

## Why Aizawl is referred to as a “Silent City” by Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma

**Aizawl, June 12:** Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma has highlighted Aizawl’s unique civic culture as one of the key reasons behind the state’s growing popularity among tourists, describing the capital as a “silent city” where unnecessary honking is virtually absent.

Speaking to India Today NE, Lalduhoma said visitors to Aizawl are often struck by the city’s disciplined traffic culture and peaceful atmosphere. ”

If you come to Aizawl, you will never hear horns unless it is absolutely necessary. It is called a silent city,” the chief minister said.

According to Lalduhoma, the city’s quiet streets and orderly public behaviour reflect the broader social environment in Mizoram, which he described as India’s most peaceful state.

He added that another feature that fascinates visitors is the presence of unattended shops operating on trust, where goods are left without shopkeepers and custom-



ers make payments voluntarily.

The chief minister’s remarks come amid a sharp rise in tourist arrivals to the state. He said Mizoram welcomed around eight

lakh visitors in 2025 and expressed confidence that Aizawl is steadily emerging as one of the Northeast’s leading tourism destinations.

Lalduhoma attributed the tourism

boom to improved connectivity, particularly the railway connection inaugurated last year, as well as the state’s peaceful environment and strong social indicators. He not-

ed that Mizoram recently became India’s first fully literate state and has also gained recognition as the country’s ginger capital.

The chief minister said the state’s reputation as one of the safest places for women has further enhanced its appeal among domestic and international travellers.

Looking ahead, Lalduhoma said tourism growth is expected to continue, with destinations such as Thenzawl being developed into major attractions.

The town is being transformed into a Peace City and will feature tourism infrastructure including an international-standard golf course, paragliding facilities, a ropeway project and access to some of Mizoram’s most scenic natural attractions.

“As tourism continues to grow, Aizawl’s unique identity as a silent city is becoming one of the state’s strongest attractions,” the chief minister said.

### Assam CID to Question BJP MLA Ramakanta Deuri i

**Guwahati, June 12:** BJP MLA Ramakanta Deuri is scheduled to appear before the Assam Criminal Investigation Department (CID) today in connection with the ongoing investigation into alleged irregularities in recruitment within the Assam Fisheries Development Corporation (AFDC). The development marks a significant step in the agency’s probe into claims of procedural violations and suspected irregularities in appointments made under the corporation. Deuri, who previously served as chairman of the AFDC, has been summoned for questioning as investigators seek to determine his role, if any, in the recruitment process under scrutiny.

The CID recently carried out search operations at the legislator’s residence in Morigaon district and collected documents and other materials believed to be relevant to the investigation. The agency has been examining recruitment records and the circumstances surrounding several appointments that have come under suspicion.

The probe has already led to action against several officials linked to the Fisheries Development Corporation, with investigators attempting to uncover the full extent of the alleged recruitment scam.

While political attention remains focused on the case, authorities have maintained that the investigation is being conducted strictly in accordance with legal procedures. Further developments are expected following Deuri’s appearance before the CID.

### Special Court to Hear Fresh Bail Pleas of Former Zubeen Garg Bodyguards

**Guwahati, June 12:** A special court in Assam is set to hear fresh bail applications filed by two former bodyguards of late Assamese music icon Zubeen Garg in connection with a disproportionate assets case being investigated by the Chief Minister’s Vigilance Cell. The accused, Paresh Baishya and Nandeshwar Bora, have approached the Special Judge’s Court after their earlier bail requests were rejected by a special fast-track court. The hearing is scheduled for Thursday, with the court expected to consider the merits of their renewed petitions.

The case relates to allegations that the two men possessed assets beyond their known sources of income. The vigilance investigation was launched following the registration of a case by the state’s anti-corruption authorities, and inquiries into the matter remain ongoing.

Legal observers are closely watching the proceedings, as the outcome could influence the direction of the broader investigation. The court is expected to decide whether the accused should be granted relief while the probe continues.

The case has attracted public attention due to the involvement of individuals once closely associated with the celebrated singer. However, investigators have maintained that the inquiry is focused solely on the allegations of disproportionate assets and that the legal process will proceed in accordance with established procedures.



## Mizoram CM addresses 11th NITI Aayog governing council meeting

**Aizawl, June 12:** Chief Minister Lalduhoma highlighted Mizoram’s achievements, aspirations, and development priorities in his address at the 11th meeting of the NITI Aayog Governing Council in New Delhi on Thursday. The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The theme of this year’s meeting was “Human Capital for Viksit Bharat.” Chief Minister Pu Lalduhoma attended the meeting and delivered an address highlighting Mizoram’s achievements, aspirations, and development priorities. The Chief Minister stated that Mizoram has become the first fully literate state in India and has recorded significant progress in the Human Development Index. He noted that all districts of Mizoram have been categorized as “Front Runners” in the North Eastern Region District Sustainable Development Index Report. In alignment with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the State Government is implementing its own roadmap, “Transformed Mizoram 2047.”

Mizoram aims to contribute 1% to India’s GDP by the year 2047. The Chief Minister emphasized that achieving full literacy is only the beginning. The Government is now focusing on strengthening digital literacy, financial literacy, skill development, and entrepreneurship. Young people are being equipped with skills relevant to emerging industries and technologies, including Electric Vehicle (EV) Maintenance, Drone Technology, Artificial Intelligence, and Solar Technology. During the last financial year, around 26,500 youths have received various forms of skill training, with more than 72 percent securing employment thereafter. He also highlighted Mizoram’s achievement as the Champion State in the IndiaSkills North East Regional Competition 2025–26. Recognizing the importance of in-



novation and entrepreneurship, the State Government has launched the Chief Minister’s Innovation Challenge, involving Government Departments, Civil Society Organizations, educational institutions, and grassroots stakeholders. To support aspiring entrepreneurs and start-ups, the Government has also established the Mizoram Handholding Venture Capital Fund. The Chief Minister further stressed the importance of digital transformation. Mizoram today ranks among the best-connected states in the North East in terms of telecom infrastructure and has achieved a tele-density of 112. The State has successfully implemented e-Office systems, initiated the digitization of land records, and expanded the delivery of digital public services. Referring to the

Prime Minister’s vision for the North East, the Chief Minister strongly advocated for the implementation of the recommendations of the High-Level Committee on the North East Economic Corridor (NEEC).

The proposal envisages an integrated “One Grid Approach” for the North East, covering roads, railways, air connectivity, inland waterways, power transmission, telecommunications, and logistics infrastructure. He described the proposal as a transformative initiative that would greatly benefit all North Eastern states. It may be noted that Chief Minister Lalduhoma serves as the Convener of the High-Level Committee on NEEC, and the Committee’s recommendations were formally submitted to Union Home Minister and Chair-

man of the NEC Plenary, Amit Shah, during the NEC Plenary Meeting held on June 4. The Chief Minister also advocated for a cluster-based investment strategy that recognizes the unique strengths of individual North Eastern states. He also underscored Mizoram’s immense tourism potential and stressed the importance of realizing the Thenzawl Peace City Project. Furthermore, he requested special support from the Central Government for Mizoram’s Handholding Programme, which aligns closely with the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047. Appreciating the positive impact of the NITI Aayog State Support Mission in Mizoram, the Chief Minister expressed hope for the early launch of State Support Mission 2.0. (EOM)

## Living root bridges shortlisted for UNESCO World Heritage evaluation

**Shillong, June 12:** The iconic living root bridges of Meghalaya is now poised for UNESCO World Heritage status after India’s nomination of the “Jingkieng Jri / Living Root Bridge Cultural Landscape” was accepted for the 2027 World Heritage cycle. According to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Meghalaya’s nomination is among 34 global submissions that cleared the completeness check. The World Heritage Committee will now evaluate the nomination during its 49th session in 2027.

Altogether 46 nominations were submitted globally before the January 2026 deadline. While the submissions were made under cultural criteria (i), (iii), and (v), the nomination highlights the unique living architecture developed by indigenous Khasi communities through cul-



tivating and weaving aerial roots of rubber fig trees to create bridges across rivers and streams.

UNESCO has described the site as a cultural landscape comprising three

parts reflecting the close relationship between local communities and their natural environment. The living root bridges, which provide vital connectivity and livelihood infrastruc-

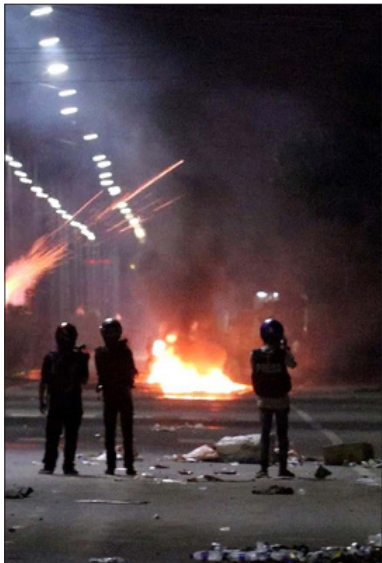
ture for more than 75 remote villages, demonstrate exceptional harmony between humans and nature while showcasing centuries-old indigenous knowledge, collective cooperation, and climate resilience.

Root bridge construction traditions in the Sohra region are documented from the early 19th century, noting the remarkable engineering and botanical characteristics enabling the structures to grow stronger over time. The nomination will undergo detailed technical assessment by UNESCO’s advisory bodies before the World Heritage Committee’s final decision in 2027. If approved, the living root bridges would join UNESCO’s World Heritage sites list, bringing global recognition to Meghalaya’s indigenous engineering heritage and community-led conservation practices.

## KCLF condemns renewed violence in Manipur

**Imphal, June 12:** The Kuki Christian Leaders’ Forum (KCLF) has expressed grief over the killing of six Naga hostages and condemned the recent attack in Kamjong district that resulted in the deaths of two Kuki church leaders and displacement of several families. The Christian leaders’ body said the state continues to witness acts of violence and killings more than three years after ethnic clashes broke out on May 3, 2023, and appealed to all communities to refrain from retaliatory actions that could further deepen suffering and instability.

