top-scored for Monaco



with 19 goals after a reported 40-million-euro transfer.

His first season in France's Ligue 1 sparked interest from the US, which was famously courted by scouts, receiving the red-carpet treatment with trips to Florida and NBA ringside tickets. American soccer fans tracked his every move, before he formally switched allegiance to the US in 2023. "I just remember this immense amount of appreciation from the fans. And to really feel that in full force was something that was inspirational for me, it made my decision easier," recalled Balogun.

Balogun's first US goal came in the 2023 Nations League final win over

Canada. But the team came off the rails soon after, falling short in multiple tournaments. That led to the sacking of Gregg Berhalter and hiring of former Tottenham Hotspur coach Pochettino. Balogun briefly held trials with Tottenham as a child, before joining Arsenal's youth academy. "As I said before, it's just coming to a full circle moment. Being able to perform on the biggest stage and give back to the fans, that's something I'm looking forward to doing," said Balogun, at the United States' World Cup training camp in Irvine, California. "With the World Cup being here, the opportunity to represent my nation in front of a home crowd is going to be something special," he added.

8 killed as molten steel spills on workers after Visakhapatnam plant blast

Luchnow, June 09: At least eight workers were killed and six others injured when molten steel accidentally spilled on them from a ladle that exploded while carrying the hot metal to the casting unit in the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) on Monday, officials said. Visakhapatnam district collector M Abhishikh Kishore said the accident happened at around 4.15pm in the central government undertaking also known as Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

"Eight workers were killed and six others sustained injuries in the accident," Kishore, who visited the accident site, told reporters. This is the worst accident at the 34-year-old plant in 14 years. On June 14, 2012, 19 workers, including some officials, died in a massive explosion in the oxygen plant of the Steel Melting Shop-III unit at RINL. Union minister of state for steel Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma, who was rushing to Visakhapatnam from his camp office at Bhimavaram, told reporters that the blast occurred when approximately 150 tonnes of molten steel – heated to nearly 1,500 degrees Celsius – was being transported in a ladle to machine No. 2 as part of the steel manufacturing process.

It was then that the la-



dle exploded, resulting in spilling of hot, molten metal on the workers. The minister said eight workers died in the accident and six workers on duty near an adjacent machine sustained serious injuries. The condition of four injured workers was stable and two were critical.

"Providing the best possible medical treatment to the injured is our top priority," Varma said. He added that the government kept an air ambulance on standby to shift the injured for advanced medical care if required.

The minister said the exact cause of the accident was yet to be determined. "A detailed investigation will examine whether a technical failure occurred during the transfer of molten steel through the ladle, including the possibility of

snapped wires or any other mechanical malfunction that may have triggered the explosion," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief. "Saddened by the mishap at the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. Praying that the injured recover at the earliest.

The local authorities are providing all possible assistance to those affected. An ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given Rs. 50,000," PM Modi posted on social media platform X.

According to senior employee of the Visakhapatnam steel plant and trade union leader D Adinarayana, the deceased work-

ers included five regular employees, identified as technicians Gonitha Bhanu Kumar, G V Appa Rao and M Krishna Nagu, general foreman K Prabhakar Rao and manager Gold Kumar, besides three contract workers – Ramana, Trinath and N Appala Raju.

The accident occurred in the Continuous Casting Department (CCD) under the Steel Melting Shop (SMS) section of the plant in STC-3 heat forging (FG) unit, when a metal ladle carrying 150 tonnes of molten steel exploded while carrying the hot metal from blast furnace to the casting unit.

"The molten steel, which was at an extreme temperature of 1,500 degrees Celsius, spilled out of the ladle like a foam, leaked in large quantities, and fell on the workers in the unit," Adi-

narayana said, adding panic-stricken workers fled the site immediately after the explosion occurred.

"The process is that hot metal from the blast furnace is reheated at 3,000 degrees Celsius and taken to the casting machine through the ladle. In the process, the ladle exploded and hot metal spilled from the ladle," said another employee, adding that the liquid metal spread over an area of about 500 metres.

Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock over the accident. "He spoke to the steel plant authorities and enquired about the incident. He asked the district authorities to rush to the spot and take up rescue operations," an official statement said.

Union minister of steel HD Kumaraswamy expressed shock. "The circumstances leading to the incident are being assessed, and all necessary assistance is being extended to those affected," he said.

Sandeep, a supervisor technician in the steel plant who was working in the adjacent section of the unit where the accident took place, said: "I heard a loud explosion, followed by huge fire hitting the roof of the plant. We all ran out as the hot metal along with flames was spreading fast across the floor."

Inside Team Praggnanandhaa's French connection



Bengaluru: The identity of a top player's team of seconds is perhaps one of the most closely guarded secrets in chess. On Monday, however, R Praggnanandhaa decided to break convention and reveal his extended team as a mark of gratitude days after his remarkable charge to the Norway Chess title with four classical wins in a row. His long-time coach and mentor, RB Ramesh, shared a photograph on X from a training camp held ahead of this year's Candidates tournament with a shout out to Pragg's extended team members.

The image featured the familiar faces of Praggnanandhaa, his known second Vaibhav Suri, sister R Vaishali, and Ramesh. But it also revealed previously unknown members of the setup: French grandmasters Joseph Girel and Mahel Boyer, both in their early twenties, who have been part of the Indian star's preparation team.

"After his Norway Chess win, Pragg thanked his family and the known members of his team – Vaibhav and I. He really wanted to thank Joseph and Mahel publicly rightaway I suppose, but held back," Ramesh told HT on Monday. "We later discussed it and agreed that it would be nice to acknowledge them for the work they've been putting in for close to two years now. The original plan was not to name them until after the World Championship, if Pragg qualified for it. Since that didn't happen and the next Candidates tournament is still some way off,

and with the Norway Chess win, it just seemed like the right thing to do. I spoke to Joseph and Mahel and they were okay with being named. They're young, super hardworking and deserve due credit."

Ramesh met Joseph during a training camp he conducted in Italy a couple of years ago. He was an International Master then. "He was a participant in the camp and I was impressed with his ideas and how he was faring. I discussed about him with Pragg. We were thinking of adding young members to the team at the time. Pragg had already worked with big names so we wanted to try working with lesser-known ones. After the camp, I tracked how Joseph was doing and once he became a grandmaster (in 2024) I asked him if he would want to work for team Pragg. He agreed rightaway and also recommended Mahel as a team member. The great thing with having young players on the team is that they're hungry for success because they believe they have a lot to prove and they also come with zero baggage." "Huge thanks to Mahel and Joseph for their incredible work! Both of them have played a big role in preparation in the last two years! Thank you so much guys!!" Praggnanandhaa wrote on X. Suri describes Praggnanandhaa's decision to acknowledge Joseph and Mahel publicly as "super cool". "These are guys who work behind-the-scenes and it's great that they are being named. It's not like people can go look at my or their games

and figure out the ideas we come up with. I suppose all three of us are evolving as players and seconds," Suri told Praggnanandhaa's second win against world No.1 Magnus Carlsen with Black in Round 8 of Norway Chess came off the French Defense. On move 5, Praggnanandhaa pulled out a surprise with Nh6, a fairly new idea. Carlsen spent over twenty minutes coming up with a response. Praggnanandhaa had employed the French in the Candidates tournament earlier this year as well. Suri jokes at the suggestion of it being a giveaway of the team composition. "We came up with a lot of ideas for the Candidates, some of it was unused and the one in the French that he played against Magnus was one of them. I was literally pleading with Pragg to play it. Magnus spent a lot of time in the opening and Pragg ended up being over an hour ahead on the clock inside the first 14 moves. Pragg might play it down at times but to beat Magnus twice and finish ahead of him in a tournament is definitely a big deal for all of us in the team." Suri points out that both Joseph and Mahel bring a burst of "energy and ideas" to Team Pragg. "Also, they're closer to Pragg's age. When we met in Chennai for the pre-Candidates camp, we would play badminton together or hit the gym when we had time off from sessions. Since both are French, their love for cheese is a given I suppose. When they visited India, they were fascinated with cheese naans."

Dalit teen beaten to death in Uttarakhand over befriending girl from upper caste community

Agency: An 18-year-old from the Dalit community was allegedly beaten to death in Uttarakhand's Tehri Garhwal district over befriending a girl from an upper caste community. Besides, one of the teen's friends was injured in the incident, that sparked huge uproar among locals. Upon receiving a call from her at around 11pm on Sunday, Ketan went to her village Kholgarh with Diwakar Dimri, his friend.

This is when members of the girl's family locked them both in a room and assaulted them with sticks, the report further said, citing the police. The next morning, Ketan's father Dhanpal Lal received a call from the girl's father, asking him to pick up his son.



Upon reaching the location, Dhanpal found Ketan covered in blood, rushed him to a hospital, but he couldn't be saved.

A case under the charge of murder and Section 3(2)(v) of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act has

been registered, Tehri Garhwal Senior Superintendent of Police Shweta Choubey said. Besides, one person, identified as Yashveer Singh Panwar, has been detained for questioning. Ketan's friend Diwakar, who was injured in the incident, has been admit-

ted to the district hospital in Baurari. In October 2025, a Dalit teen died in Greater Noida after being beaten up on his birthday. He was allegedly attacked by "upper-caste" men on his birthday night and had reportedly been facing threats from them.

Earlier that same month, a 38-year-old Dalit man was beaten to death in UP's Rae Bareilly district. The man was lynched by people who allegedly mistook him for a "drone thief". Rumours of thieves marking houses with drones had emerged back then.

More recently in May 2026, a 17-year-old girl was allegedly abducted and gang-raped by three people in UP's Pratapgarh district.

Sports Minister Backs Club-Led Model To Secure Indian Super League Future

Mandaviya Orders Task Force For ISL Dispute

New Delhi: Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has stepped in to save the Indian Super League (ISL), ordering the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and the clubs to immediately set up a joint task force. The goal is to end their long-running financial argument and create a solid plan for the next two seasons. The meeting in New Delhi lasted a couple of hours and was described as positive, with everyone looking for answers rather than playing the blame game. Mandaviya reminded everyone that the ISL is a massive business that supports the livelihoods of many players and staff, urging them to come back to him quickly with a fair business model.

The minister's intervention is highly crucial for the league's survival. The ISL fell into a major financial crisis late last year when its long-term commercial partner, FSDL, suddenly backed out. While the ministry managed to help push through a



shortened 2025-26 season—where East Bengal FC beat rivals Mohun Bagan Super Giant to lift their first-ever trophy—the league still lacks a permanent financial setup. Right now, the AIFF and the 14 ISL clubs are locked in a feud over who should run the league's business side. The clubs want to manage things themselves and have proposed a two-year "club-led" pilot model for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 seasons to keep the tournament stable. Under this plan, the clubs want to take over the commercial rights of the ISL and pay a set fee directly to the na-

tional federation: The clubs are offering to pay a total of ₹15 crore per year to the AIFF. This money is meant to pay for the federation's official duties, like refereeing, anti-doping tests, and legal costs. This ₹15 crore offer is actually higher than the ₹12.4 crore the AIFF would get in the first year from a massive deal proposed by London-based Genius Sports. The clubs are also strongly rejecting an AIFF proposal to charge them an extra entry fee, arguing they are already spending enough to keep their teams running. The newly formed task force

needs to work fast to lock in a deal before the next season kicks off. According to the AIFF's early calendar, the upcoming 2026-27 ISL season will return to a full seven-month schedule, running from 1 September to 11 April. This will be a big step up from the emergency format used last season, where teams only played 13 matches each in a single-leg tournament. With the Sports Minister now pushing hard for a joint solution, AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey and the 14 club owners must compromise quickly to ensure Indian football can move ahead smoothly. Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has intervened to resolve the Indian Super League's financial crisis by urging AIFF and clubs to form a joint task force. The ISL faces disputes over control of commercial rights, with clubs proposing a two-year self-managed model offering ₹15 crore annually to AIFF for federation duties, rejecting extra fees.