The KCLF described the recovery of the bodies of the six hostages as a tragic loss of human lives that has added to the pain caused by the prolonged conflict. The Forum extended solidarity to the bereaved families and called for an end to violence across communities. The organisation also highlighted the recent attack on Kultuh village in Kamjong district, where the Head Deacon and Youth Chairman of the village Baptist Church were killed. The incident,



according to the KCLF, reflected the continuing cycle of violence affecting civilians and community leaders.

The ongoing violence has witnessed many brutal and barbaric acts of killings,” the Forum said, while urging people to reject revenge and work towards peace and reconciliation. Emphasising the need for unity be-

yond ethnic divisions, the KCLF said the values of compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation must guide efforts to restore peace in Manipur. It appealed to communities to rebuild trust through dialogue and collective efforts.

The Forum also recalled its earlier response to the safe release of 14 Kuki hostages after 28 days in captivity, appreciating the role of Senapati-based Naga civil society organisations in facilitating their unconditional release.

The KCLF had described the release as a positive development reflecting compassion and reconciliation, saying it provided hope for renewed dialogue among communities affected by the prolonged conflict. The organisation also recalled earlier peace initiatives undertaken by Kuki church leaders and civil society groups, including efforts led by late Rev. V. Sithou, who had travelled to Kohima following an invitation from the Nagaland Joint Christian Forum (NJCF) to explore possibilities for a ceasefire and lasting peace. (EOM)

## NE/EAST

## Rio seeks central support for key infrastructure projects at NITI Aayog meeting

**Kohima, June 13:** Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has highlighted the state's achievements in sustainable development, governance reforms and human capital development while seeking the Centre's support for several major infrastructure projects during the 11th Governing Council Meeting of NITI Aayog in New Delhi. According to an official report issued by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Rio reaffirmed Nagaland's commitment to the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047 and outlined the state's progress across various sectors.

Addressing the meeting, the chief minister said Nagaland has emerged as a national leader in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-5, which focuses on gender equality. He also informed the council that Mokochung, Kohima and Dimapur were among the top ten performers in the Northeast District SDG Index 2.0, reflecting the state's efforts in achieving development targets. Rio highlighted several governance reforms undertaken by the state government, including SDG-linked budgeting, gender budgeting and outcome-based budgeting.

He said these initiatives have helped improve transparency, accountability and evidence-based planning in government programmes. Speaking on women-led development, the chief minister referred to initiatives such as the Innovation



Seed Fund for nano women entrepreneurs and the Pink Scooty Taxi programme. He also highlighted efforts aimed at promoting water resilience, bamboo-based value chains and the green economy.

On youth development, Rio outlined programmes being implemented under the Nagaland Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Mission, Nagaland Apprenticeship and Placement Exchange, Chief Minister's STEM Incentive Programme, Academic Excellence Corpus and Open Learning Support Scheme. He said these initiatives are aimed at enhancing employability and creating opportunities for young people across the state.

The chief minister also highlighted fiscal and administrative reforms, including the modernisation of land revenue systems, introduction of e-Stamping, implementation of the e-GRAS digital revenue platform and the establishment of a revenue and development fund mobilisation cell. In the agriculture sector, Rio stressed

the need for stronger food processing facilities and post-harvest infrastructure to support farmers. He also highlighted efforts to promote coffee cultivation and high-value horticultural crops such as kiwi, persimmon, dragon fruit, avocado and pineapple.

Tourism and culture were identified as important drivers of economic growth. Rio said flagship events such as the Hornbill Festival and Mini Hornbill Festivals have helped generate livelihoods while showcasing and preserving Naga cultural heritage. Speaking on the meeting's theme, "Human Capital for Viksit Bharat @ 2047", Rio highlighted several initiatives in education, skill development, sports and digital governance.

These included the development of lighthouse school complexes, the Smile App for monitoring teacher attendance, vocational education programmes, artificial intelligence-based skill development initiatives and the proposed AI research centre in Kohima. He also

highlighted sports development programmes, including the "Catch Them Young, Teach Them Right" initiative, the Nagaland Super League and efforts to expand sports infrastructure across districts. Seeking continued support from the Centre, Rio proposed several key infrastructure and development projects for Nagaland.

These included the Foot-hill Road, also known as the Trans-Nagaland Highway, a Greenfield Airport at Ciethu, establishment of an AIIMS and an IIT in Nagaland, development of Nagaki City, railway expansion, resumption of oil and natural gas exploration, inland waterways development, construction of urban flyovers, promotion of agarwood cultivation and strengthening of power transmission infrastructure. The chief minister said these projects would play a significant role in improving connectivity, boosting economic growth and creating new opportunities for the people of the state.

Expressing confidence in the outcomes of the meeting, Rio said the discussions would further strengthen cooperative federalism and contribute to the goal of building a stronger, more inclusive and resilient India. He emphasised that sustained cooperation between the Centre and the states would be essential for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 while ensuring balanced and inclusive development across all regions of the country.

## Eleven shops found violating trade norms during enforcement drive in Arunachal's Doimukh



**Itanagar, June 12:** A joint enforcement team conducting a market inspection in Doimukh town of Arunachal Pradesh's Papum Pare district found 11 commercial establishments violating trade regulations, including operating without valid licenses and selling tobacco products near educational institutions.

The inspection was carried out in areas surrounding Government Higher Secondary School, Doimukh, and Government Middle School, Rono, as part of an effort to ensure compliance with trade regulations and maintain a tobacco-free environment around schools.

The joint team comprised officials from the district administration, Trade and Commerce Department and Doimukh Police Station. The drive was led by Doimukh Circle Officer Nyalisa Raji and included Trade Development Officer Sorang Yapa, Trade and Commerce Inspector Toko Mira, departmental staff and police personnel.

During the inspection, authorities found that eight shops were operating without valid trading licenses. In addition, three establishments were found conducting business with expired licenses.

Officials imposed penalties on the violators and collected a total of Rs 3,000 for breaches of licensing regulations. The enforcement team also took action against shops found displaying tobacco products near educational institutions. Officials seized visible tobacco products from establishments located close to school premises, citing violations of restrictions on the sale and display of tobacco products around schools.

Alongside enforcement measures, the team conducted an awareness programme for local traders and business owners. Shopkeepers were informed about the procedures for obtaining and renewing trading licenses through the Trade and Commerce Department and were encouraged to comply with

all legal requirements governing commercial activities. Officials specifically instructed traders not to stock, display or sell tobacco products within a 100-yard radius of schools and other educational institutions.

They warned that any future violations would invite stricter legal action. Authorities said repeat offenders could face stronger measures, including the sealing of their establishments if they continue to violate regulations despite warnings and enforcement action.

The district administration stated that the inspection drive was undertaken to promote lawful business practices, strengthen regulatory compliance and protect students from exposure to tobacco products near educational institutions. Officials added that similar inspections and awareness programmes may be conducted in the future to ensure that businesses operate in accordance with the law and that public spaces around schools remain safe and healthy for students.

## Eight from Assam awarded Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards and Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar

**Guwahati, June 12:** Eight artistes from Assam have been selected for the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards and the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the years 2024 and 2025. Among the recipients of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards, Prema Oja Barbayan (Sattriya Dance) and Bipul Chandra Das (Kathak Dance) were selected for 2024. For 2025, the awardees from Assam are Chetana Das (Acting), Mallika Kandali (Sattriya Dance), and Bhaskar Jyoti Oja (Sattriya Music).

The Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar recipients from Assam for 2024 are Minakshi

Medhi (Sattriya Dance), Dilip Hira (Folk Music), and Bidyut Kumar Nath (Theatre Direction). For 2025, the young artistes selected for the honour are Niranjana Saikia Borbayan (Sattriya Dance), Debajit Saikia (Khol Percussion), and Hirak Jyoti Sarma (Tokari Geet and Folk Music).

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal have congratulated the recipients. Chief Minister Sarma said the honours reflect the strength and diversity of Assam's artistic traditions.

"Heartiest congratulations to all the recipients." "Their remarkable achievements are

a testament to their years of dedication and to the enduring strength of Assam's cultural ethos," Sonowal added.

The awards, conferred by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, India's national academy for music, dance and drama, are among the country's highest recognitions in the field of performing arts. The recognition of artistes from diverse disciplines, including Sattriya dance, folk music, theatre, acting and traditional percussion, is being seen as a significant boost to Assam's efforts to preserve and promote its cultural legacy on the national stage. (EOM)

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## Vehicle carrying 60 LPG cylinders seized in Bongaigaon; black marketing angle under scrutiny

**Bongaigaon, June 12:** A vehicle carrying around 60 LPG cylinders was seized in Assam's Bongaigaon district after local residents intercepted it on suspicion of illegal transportation and possible black marketing of cooking gas cylinders, officials and local sources said.

The incident took place on Thursday night at Kirtanpara market, where residents reportedly stopped the vehicle and alerted Borghola Police.

Following the information, police personnel reached the spot and took possession of the vehicle and the cylinders for further investigation. According to local residents, the vehicle was carrying a large consignment of LPG cylinders at a time when consumers and commercial establishments in several parts of the region are reportedly facing shortages of cooking gas.

The seizure has raised questions among residents regarding the purpose of the transportation and the intended destination of the cylinders. Local sources al-



leged that the cylinders belonged to a gas agency located in the Panbari area of Chirang district and were allegedly being transported

to an individual identified as Salam of Dumuria in Abhayapuri. However, the exact details regarding the ownership and destination

of the cylinders have not yet been officially confirmed.

Residents also expressed concern over the movement

of such a large number of cylinders amid reports of limited availability of LPG supplies in the area. Some locals alleged that the cylinders may have been intended for sale in the black market, where cooking gas cylinders are reportedly being sold at prices ranging between Rs 1,500 and Rs 2,000.