Top African Referee Omar Artan Denied US Entry And Ruled Out Of World Cup

New Delhi: Logistical and administrative problems seem to find no end at the FIFA World Cup 2026, with strict United States immigration policies now overshadowing the buildup to the tournament. In a shocking turn of events just days before the football extravaganza kicks off, Africa's top referee, Omar Abdulkadir Artan, was reportedly turned away by authorities at Miami International Airport and sent straight back on a flight to Istanbul. The decision has stunned the football world, especially since reports suggest that Artan was travelling on a diplomatic passport. The Somali Embassy in Nairobi had stepped in to help him secure his visa after initial delays, but US border control ultimately refused to let him into the country. Given the ongoing political tensions and travel restrictions involving the US and nations across East Africa and the Middle East, the incident has sparked intense debate over the suitability of the host nation's rigid border controls for a global sporting event. Neither FIFA nor



the Somali Football Federation has made an official comment yet, but the move means Artan will no longer be part of the World Cup refereeing team. His sudden deportation is part of a growing list of travel issues that have already impacted personnel from other nations facing strict US vetting, including Iran. US Customs and Border Protection has not given an official reason for sending the award-winning referee back to Turkey. However, the situation is heavily tied to political issues, as Somalia faces strict US travel bans

alongside other restricted nations. Right now, most Somali citizens are blocked from getting US visas, with very few exceptions made unless it involves specific diplomatic tasks or American national interests. Artan's absence is a huge loss for the tournament. He became a FIFA-listed referee in 2018 and is widely considered the best official in African football, having handled major CAF Champions League matches throughout 2026. His incredible work earned him the Africa's Best Referee award for 2025 at the CAF cere-

mony in Morocco, making him a star choice for the elite nine-member referee group representing Africa this summer. Artan isn't the only one facing border troubles. His deportation highlights a much bigger visa mess ahead of the tournament. The International Sports Press Association (AIPS) has already complained to FIFA because a large number of African and Iranian sports journalists have had their visa applications rejected. Even Iran's official team photographer was barred from entering the country.

Eriksen in good spirits, set for discharge after heart scare

Odense: Danish midfielder Christian Eriksen is making a steady recovery and is expected to be released from the hospital shortly after a frightening health scare saw him collapse during an international friendly. The football world held its breath as the 34-year-old was attended to on the pitch, but medical updates have brought significant reassurance regarding his condition.



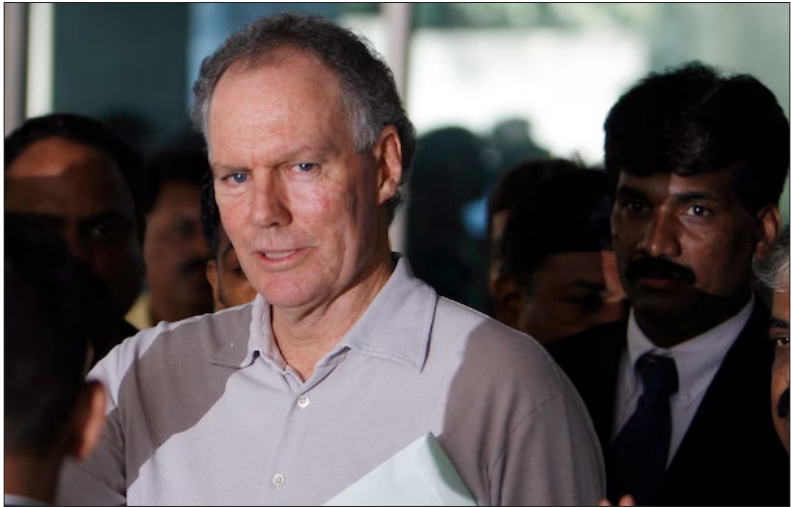
The match was abruptly halted and subsequently abandoned following the distressing second-half incident, drawing immediate parallels to the player's previous medical emergency. Speaking on Monday morning to provide an update from Odense University Hospital, Denmark team physician Morten Boesen confirmed that the veteran playmaker was resting comfortably with his loved ones. "I spoke with Christian this morning, and he is doing well. He is with his family and is in good spirits. The expectation is that he will be discharged soon and can return home." As I see it, the pacemaker responded as it should. He was briefly unconscious, but regained consciousness very quickly, and we were quickly in con-