These allegations, however, have not been independently verified and are currently part of the ongoing inquiry. The incident has triggered concern among consumers as well as business owners.

Several hotel and restaurant operators in the region have reportedly been facing difficulties due to shortages of LPG cylinders, affecting their daily operations.

Meanwhile, allegations have surfaced that journalists who reached the location to cover the incident were prevented from collecting information by police personnel present at the spot.

There was no immediate official response from the police regarding the allegation.

## Missing Bangladeshi Man Reunited with Family After 24 Hours in No-Man's Land Along Meghalaya Border

**Guwahati, June 12:** After spending nearly 24 hours stranded in no-man's land along the India-Bangladesh border, a Bangladeshi man was finally reunited with his family on Thursday, bringing an end to a tense cross-border standoff.

The development also established that the man, whom Bangladesh's Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) had allegedly attempted to identify as an Indian national, was in fact a citizen of Bangladesh.

Tensions had flared on Wednesday along the Jalmalpur border between Bangladesh's Bokshiganj area and Meghalaya after BGB claimed that India's Border Security Force (BSF) was trying to push an Indian citizen into Bangladesh.

BGB personnel and local villagers reportedly blocked the move, leading to heated exchanges and stone-pelting between residents on both sides of the border. A flag meeting between the BSF and BGB failed to resolve the issue. Rejecting the allegations, BSF officials maintained that the man was actually



a resident of Bangladesh's Rajshahi district. According to BSF sources, it was the BGB that had detained him and attempted to push him into India through the Nandir Char sector near Mahendraganj in Meghalaya.

As both sides stood by their claims, the man remained stranded overnight in the border's no-man's land. The incident quickly gained attention on social media in both countries. On Thursday, family members identified the man from online reports and photographs.

He was confirmed to be Shasthi Chandra Barman, son of Babu Chandra Barman of Chandlai village in

Godagari Upazila, Rajshahi district. Family members revealed that he had been missing for the past two months. Following verification of his identity, Bangladeshi authorities brought him to Bokshiganj Police Station.

At around 4:30 pm, he was formally handed over to his elder brother, Bhabani Barman.

The emotional reunion saw both brothers break down in tears before leaving for their home in Rajshahi. The episode highlights the complexities of border management and the humanitarian challenges that can arise amid disputes over nationality and cross-border movement.

# As about 900 residents start to relocate, the Dharavi project gains momentum

**Mumbai, Jun 12:**The Dharavi Redevelopment Project is advancing with the BMC issuing eviction notices to Shahunagar residents for redevelopment. This follows prior notices for families in Sector 6 to prepare for temporary relocation. The goal is to clear land for rehabilitation and expedite the construction of permanent homes. The Maharashtra Government aims to transition the project from planning to execution, responding to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis' directive to make 10,000



homes available by 2028. Approximately 900 BMC tenants in Shahunagar will need to relocate temporarily, with options for transit

accommodation in MHADA buildings, which offer larger, better-quality living spaces. Agreements will outline terms for relocation and re-

habilitation entitlements. Residents in units up to 275 sq ft will receive a monthly rent allowance of Rs 22,000, while those in 375 sq ft units will get Rs 30,000, alongside a one-time shifting allowance of Rs 15,000. Each family will be promised homes with a minimum carpet area of 500 sq ft or 1.35 times their current area. Efforts are being made to ensure a smooth relocation process aimed at minimizing inconvenience while enabling timely construction and delivery of new homes.

## MoS Margherita said that school dropouts are a concern

**Guwahati, Jun 11:** Pabitra Margherita, the Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Textiles, expressed worry over school dropouts and emphasized the importance of ensuring high-quality education and keeping every child in the educational system.On Wednesday, Margherita chaired a review conference in Likabali, Lower Siang district, where she examined the execution of state and federal flagship programs and talked about how to make them better. According to him, development initiatives are essential to the future of Arunachal Pradesh and must be regularly evaluated. Deputy Speaker Kardo Nyigyor brought attention to issues with road connectivity during the meeting, especially along the Akajan-Likabali-Bame road. Meanwhile, Nari Koyu MLA Tojir Kadu requested more allocations under rural housing projects. The minister was also informed by department heads and district officials on welfare issues, infrastructural needs, and developmental accomplishments.

## A model was arrested for smuggling marijuana worth Rs 11.82 crore from Bangkok to Mumbai

**Mumbai, Jun 12:** After arriving in Mumbai, a 28-year-old model was immediately arrested for transporting more than 11 kg of premium “hydroponic marijuana.” The model, named as Harsha Sunny, was stopped at the Mumbai airport while traveling from Bangkok after authorities saw strange behavior in her routine surveillance. Customs officials claim that on the evening of June 10–11, Harsha Sunny took Air India aircraft TG-351 from Bangkok to Chha-

trapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai. Noting Sunny’s behaviour, officials from the Air Intelligence Unit (AIU) and the Customs Department stopped her. Upon searching her trolley bag, officials found 12 vacuum-sealed plastic packets full of “green substance.” An on-the-spot chemical test using a Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) kit confirmed the substance to be high-quality ‘hydroponic marijuana.’ Follow-

ing this, the Customs Department arrested Harsha Sunny under the NDPS Act for smuggling banned narcotics.The ‘hydroponic marijuana’, weighing over 11 kg, is valued at Rs 11.82 crore.Harsha Sunny, a former ‘Mrs Kerala’ 2025 contestant, was produced before the Fort Court which remanded her to judicial custody.The investigation is underway to ascertain where in Mumbai or other parts of the country this consignment was intended to be delivered.

## The governor calls an assembly, and the Assam budget session will start on July 6

**Guwahati , Jun 12:** The Budget Session of the Sixteenth Assam Legislative Assembly has been called by Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya to meet on July 6, 2026. The Assam Legislative Assembly Secretariat has officially announced that the meeting will start on Monday, July 6 at 9:30 am in the Assembly Chamber in Dispur.According to the notification, the Governor

used the authority granted by Article 174(1) of the Indian Constitution to issue the order on June 10. ”In exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 174 of the Constitution of India, I, Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Governor of Assam, hereby summon the Budget Session of the Sixteenth Assam Legislative Assembly to meet at 9.30 A.M. on Monday, the 6th July, 2026

at the Assembly Chamber in Dispur,” according to the order.Rajib Bhattacharyya, the Assembly’s Secretary-in-Charge, signed the notification, which was released by the Assam Legislative Assembly Secretariat. It is anticipated that the state’s financial proposals, governmental policies, and other legislative matters will be discussed during the next Budget Session.

## Why Aizawl is referred to as a “Silent City” by Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma

**Aizawl, Jun 12:** Aizawl’s distinctive civic culture is one of the main factors contributing to the state’s rising tourism appeal, according to Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma, who has described the capital as a “silent city” with almost no needless honking.Lalduhoma told India Today NE that tourists are frequently impressed by Aizawl’s tranquil atmosphere and orderly traffic culture.”Horns will never be heard in Aizawl unless they are absolutely essential. The chief minister remarked, “It’s known as a silent city.” Lalduhoma claims that the city’s serene streets and well-behaved citizens are a reflection of Mizoram’s overall social climate, which he characterized as India’s most tranquil state. The existence of unattended stores that operate on trust, where goods are left without salespeople and customers make voluntary payments, is another element that captivates tourists, he continued.The chief minister’s comments coincide with a notable increase in the number of visitors to the state. He stated that almost eight lakh tourists visited Mizoram in 2025 and expressed optimism that

Aizawl is becoming one of the top travel destinations in the Northeast.Lalduhoma credited the state’s tranquil surroundings, robust socio-economic indicators, and better connectivity—especially the train connection that was opened last year—for the tourism surge. He pointed out that Mizoram has recently emerged as the nation’s ginger capital and as India’s first entirely literate state.According to the chief minister, the state’s standing as one of the safest locations for women has increased its allure to both local and foreign tourists.

According to Lalduhoma, tourism growth is anticipated to continue in the future, with places like Thenzawl developing into popular tourist destinations. In addition to an international-standard golf course, paragliding facilities, a ropeway project, and access to some of Mizoram’s most picturesque natural attractions, the town is being developed into a Peace City.The chief minister stated, “Aizawl’s distinct identity as a silent city is becoming one of the state’s strongest attractions as tourism continues to grow.”

## Allegations of a Rs 300-crore fisheries fraud rock Arunachal; according to JAC, “ghost ponds” were used to drain money

**Itanagar, Jun 12:** Allegations of widespread financial irregularities in the Fisheries Department have sparked a major controversy in Arunachal Pradesh. Activists and former officials claim that over Rs 300 crore may have been embezzled through unauthorized transactions and fictitious projects.

Members of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) on the Fisheries Scam claim to have discovered violations of over Rs 100 crore in Lower Subansiri district and about Rs 183 crore in Kra Daadi district. In order to steal public monies, the accused scheme allegedly involved the construction of “ghost ponds” and fictitious fisheries initiatives. The matter is currently under investigation by the Special Investigation Cell (SIC-Vigilance), Itanagar, with the case reportedly dating

back to the period between 2018 and 2024Speaking to India Today, former Fisheries Minister and current Chairman of Science and Technology, Tage Taki, termed the allegations “most unfortunate and painful.” He alleged that certain District Fisheries Development Officers (DFDOs), in collusion with treasury officials, siphoned off large sums from the state exchequer without the knowledge of the minister, secretary, or commissioner concerned.

Taki stated that during his tenure from 2019 to 2024, the Fisheries Department generally received less than Rs 20 crore annually, apart from central schemes. He said documents reportedly uncovered during audits indicating expenditures of Rs 183 crore in a single district warrant a thorough inves-

tigation and strict action against those found responsible.Meanwhile, student activist and JAC member Takam Chacha alleged that the scam involved unauthorized financial transactions carried out by departmental and treasury officials in Kra Daadi district, particularly in the Palin and Jamin areas.

Political attention has also been brought to the matter, as local MLA and Urban Affairs Minister Balo Raja has publicly responded to growing concerns over how such large sums of money were being distributed without ministerial consent.Local NGOs, student organizations, and public watchdog groups have alleged that money intended for the development of fisheries was misappropriated through fictitious projects and false docu-

mentation. According to reports, a number of transactions might have been carried out without the required permissions from the commissioner, secretary, or minister.

The Joint Action Committee recently sent a memo to Pema Khandu, the chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, requesting an open and prompt investigation. Additionally, the committee has threatened democratic protests in the event that individuals found guilty do not face severe punishment.Tage Taki, a former minister, has said he is willing to fully help with any investigation and denies any role in the alleged scheme.

The suspected fisheries fraud is becoming one of Arunachal Pradesh’s biggest financial scandals in recent years as the SIC-Vigilance investigation moves on.

# Sharad Pawar, Mamata Banerjee, and Leaders Advocate for the “Akhand” Congress



**New Delhi , Jun 12:** Will Sharad Pawar’s Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-SP) and Mamata Banerjee’s Trinamool Congress rejoin the Congress? In the midst of the Trinamool Congress’s current turmoil, there is a lot of conjecture in political circles regarding the parties’ intentions to rejoin the Congress.While KC Venugopal, the general secretary of the Congress Organization, dismissed the Trinamool merger talks as “baseless rumours” on Thursday, Nana Patole, the party’s senior leader in Maharashtra, gave a strong indication that the move might be underway. Patole has said that the “like-minded parties” are preparing to merge with the Congress.

“Sharad Pawar and Mamata Banerjee are making up their mind for a merger with the Congress,” Patole told reporters insisting that it will not be an alliance, but a merger. Patole went on to claim that a proposal for NCP-SP’s merger has already been made by Sharad Pawar and is in the works. ”Pawar Saheb’s NCP plan was previously presented, but it was postponed for several reasons. However, given the current situation of the nation’s politics, I believe that all parties with secular, pluralistic views should come together to prevent the widespread division of votes,” he said.Patole asserted, “This process has now started at the national level, and whether it is

the Trinamool Congress or Pawar Saheb, all are now showing the willingness to merge with Congress.” Sanjay Raut, the head of the Shiv Sena UBT, expressed a similar view a few days ago when he called on Sharad Pawar to “take the lead” in reuniting the minor parties that emerged after breaking away from the Congress with the Grand Old Party.”Leaders of smaller parties that emerged from it must comprehend the situation, and Congress must be strong,” Raut had stated. Supriya Sule, the daughter of Sharad Pawar and leader of the NCP-SP, called it a “good proposal” and stated that only time would tell what would happen next. She had responded cryptically, “Let it rain first, then we’ll see whether to take an umbrella or a raincoat,” without turning down Raut’s suggestion. Ashok Gehlot, a senior Congress leader and former chief minister of Rajasthan, has added to the political discourse by urging the minor parties to unite with the Congress and acknowledge Rahul Gandhi as their leader.There is truth to what Sanjay Raut said. The moment has arrived. Gehlot stated that all parties that split from the Congress and established regional parties have to rejoin and fully embrace Rahul Gandhi as their leader.

## Six Naga civilians were killed, and the Native Peoples’ Committee wants an independent investigation



**Imphal, Jun 12:** The Native Peoples’ Committee, Manipur (NPCM) has called for an impartial inquiry into the circumstances behind the kidnapping and killings of six Naga citizens, whose remains were just found.The organization expressed sorrow over the deaths of the six people—Kenpibou, Phenrongwi Thiumai, Rev. Dr. Manu Thiumai, Dilip

Thiumai, Kaliwangbou Abonmai, and Ch. Phenrilung of Konsakhul village in Kangpokpi district—in a statement released by its Information and Publicity Committee.

The NPCM called the incident a serious violation of human rights and claimed that the victims were tortured before being slain. According to the organization, pastors and other church officials were among the dead.

The committee stated it stands in solidarity with those impacted by the tragedy and offered condolences to the grieving families and the larger Naga community.Concerns about how the government handled the hostage situation were also voiced by the organization. It asked for explanation on the events leading up to the six Naga civilians’ murders and the release of the fourteen Kuki captives, as

well as if enough attempts had been taken to achieve their release. NPCM stated that the situation had raised public concerns and demanded that the government and security services provide an open explanation.

The committee demanded accountability and demanded an unbiased, independent, and timely investigation into the kidnapping and murder of the six citizens.

It called on authorities to find and prosecute everyone involved and to look into the involvement of any people or organizations that might have had information regarding the whereabouts of the hostages.

The group also aimed to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the activities of all local actors purportedly involved in the holding, transportation, or hiding of the hostages.

## The Meghalaya government is awaiting a policy assessment of the alternative coal mining proposal

**Shillong, Jun 12:** Before bringing up the issue with the Center for a review of the current mining framework, the Meghalaya government stated that it was awaiting an alternate mining plan from coal dealers and stakeholders.

According to Deputy Chief Minister Snaiwbhalang Dhar, the government spoke with East Jaintia Hills coal traders and requested that they submit their ideas to the Department of Mining and Geology and the Directorate of Mineral Resources. He stated that after hearing the plan, Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma would call a joint meeting with mining associations.

According to Dhar, stakeholders expressed concerns about the size of mining re-



gions and the high expense of open-pit mining, and they told the government that the current scientific mining model was not

practical in some parts of Meghalaya, especially in Jaintia Hills. According to him, the government would review

their recommendations and pursue the issue with the Indian government in compliance with current legislation.

## Home Minister: COBRA deployment to bolster security in Manipur

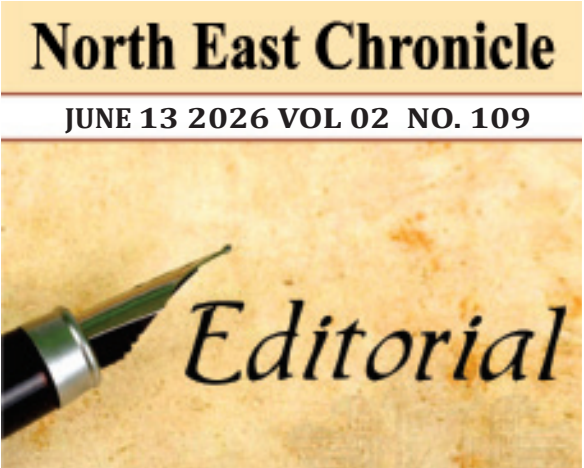
**Guwahati, Jun 11:** On June 11, Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam stated that the state’s law and order situation would be improved by the recent deployment of two CRPF Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) troops. After meeting the relatives of six Naga civilians whose bodies were being held at the mortuary for official procedures, Konthoujam told reporters at the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences that although there were few security forces in the state, the arrival of the specialized battalions would support operations. ”Our security forces are really little. However, I believe things will get better now that two COBRA battalions have been deployed,” he stated. The Central Reserve Police Force’s COBRA troops are elite groups with training in jungle combat and guerrilla warfare.Nonetheless, the minister

emphasized that public cooperation was still essential to bringing about peace.In order to prevent any violence, we, along with the chief minister, have consistently urged residents of the valley and the hills to work with the state government. Without public cooperation, security personnel cannot accomplish much, even with increased deployment,” he stated.Konthoujam called the murder of six individuals a “unprecedented and heinous crime” and promised to prosecute the perpetrators. ”

We are committed to arresting the perpetrators and taking action against those who have no humanity,” he stated.He also applauded the release of 14 Kuki people who were purportedly held captive by armed Naga factions, calling the event a sign of humanity. The state police chief’s attempts to locate the missing Naga citizens were also commended by the minister.On

Wednesday, Y Khemchand Singh declared that the government will not continue to be a “mute spectator” to such violent crimes. The chief minister promised to take severe measures against the killers in an official statement.The state administration will not stand by while these crimes are committed. The murderers will be apprehended and prosecuted in accordance with the law, Singh declared. On May 13, the six victims were kidnapped from Leilon Vaiphei village in the Kangpokpi area.

Their bodies were found the day after 14 Kuki people who had been kidnapped by armed groups in Senapati district about a month earlier were freed on June 9.Concerns about security in the hill districts have increased as a result of the killings, and authorities are hopeful that more specialized personnel and public assistance would help stop more violence.



Reclaiming Bengal's Crown

West Bengal was once the intellectual and economic heartbeat of India. Kolkata, its storied capital, was the crucible of the Renaissance, the cradle of industry, and the nerve centre of nationalist thought. That Bengal — visionary, dynamic, and culturally sovereign — feels distant today. The state’s descent from eminence is not a mystery. Decades of political patronage, institutional decay, and entrenched corruption have hollowed out its promise. Talent migrates. Investment hesitates.

Infrastructure lags. When merit is subordinated to loyalty and public resources are siphoned for private gain, it is ordinary citizens — farmers, students, the urban poor — who bear the heaviest cost.

The recent recruitment scandals in education and civic bodies are not aberrations; they are symptoms of a systemic rot.