tact with him." The sudden emergency forced officials to call off the friendly against Ukraine at Nature Energy Park with Denmark leading 2-1 midway through the second half. Since neither nation qualified for the World Cup, the fixture was meant to serve as a crucial building block for future campaigns, but the sporting context faded entirely as medical per-

sonnel rushed to the field. The incident occurred in the 65th minute of the match in Odense when Eriksen, in an off-the-ball action, clutched his chest with both hands before slumping to the turf. Teammates and opponents immediately signalled for urgent assistance, prompting a swift response from the on-site emergency staff. Players from both sides formed a protective shield around the midfielder to offer privacy as he received initial treatment. The harrowing scene immediately revived memories of Euro 2020, where Eriksen suffered a near-fatal cardiac arrest on the pitch against Finland. Following that 2021 incident, he was fitted with an Implantable Cardioverter-Defibrillator (ICD), a device that proved crucial during Sunday's scare.

Chappell praises Vaibhav Sooryavanshi but demands radical changes to T20 cricket

New Delhi: While Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's astonishing rise has left Greg Chappell impressed, the former Australia captain believes the teenager's record-breaking IPL season also exposes a deeper problem within T20 cricket. Writing in a column for ESPNcricinfo, Chappell argued that modern T20 cricket has tilted too heavily in favour of batters, making extraordinary performances appear increasingly routine. The former India coach was full of praise for Sooryavanshi, who scored 776 runs for Rajasthan Royals in IPL 2026 at a staggering strike rate of 237.3. "At just 15 years of age, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi did not merely make a mark on the tournament, he detonated it. Amassing 776 runs with a strike rate of 237.3, he systematically dismantled some of the most sophisticated bowling attacks on the planet. His record-shattering 72 sixes eclipsed Chris Gayle's legendary single-season milestone, establishing a benchmark that defies conventional cricket logic," Chappell wrote. However, Chappell argued that performances of such magnitude should not be possible unless the game has become heavily skewed in favour



of batters. "If a child who has barely completed his physical development can step onto the global stage and effortlessly humiliate elite international bowlers, it exposes a systemic illness within the sport," Chappell said. According to Chappell, the imbalance has been worsened by innovations such as the Impact Player rule in the IPL, which effectively allows teams to field an additional specialist batter. "The structural parameters of modern T20 have turned a rare, magical

masterclass into an assembly-line expectation. This imbalance has been institutionalised by the short-sighted introduction of the Impact Player rule in the IPL, a tactical luxury that effectively grants the batting side an extra specialist hitter without consequence," he added. Chappell warned that T20 cricket was approaching a tipping point and risked becoming little more than a batting exhibition unless steps were taken to restore balance between bat and ball.

Andre Agassi praises Maja Chwalinska after her historic Roland Garros run

Paris: Eight-time Grand Slam champion Andre Agassi stepped forward with a heartfelt message for Maja Chwalinska following her Roland Garros final defeat, reminding the Polish qualifier exactly what her historic run meant to the sport. Despite falling in the final hurdle against Mirra Andreeva, the 24-year-old had plenty of reasons to smile after completing the tournament of her life. Speaking to the Polish player during her appearance at the TNT Sports studio, where Agassi was working as an analyst, the former world number one took the opportunity to uplift her spirits. When Chwalinska emotionally admitted that she did not know what she had done to deserve such an overwhelming wave of support, the American legend offered some powerful words of comfort to help her process her achievements. "Well, if you don't know why you deserve it, let me help you understand that. You qualified and got to the finals, one of the toughest challenges in all of our sport." "Don't be distracted by those articles. Don't be distracted by wins and losses. Keep making yourself better because you're a gift to this sport."