The UK defense minister's shocking departure is a warning for all of Europe

Since the historic Nato summit in The Hague one year ago this month, European leaders have pledged massive increases in defence spending in the face of increasingly acute threats of Russian aggression. Yet the reality is that key west European governments – especially the UK, France and Italy – are not putting their money where their mouth is for fear of undermining lenders’ confidence in their national debt. Keir Starmer, Emmanuel Macron and Giorgia Meloni are behaving as if they were more scared of the bond markets than they are of the Russians. The dramatic resignation of the UK defence secretary John Healey in protest over Starmer’s reluctance to ramp up investment highlights how politically treacherous it has become to find these much-needed resources. In a damning resignation letter, the previously ultra-loyal Healey wrote to Starmer: “You have been unable, and the Treasury has been unwilling, to commit the resources that the nation needs to defend the country at this time of rising threats.” He also pointed to the growing gap between the UK’s ambition as co-leader of the coalition of the willing – to provide security guarantees for Ukraine and restore freedom of navigation in the strait of Hormuz – and the funding the government is willing to provide. The UK prime minister himself set out in stark terms the risk of more wars in Europe, saying on a visit to a drone manufacturer this month: “It is our intelligence assessment and the assessment of other countries in Nato that there could be an attack by Russia on Nato as soon as 2030.” Moscow is already conducting a covert war of sabotage, assassinations, cyber-attacks, drone intrusions and disinformation against Europe, and has switched to a war economy, spending an estimated 8% of its gross domestic product on the military. A reluctance to increase national debt for defence is understandable at a time of economic uncertainty, when government borrowing costs have risen across the western world. But it risks leaving Europe’s hollowed-out armed forces dangerously exposed as the US under Donald Trump disengages from European security.

There is a possible way out of this dilemma, which is to borrow jointly for defence with willing Euro-

pean Nato allies, creating a euro-denominated safe asset – something the financial markets have been seeking ever since the eurozone debt crisis began in 2010. The idea of eurobonds remains politically taboo in Germany, but Berlin did agree to one-off joint borrowing to support the EU economy during the Covid-19 pandemic. Defence bonds will have to be another exceptional measure justified by the exceptional geopolitical emergency. We can’t afford to wait until Russia actually attacks a Baltic Nato ally.

The European Commission granted EU countries extra leeway to borrow last year as part of a package of measures intended to turbocharge defence spending. Member states were allowed to borrow an additional 1.5% of GDP for military expenditure above the EU’s usual 3% budget deficit limit without incurring disciplinary action by Brussels. But EU economics commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis acknowledged last week that most countries are not making full use of this opportunity, which was supposed to generate an extra €650bn for defence spending across the continent. Some allies are indeed rapidly increasing military expenditure – especially Germany, Poland and the Baltic states – because they had low debt-to-GDP ratios and can afford to borrow. Nato countries agreed at The Hague summit to boost defence spending to 5% of GDP by 2035. Of that, 3.5% is intended for core military outlays and the other 1.5% for related costs such as road, rail, bridge, port and airport infrastructure; for easing the rapid transit of troops and equipment; and for protecting energy and communications networks. Germany plans to fulfil its 3.5% core defence spending goal by 2029, but the UK has only pledged to reach 3% some time in the next parliament – ie after 2029. Healey said the UK’s proposed trajectory would only take it to 2.68% in 2030, while those of France and Italy would only see them hit 2.5% by the end of the decade. The UK defence investment plan is six months late, leaving industry and international partners in limbo amid fierce guns-versus-butter fights in the cabinet over how to pay for it. These rows have now exploded into the open with Healey’s resignation.

Natural history GCSE will educate youngsters how to plant wildflower-friendly gardens

Long-awaited proposals for a natural history GCSE in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland were unveiled on Thursday, with students learning how to build a wildflower-friendly garden. For more than a decade, campaigners have urged for the study of biodiversity loss and global warming to be introduced as a distinct topic in classrooms across the country, but despite the fact that a curriculum has already been developed, its implementation has been repeatedly delayed. The government has launched a consultation on the GCSE curriculum, with proposals for pupils to study three major areas: ecosystems and animals in the UK; human effect on the natural world; and climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, and conservation. The naturalist, explorer, presenter and writer Steve Backshall said that with this generation expected to confront some of the “biggest challenges humanity has ever faced”, the qualification would give them the knowledge and tools to “not just understand those challenges, but to be part of the solution”. The subject content will also examine human influences on the natural world, such as fishing and deforestation, and explore how everyday actions, from creating wildlife-friendly gardens to reducing the mowing of roadside verges, can support biodiversity. A key part of the GCSE will include dedicated time outside, with teachers required to include at least 20 hours of fieldwork as part of the course. Access to green space for school pupils is far from equal. However, the education secretary, Bridget Phillipson, said the fieldwork could take place on school grounds or in a park.

“I want this to be a GCSE that is accessible and available to the widest range of young people, not something that is driven by whether people can afford expensive trips a considerable distance away,” she said. Stephanie Holt, the UK biodiversity training manager at the Natural History Museum, which has been working with the government to draw up the proposed curriculum, said that by focusing on hours spent outside rather than days, it would enable teachers and pupils to focus on the “species that are around you”. It was about “inspiring curiosity on your doorstep, literally no matter where that doorstep is”, she said. Phillipson said the GCSE would complement existing subjects such as biodiversity and geography, and that one of the “biggest changes” would be the extent to which young people were able to spend time getting practical skills. “It’s about bringing their classroom-based knowledge out into their community to really see how that works in a very hands-on way,” she said. Doug Gurr, the director of the Natural History Museum, said the GCSE would provide a “more accessible” way of learning by moving away from books. “Book learning is important, but it’s not for everybody,” he said. “We need people to do stuff as well as read books.”

The government has repeatedly been accused of attacking the value of the natural world, with the prime minister, Keir Starmer, and the chancellor, Rachel Reeves, repeatedly positioning nature as a blocker to economic growth. Phillipson maintained that growth was not in conflict with the natural environment and said the GCSE would “support young people to explore their interest and curiosity in the natural world”. The government plans for natural history to be first taught in schools at the same time as the teaching of the revised GCSEs after the recent curriculum and assessment review.

From Nehru’s Republic to the Modi Era



As Prime Minister Narendra Modi completes 12 years in power and becomes one of India’s longest-serving prime leaders, the country finds itself at a watershed moment. Few presidents since independence have had as significant an impact on public debate, governance agendas, and national ambitions as Modi. However, any appraisal of contemporary India necessarily draws parallels with Jawaharlal Nehru, the country’s first prime minister and the primary architect of the early Indian state. The story of contemporary India is, in many respects, the tale of these two opposing views. One arose from the idealism of a newly independent nation seeking its place in a divided world, while the other represents the ambitions of a confident, growing power eager to reinvent itself in the twenty-first century. Nehru inherited a nation devastated by Partition, poverty, illiteracy and communal violence. His response was to create institutions that could sustain democracy and development. His government established institutions that continue to shape India today, including the IITs, the IIMs, the AIIMS, major public sector organisations, scientific research establishments, atomic energy programmes and large multipurpose dams. Fabian socialism deeply influenced Nehru’s vision. The state occupied the commanding heights of the economy. Centralised planning, import substitution and public sector dominance became the pillars of economic policy. While this model laid the foundation for industrialisation, critics argue that it also created the “licence-permit Raj”, restricting private enterprise and slowing economic growth. The low growth rates that followed were later described as the “Hindu rate of growth”. Perhaps no aspect of Nehru’s legacy generates more debate than foreign policy. Nehru championed the Panchsheel principles and became one of the architects of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). During the Cold War, India sought strategic autonomy rather than alignment with either the United States or the Soviet Union. Supporters view Nehru’s approach as a visionary contribution that enhanced India’s moral standing. Critics argue that excessive idealism weakened India’s strategic preparedness. Relations with China illustrate this debate. The slogan “Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai” reflected Nehru’s hope for Asian solidarity. However, the 1962 Sino-Indian War exposed serious military and diplomatic miscalculations. The conflict dealt a severe blow to India’s confidence and remains a significant criticism of Nehru’s leadership. The debate continues over Nehru’s decision to refer the Kashmir issue to the United Nations. Sardar Patel focused on uniting princely states, but he was not assigned the task of addressing the Kashmir issue. While some scholars see it as an attempt to secure international legitimacy, others believe it internationalised a matter that should have remained India’s internal concern. Nehru’s commitment to secularism was unwavering. He believed that the state should maintain equal distance from all religions. This outlook influenced his discomfort with overt state participation in religious activities. The inauguration of the Somnath Temple by President Rajendra Prasad, despite Nehru’s reservations, symbolised an early debate about the relationship between India’s civilisational heritage and its secular state. For many critics, Nehru represented

a Westernised elite worldview that underestimated India’s cultural roots. Admirers, however, regard him as a defender of constitutional secularism during a fragile phase of nation-building. The Northeast often felt geographically and psychologically distant from the centres of power in New Delhi during the early decades after independence. While Nehru formulated policies intended to preserve tribal identities and cultural autonomy, critics argue that the region remained inadequately connected through infrastructure, industry and investment. The perception of neglect contributed to alienation and insurgency in several areas. The famous remark attributed to Nehru after the devastating Assam earthquake of 1950 remains a subject of debate and interpretation. Regardless of historical disputes, many in the region felt disconnected from national development priorities for decades. Narendra Modi’s rise represents a significant departure from the Nehruvian framework. Unlike Nehru, Modi’s political narrative is rooted in humble origins and organisational politics. His supporters see him as embodying aspiration, self-reliance and grassroots democracy. Since assuming office in 2014, Modi has sought to combine economic modernisation with cultural confidence. The emphasis on infrastructure has been unprecedented. Motorways, airports, railway modernisation, digital connectivity, inland waterways and logistics corridors have transformed the development landscape. The Northeast has become a major beneficiary of this approach. New bridges, highways, railway links and air connectivity have integrated the region more closely with the rest of India. The Act East Policy has also enhanced the strategic significance of the region. India today is among the world’s largest economies and one of its fastest-growing major nations. Initiatives such as Digital India,

Make in India, Startup India, PM Gati Shakti and production-linked incentives have aimed to strengthen manufacturing and innovation. The expansion of digital payments through UPI has created a globally recognised model of financial inclusion. Direct benefit transfers have reduced leakages and improved welfare delivery. India’s foreign exchange reserves, gold reserves and macroeconomic resilience have strengthened significantly compared to earlier decades. The country is increasingly viewed as a major engine of global growth. The Modi government has emphasised welfare delivery at scale. Schemes related to housing, sanitation, cooking gas connections, health insurance and drinking water have sought to improve quality of life for millions.

The Ayushman Bharat programme has emerged as one of the world’s largest public health initiatives. Simultaneously, campaigns promoting yoga have elevated India’s soft power globally. Women’s empowerment has received policy attention through financial inclusion, entrepreneurship programmes and legislative initiatives. One of the defining features of the Modi era has been a more assertive national security posture. The surgical strikes and Balakot operation signalled a willingness to respond forcefully to cross-border terrorism. The abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 fundamentally altered the constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir. Supporters view it as completing national integration, while critics raise concerns about federalism and democratic consultation. The creation of the Union Territory of Ladakh reflected a broader strategic focus on border security and development. Defence modernisation, indigenous manufacturing and increased strategic cooperation with major powers have strengthened India’s geopolitical position. If Nehru sought to define

India primarily through constitutional modernity, Modi has emphasised the civilisational dimension of nationhood. The inauguration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, the redevelopment of Kashi Vishwanath, the construction of the new Parliament building, Kartavya Path and the National War Memorial represent efforts to reconnect governance with historical memory and cultural identity. For supporters, these initiatives correct decades of cultural hesitation. Critics argue that the balance between cultural nationalism and constitutional pluralism must remain carefully preserved. No major political leader escapes criticism. Modi continues to face scrutiny over the 2002 Gujarat riots despite judicial processes that found no prosecutable evidence against him personally.

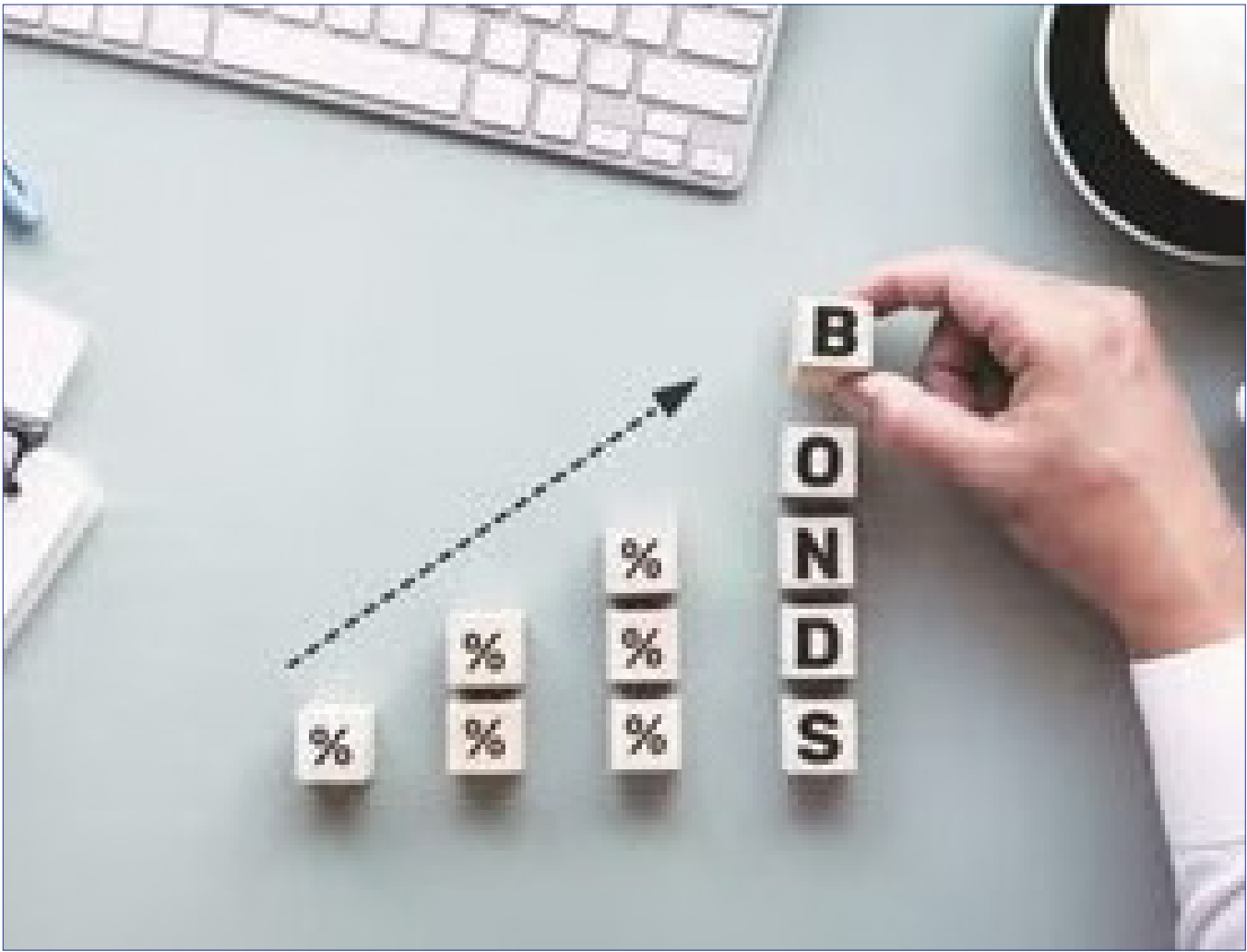
Opposition parties have frequently targeted him through political slogans and personal attacks. Yet repeated electoral victories suggest that a substantial section of the electorate evaluates him primarily on governance, welfare delivery and national leadership rather than partisan accusations. In a democracy, criticism is inevitable. What ultimately matters is public judgement through the ballot box. The contrast between Nehru and Modi should not be viewed as a battle between heroes and villains. Rather, it reflects India’s evolution through different historical contexts. Nehru’s era focused on institution-building, democratic consolidation and scientific temper. Modi’s era has prioritised execution, infrastructure, national confidence and global ambition. Nehru governed a newly independent nation struggling for survival. Modi governs a rising power seeking leadership in an increasingly multipolar world. History will continue to debate their successes and failures. Yet both have left an indelible imprint on India’s journey.

## Should you sell during the market rise today?

**Mumbai:** On Friday, the NSE Nifty 50 reached an intraday high of 23,456, up 230 points, while the BSE Sensex soared nearly 1,000 points on prospects of US-Iran peace negotiations, following US President Donald Trump’s announcement that he had abandoned his plans for a new assault on Iran. According to sources, US President Donald Trump announced that an agreement to end the conflict with Iran is virtually complete and would be signed over the weekend in Europe, after calling off military strikes on the Gulf nation hours after threatening to seize control of its oil industry. Following the newsbreak, global equity markets staged a strong rally in trades on Friday with crude oil prices cooling down. At 12:30 PM, the Nifty was up 0.8 per cent at 23,350, and the Sensex was up 740 points (1 per cent) at 74,560 levels. In the recent past, the Nifty has more than once retreated and slipped back to lower levels after a strong start, shows NSE data. For instance, the Nifty hit an intraday high of 23,516 but eventually ended at 23,367 last Friday on June 5. This week too, the Nifty twice ended up to 150-200 points lower compared to the day’s high. For G Chokkalingam, founder and head of research at Equinomics Research, this is not a right time to sell. “The markets can still go up from here if peace prevails (in West Asia). Investors should not sell stocks in the current up move, especially the stocks where there is valuation comfort and earnings visibility,” he suggests. Kranthi Bathini, equity strategist at WealthMills Securities says that market sentiment has been fragile owing to Trump’s contradictory statements in the recent past. However, he asserts that the market sentiment is likely to improve if Brent crude oil prices remain below \$90 per barrel. “The key thing to watch out for is Brent oil prices. As long as prices remain below \$90 per barrel, the market recovery may sustain. However, if Brent starts rising above \$90 again, we may see some profit-taking towards the close,” says Bathini. While the global setup has turned positive, analysts suggest investors remain watchful of profit booking at higher levels after the recent volatility. The market, they suggest, is likely to focus on whether Friday’s optimism translates into sustained institutional buying rather than a short-term relief rally. “Overall, the near-term market narrative has shifted from geopolitical anxiety to risk-on optimism. If global markets maintain their current momentum and crude oil continues to cool, Indian equities could witness a meaningful improvement in sentiment, with domestic cyclical and consumption-linked sectors likely to lead the recovery,” said Hariprasad K, SEBI-registered Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth. As regards technicals, analysts at Nirmal Bang suggest that the Nifty has an immediate resistance at 23,470 levels. If the index closes above this mark, further upside can be expected towards 23,540-23,600 levels. On the flip side, 23170-23100 will act as strong support levels for the index, they said.