Agassi's praise carries incredible weight, considering Chwalinska entered Paris ranked No. 114 and completely rewrote the record books by winning nine matches in a row across three weeks. By reaching the championship match, she became the first qualifier in history to reach the women's singles final at Roland Garros, and only the second female qualifier in the entire Open Era to do so at a Grand Slam, joining Emma Raducanu. Chwalinska's historic journey in Paris was nothing short of a fairytale, requiring her to win three consecutive qualifying matches just to get her name into the main draw. From there, she turned into a giant-killer, securing spectacular straight-set upsets over elite players like Qinwen Zheng and Elise Mertens, before fighting through

a three-set thriller against world number nine Maria Sakkari. She then defeated Diane Parry, Anna Kalinskaya, and Diana Shnaider to book her dream spot in the finale. The championship match on Court Philippe-Chatrier proved to be a step too far against eighth-seeded Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva. Chwalinska fought hard early on and even held a 3-2 lead in the first set, but Andreeva handled the windy conditions beautifully, reeling off nine consecutive games to close out a 6-3, 6-2 victory. Despite the final heartbreak, Chwalinska's career has changed forever; her world ranking is projected to skyrocket 93 places to a career-high No. 21, guaranteeing her direct entry into the world's

biggest tournaments without ever needing to play a qualifier again. Andre Agassi praised Polish qualifier Maja Chwalinska after her historic run to the Roland Garros women's singles final, despite losing to Mirra Andreeva. Ranked 114th, Chwalinska made history as the first qualifier to reach the French Open final and only the second in the Open Era at a Grand Slam. Her journey included nine consecutive wins and upsets over top players. Though she lost the final, her ranking will rise to No. 21, ensuring direct entry into major tournaments. Mirra Andreeva is finally a Grand Slam champion. The 19-year-old overcame an early wobble in the final before producing a dominant display to claim her maiden French Open title. On Saturday, June 6, the Russian needed just one hour and 22 minutes to end Polish qualifier Maja Chwalinska's dream run, winning the championship match 6-3, 6-2 at Roland Garros. With the victory, Andreeva became the youngest Roland Garros singles champion since Monica Seles in 1992. She is also the new No.1 in the race to the WTA Finals. After finishing runner-up in the Australian Open girls' singles event in 2023, Andreeva steadily established herself on the WTA Tour.

IPL style Yogasana Super League aims to boost yoga's upcoming Olympic dream

Ahmedabad: The first World Yogasana Championship has left the sport with a sense of optimism about its future and long-term sustainability. The vision has always been clear — to position Yogasana for the biggest stage possible, especially if India succeeds in its bid to host the 2036 Olympics, with Ahmedabad expected to be at the heart of the festivities. India dominated the inaugural World Yogasana Championship, winning 80 medals, including 70 golds. But beyond the medal tally, the focus has now shifted towards what comes next. The first major milestone is making Yogasana a demonstration sport at the Olympics. Yogasana Bharat president Udit Sheth revealed that the roadmap begins well before 2036. "You can see that by 2032 you may get a demo, not a medal tally, because before that it should become a medal sport in the Commonwealth Games," said Sheth to the media on the sidelines of the World Yogasana Championship. "Before that, maybe in 2028 or 2030, you can see it in the Asian Games also as a med-



al sport. Once it becomes a medal sport, then we can talk about the Olympics." Alongside the Olympic push is perhaps the most ambitious project yet — the launch of an IPL-inspired franchise competition, the Yogasana Super League. Sheth revealed that nearly 90 percent of the preparations for the league are complete and that the project is ready to move into its next phase.

The league is expected to become a key pillar in Yogasana's bid for Olympic recognition while also helping expand the sport's global footprint. According to Sheth, the league will not follow a traditional sporting

structure. Instead, it will blend elements of entertainment and elite competition, borrowing ideas from talent-based reality shows while retaining the competitive edge of franchise sports. The Yogasana Bharat chief said the league would be a hybrid model, drawing inspiration from shows such as America's Got Talent and Indian Idol, while also incorporating elements of football's franchise-league ecosystem. Importantly, it will not be as long as major football leagues that stretch over six months. The competition is expected to begin with eight teams before gradually expanding into a larger ecosystem.