## Volume shockers: IFCI, Chamanlal Sethia, and Authum Investment rise up to 20%

**Mumbai:** In Friday’s intra-day trade, shares of IFCI, Authum Investment & Infrastructure, and Chaman Lal Setia Exports rose by up to 20% on the BSE due to significant activity. In comparison, at 12:35 PM, the BSE Sensex was up 1.08 percent at 74,560. IFCI’s share price reached a 22-month high of ₹84.63 on the BSE, up 20% in intra-day activity. Currently, the stock is at its highest level since August 2024. The average trading volumes at the counter more than doubled, with a total of 226.9 million equity shares changing hands on the NSE and BSE. In the last month, the financial institution’s stock price has risen 37%. The National Stock Exchange (NSE), the country’s largest stock exchange, is likely to file its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The excitement surrounding blockbuster initial public offering (IPO) candidates on Wall Street may soon find an echo in the domestic markets. People familiar with the matter said Reliance Industries-backed Jio Platforms and the National Stock Exchange (NSE) are likely to file their draft red herring prospectus with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) next week, setting the stage for two of the country’s most closely watched public offerings, the In response to a query, NSE said its board had approved its proposed IPO on February 6 following receipt of Sebi’s no-objection certificate and declined to comment further. If regulatory clearances come through on schedule, the twin filings could mark the beginning of a much stronger second half for India’s primary market after a relatively subdued first six months, characterised by geopolitical tensions, volatile markets, and sustained outflows from foreign investors, the newspaper reported. The proposed issue of NSE will be entirely an offer for sale (OFS), with existing investors expected to dilute 4.5-5 per cent of their holdings, according to reports. IFCI holds an indirect stake in NSE via its subsidiary Stock Holding Corporation of India (SHCIL). IFCI owns a 52.86 per cent stake in SHCIL. According to NSE’s March 2026 quarter shareholding pattern, SHCIL has a 4.4 per cent stake in the exchange. SHCIL, a subsidiary of IFCI, is one of the largest Depository Par-



ticipants in the country besides being the country’s premier custodian and provides post trading and custodial services to institutional investors, mutual funds, banks, insurance companies, etc. It also acts as a Central Record Keeping Agency (CRA) for collection of stamp duty, e-court fee and e-registration in various States and Union Territories (UTs). Meanwhile, the share price of Chaman Lal Setia Exports rallied 15 per cent to ₹305.50 on the back of multiple-fold jump in the average trading volumes. A combined 10.65 million shares representing 21.4 per cent of total

equity of the company have changed hands on the NSE and BSE. During the January to March 2026 quarter (Q4FY26); Chaman Lal Setia Exports achieved revenue from operations of ₹428.4 crore, supported by a sharp 31.8 per cent growth in export volumes and improved realizations across both domestic and export markets. Operational efficiencies and disciplined execution enabled EBITDA margin expansion of 306 bps YoY to 12.1 per cent in Q4FY26. The quarter also witnessed temporary logistical disruptions in global shipping routes, leading to deferment of around

170-180 export containers and higher freight costs due to rerouting of certain GCC shipments. Despite these short-term challenges, demand across key international markets including the Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, US, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Far East regions remains strong, the company said in the Q4 earnings release. Shares of Authum Investment & Infrastructure also surged 15 per cent to ₹526.80 on the back of 10-fold jump in the average trading volumes. A combined 10.18 million equity shares changed hands on the NSE and BSE.

## OMCs gain up to 5%; upstream stocks fall 2% as Brent dips below \$90/bbl

**Mumbai:** On Friday, June 12, 2026, shares of oil marketing companies (OMCs) Hindustan Petroleum (HPCL), Bharat Petroleum (BPCL), and Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL) rose by up to 4.6%. The purchasing on the counter occurred when oil prices fell below \$90 per barrel. Upstream oil firms’ shares fell by up as 2.2%. At 10:07 AM, HPCL shares were trading 3.9% higher at ₹379.95 a share, while BPCL shares were up 3.8% at ₹297.3 per share and IOCL shares were up 2.8% at ₹138.15 per share. In comparison, the BSE Sensex was up 0.99% at 74,567.09. Meanwhile, ONGC and Oil India declined by 1.07 percent and 1.77 percent, respectively. How do lower crude oil prices effect OMCs and upstream companies? Crude oil is the principal raw material for oil marketing companies (OMCs), which distribute and sell petroleum products such as gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, and heating oil. Thus, a drop in crude oil prices lowers the input cost of OMCs. On the other hand, upstream firms sell crude oil at prices based on international benchmarks such as Brent crude. When petroleum prices fall, these firms’ realization per barrel falls direct-



ly, reducing revenue and profitability, even if production quantities remain constant. Why did Brent crude oil fall below \$90 per

barrel? Oil prices fell on Friday after US President Donald Trump cancelled plans to strike Iran,

reducing fears of an escalation of hostilities following tit-for-tat attacks earlier in the week. Trump, who had threatened to hit Iran “very hard”, called off planned strikes on Thursday, saying discussions with Iran had progressed and a peace deal that would reopen the Strait of ?

Hormuz to shipping could be signed as soon as this weekend. Iran’s semi-official Fars news agency reported that Tehran had not approved the text of any agreement. Brent futures fell 2 per cent to \$88.55 a barrel. “Crude’s fallen 15 per cent in a month. Brent near \$89 on US-Iran de-escalation, not weak demand. “Oil stocks” split three ways: lower crude hurts upstream (ONGC, Oil India) via weaker realisations; helps OMCs (IOC, BPCL, HPCL) through fatter marketing margins; refiners (Reliance) depend on crack spreads. If de-escalation holds, favour OMCs over upstream; if it reverses and crude spikes, flip. The whole call hinges on the binary Hormuz outcome. In other words, the war-risk premium that had pushed oil above \$110 during the Hormuz closure is unwinding,” said Khushi Mistry, research analyst at Bonanza.

## Vedanta rises 3% ahead of the IPO of four demerged firms

**New Delhi:** TVedanta Ltd shares are in focus today as the group’s four demerged businesses will list on the bourses next week. Vedanta’s shares opened in the green at day’s high of ₹314, up 3 per cent, on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Four companies that have taken shape following demerger from Anil Agarwal’s Vedanta Ltd will list on the BSE and NSE on Monday (June 15). The four newly created entities are: Vedanta Aluminium Metal (VAML), Vedanta Oil Gas (VOGL), Vedanta Power and Vedanta Iron Steel (VISL). As of 10:30 AM, Vedanta shares traded in the green, quoting 1.4 per cent higher at ₹309. A total of 7 million equities of the company changed hands, according to NSE data. Vedanta’s demerger was approved by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) in December last year. Under the 1:1 approved demerger scheme, shareholders have received one share of each demerged company for every one share held in the currently listed Vedanta Ltd. The much-awaited demerger is likely to unlock substantial value for shareholders since each company will now operate independently and raise capital as per its business plans, while giving investors an opportunity to invest in a specific sector. Vedanta: Should you buy? Sunny Agrawal, head of fundamental research at SBI Securities, said that Vedanta stock price has been adjusted on 30th April following its demerger into 5fve separate listed entities. Going ahead, the residual stock (Vedanta Ltd) will house the Zinc/Silver business (HZ stake + Zinc International) and base metals business. “We recommend investors to Buy the stock (Vedanta Ltd) post demerger, as the Zinc business carries robust earnings potential underpinned by its industry-leading Cost of Production and increasing contribution of the Silver segment. We expect the fair value of Vedanta Ltd in the range of ₹320 - ₹330 in medium to long term,” he said.

## Vedanta group’s four demerged businesses will make their stock market debut on June 15



**New Delhi:** Vedanta group’s four demerged businesses are expected to list on the Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange on Monday, sources said. Besides Vedanta Ltd, which is already listed, the shares of four newly created entities -- Vedanta Aluminium Met-

al (VAML), Vedanta Oil & Gas (VOGL), Vedanta Power and Vedanta Iron & Steel (VISL) -- will begin trading on Indian stock exchanges. The much-awaited demerger is likely to unlock substantial value for shareholders since each company will now operate independently and raise capital

as per its business plans, while giving investors an opportunity to invest in a specific sector. Vedanta’s demerger was approved by the National Company Law Tribunal in December last year. Under the 1:1 approved demerger scheme, shareholders will receive one share of each demerged

company for every one share held in the currently listed Vedanta Ltd. During an investor call following the fourth quarter financial results, Vedanta Resources CEO Deshnee Naidoo stated that Vedanta companies will begin trading by mid-June following the demerger. Vedanta previously stated that the demerger will help to simplify Vedanta’s corporate structure by creating sector-focused independent businesses, as well as provide global investors, including sovereign wealth funds, retail investors, and strategic investors, with direct investment opportunities in dedicated pure-play companies linked to India’s remarkable growth story via Vedanta’s world-class assets. It will also give a framework for individual units to pursue strategic agendas more freely while better aligning with customers, investment cycles, and end markets, according to the statement.

## India’s bond index journey: How India won access to global benchmarks

**New Delhi:** Last week, the government issued an ordinance exempting foreign institutional investors (FIIs) from paying capital gains tax on their investments in government securities. The initiative is purportedly targeted at including Indian government bonds into Bloomberg Index Services’ flagship Global Aggregate Index. Such an inclusion will further link India’s government bond market with global markets, increasing foreign investor engagement. Here’s a look at India’s bond index and how it has changed over time. India began discussing the inclusion of its Gsecs in global bond indexes as far back as 2013. However, restrictions on foreign investment in domestic debt prevented Indian bonds from qualifying for major benchmarks. At the time, global index providers sought easier market access, unrestricted foreign participation and smoother settlement mechanisms. India’s bond market remained relatively closed, with foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) allowed to invest in Gsecs only through the General Route. Under this route, foreign investors faced several restrictions, including a cap of around 6 per cent of the outstanding stock for investment in Gsecs. As a result, foreign participation remained limited. FPI holdings of government bonds stood at roughly 1.4 per cent of the market in late 2013 and rose to only about 3.1 per cent by December 2016, according to the Asia Securities Industry & Financial Markets Association (ASIFMA) report. In 2014, India made its first attempt to liberalise the government securities market. Then RBI Deputy Governor HR Khan said the central bank was working on allowing government bond settlements through Euroclear, the world’s largest securities settlement system based in Brussels, Belgium, to ease foreign investor access and attract larger debt inflows. Then finance minister Arun Jaitley had also announced in his Budget 2014-15 speech that the government intended to allow international settlement of Indian debt. How-



ever, differences emerged between the RBI and Euroclear over certain aspects of cross-border settlement of government bonds. According to a Business Standard report, the RBI was opposed to allowing short-term investors such as FIIs to invest in Gsecs through Euroclear, citing the risk of sudden capital outflows. The discussions eventually stalled. In a major step towards attracting stable foreign capital and securing global bond index inclusion, the RBI introduced the Fully Accessible Route (FAR) in March 2020, following an announcement in the Union Budget 2020-21. Effective April 1, 2020, the framework allowed foreign investors to purchase designated Gsecs without any investment limits, creating a pool of bonds eligible for global indexes. The move widened foreign investor access and laid the foundation for India’s integration into global bond markets. Since then, the government and RBI have expanded the FAR framework, most recently by including all new issuances of 15-year, 30-year and 40-year Gsecs.

INTERNATIONAL

# Matt Canavan has declined to enter into a seat-sharing agreement with One Nation

**Australia:** The leader of the Nationals, Matt Canavan, has dismissed requests from certain Liberals to explore a collaborative election strategy with One Nation, stating to Guardian Australia that the Coalition will “compete against Labor in all areas”. Canavan rejected Liberal MP Tony Pasin’s push for a seat-sharing agreement, who told the Australian newspaper the Liberals and One Nation “should work together to identify which seats are more appropriately targeted”. Taylor and other senior Liberals had quickly shut down the idea. “I am focused on removing this terrible government ... We will compete against Labor everywhere to do that. I welcome all parties running. Competition is a good thing,” Canavan said. But the Queensland

senator did welcome Pauline Hanson’s campaign to “fire the liar”, which her party claimed had already raised more than \$2m in 48 hours. On Friday morning, the website appeared to be down temporarily – at 2pm it stated it had raised more than \$3m. “I welcome everybody trying to take down this government, because that is the first step. So, good on One Nation for doing this,” Canavan told Sky News. “They’re saying that that funding, that that now over \$2m is going to be used to root out Labor members of parliament, and I’d encourage them on that front, because we have seen Pauline Hanson spent a lot of time campaigning in the seats of Liberal and National members.” Labor has played down One Nation’s donation



claims, and questioned the “independent audit” which Hanson said shows the

money is “ridgy didge”. The audit was completed over a few hours, and con-

cluded that the donations were real and received. Labor’s outgoing fed-

eral president and former treasurer, Wayne Swan, called the public fundraiser

a “cover-up” of One Nation’s billionaire donors including Gina Rinehart, and doubted the \$2m figure. “We never know whether it’s true, but what we do know is that they are raising a lot of money from high net worth individuals, including going to Mar-a-Lago to raise it with Donald Trump,” Swan told Channel Nine. “This is a complete smokescreen ... It’s a complete farce,” he said. On Thursday, Hanson also revealed the influence Rinehart on One Nation policy, saying she consults her “friend” and was grateful for the mining magnate’s support. Guardian Australia has revealed the depths of their close relationship, including the gift of a new private plane, worth more than \$1.5m. Before the gift, Hanson and others in-

cluding Barnaby Joyce had been flown numerous times in Rinehart’s own private jet. “I consider her a friend and I’m very ... grateful for her support. She’s an Australian identity, she’s one of the highest taxpayers in the country,” Hanson told ABC radio in Perth on Thursday night. “I won’t have anyone have a go because she’s, you know, OK, she’s a billionaire.” Asked if Rinehart contributes to formulation of One Nation policy, Hanson said she had been “very beneficial”. “My policy on pensioners being able to work unlimited hours and without losing their pension or healthcare card came from Mrs Rinehart. And I think that’s great. I listen to anyone who brings good policy to me.”

## The One Nation fundraiser has been relocated from a restaurant



**Australia:** One Nation has had to relocate its scheduled fundraising event to a confidential venue in Melbourne, as the original location opted not to host it due to anticipated protest activities. The event was set to feature One Nation leader Pauline Hanson and Barnaby Joyce. A representative for the party informed Guardian Australia on Friday that the fundraiser would be shifted from Giorgio Casa, a bistro located in Moonee Ponds, following concerns raised

by Victorian police regarding potential protest activities at the event. The One Nation spokesperson added that the event was “sold out” but would not confirm how many people were expected to attend. A spokesperson for Victoria police said officers were not aware of any threats made towards the event, and the decision not to hold the event was made by the venue. Victoria police confirmed they were aware the event was

no longer being held at the Moonee Ponds location but said “police will maintain a presence in the area due to potential protest activity”. The Australian federal police referred inquiries by Guardian Australia into whether officers were investigating the issue to state police. A number of groups were planning to protest the event, including the “Campaign against Racism & Fascism” group which called for Victorians to “fight back”.

“We need to stand up and fight back. All anti-racists and anti-fascists need to join this demonstration next week,” the group said. The Victorian Socialists and Campaign Against Racism and Fascism said the group would go ahead with their protest in the area tonight. Omar Hassan, a spokesperson for Victorian Socialists, said if Hanson and Joyce didn’t show up, the group would claim it as a victory. “We will be taking our chance to mobilise strongly and let the world know that a party bought and paid for by Gina Rinehart, which votes against wage rises, supports devastating wars overseas and bigotry at home, is not welcome in Melbourne,” Hassan said. The Moonee Ponds city council had also warned locals not to attend the area in a post to social media on Friday. The council wrote that Victoria police had advised of the planned protest and that officers would be present. They added that there would also be temporary road closures for up to four hours. A One Nation event in Perth, attended by Hanson on Wednesday, was also met with hundreds of protesters, who reportedly shouted “Pauline Hanson go to hell, take your racists there as well”.

## Canada’s Prime Minister pays tribute to the two police officers

**Toronto:** The Prime Minister of Canada, Mark Carney, has expressed his condolences for the loss of two police officers who were tragically killed while on duty this week, one of whom was Indo-Canadian provincial constable Tarun Bali. Bali, a constable with the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), was killed on Tuesday near the township of Hearst in Ontario, while Toronto Police Constable Marc Pinizzotto was shot during the course of an operation in the early hours of Thursday. In a post on X, Carney said, Canada mourns the loss of these brave officers who dedicated their lives to protecting their communities. “My prayers are with their loved ones, their fellow officers, and their communities



in this time of grief,” he added. Justin Veronneau, 18, has been charged with first-degree murder in connection with Bali’s death. Another teenager, 19-year-old Nicholas Bennett will face the same charge in relation to the killing of 43-year-old Pinizzotto. On Wednesday, the Toronto landmark, CN Tower,

was dimmer for five minutes every hour to honour Bali. It did so again on Thursday in memory of Pinizzotto. Pinizzotto’s death came as Toronto Police officers were conducting an investigation linked to multiple firearms-related incident, including several rounds that were fired at the United States Consul-

ate in the city on March 10, which, at the time, was described by law enforcement as a “national security incident”. As police searched a residential building in the city in the early hours of Thursday, there was an exchange of gunfire, killing Pinizzotto, and leaving Bennett in a critical condition. Police are looking for another 19-year-old suspect Zara Jabbi. Bali, meanwhile, was killed during an investigation as officers looked for Veronneau, who had fled from a hospital where he was undergoing a mental health assessment. Bali was struck by a vehicle and suffered serious injuries, which claimed his life. OPP officers will take out a procession on Friday, to accompany Bali’s remains.

## Trump elevates hopes for concluding an agreement with Iran to resolve the conflict

**Washington:** President Donald Trump has long been looking for this weekend to be a big one for his presidency. The World Cup is set to return to the United States on Friday, marking the first occurrence in 32 years, following Trump’s vigorous efforts to secure the bid for co-hosting the soccer tournament during his initial term. He will be celebrated on Sunday, coinciding with his 80th birthday, at a UFC fight night anticipated to attract thousands to the White House grounds. Shortly after the final match, he is scheduled to depart for the G7 summit in the French Alps, where he will engage in discussions with various world leaders with whom he has had contentious relations regarding war and tariffs. But Trump set expectations even higher for the coming days when he announced Thursday that the US and Iran could come to terms this weekend on an agreement that would set the pathway to end the three-month-old war that’s been broadly unpopular with Americans and has rattled global oil markets. He said he plans to dispatch Vice President JD Vance to the signing of the agreement. Trump has said on several occasions in recent weeks that he’s on the cusp of a deal without anything coming to fruition. A spokesperson for Iran’s Foreign Ministry told state television following Trump’s comments that mediators were active but nothing had been finalized to end the conflict.

Still, Trump is claiming this time might be different. The breakthrough comes after he threatened to escalate the conflict with more intense bombardment of Iran and by seizing control of Iran’s oil industry, including capturing Iran’s vital Kharg Island oil facility. The president’s threats followed back-and-forth strikes this week that had rendered a temporary ceasefire agreed to in early April all but meaningless. “They’ve taken a pounding like very few people could take,” Trump said in an Oval Office exchange with reporters as he explained why he was confident that, this time, a deal would come through. “And they want to make the deal a lot more than I do.” Trump offered scant details about the settlement he says is taking shape, but told reporters that he believed the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, who is believed to have been wounded on the first day of the war and has not been seen in public since, is ready to sign off on the deal. Trump is billing the deal as “very strong,” though he says it remains “a little conceptual,” and says it would ensure Iran is blocked from ever developing a nuclear weapon. Trump’s heightened threats are aimed at creating an off-ramp. With the conflict intensifying over the past week, Trump’s threat to escalate U.S. military action seemed in part aimed at demonstrating to the hawkish flank of his political base that he was willing to play “hardball” with the Iranians if they didn’t



come to a deal soon, said Ali Vaez, Iran director at the International Crisis Group. Trump in March warned he would target Iran’s infrastructure and put American troops on Kharg Island before he ultimately backed down, and the two countries agreed to the temporary ceasefire. Almost immediately after raising the idea again on social media Thursday, Trump appeared to back away. He called into a morning show on Fox News Channel and questioned whether Americans had the “stomach” for an option that would require putting U.S. troops in harm’s way. Hours later, Trump announced he had decided to cancel orders for “very hard” strikes on Iran and said a deal was close. Vaez said even as Trump was posting on social media Thursday about escalating strikes, mediators from Pakistan, Turkey and Qatar had been making progress in their talks with Iran. At the same time, Iran also may have reset the equation for Trump with its decision last weekend to attack Israel directly for the first time since the ceasefire after Israeli forces carried out military strikes on Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon. With the move, Iran signaled that Israel could no longer bomb Lebanon without facing a meaningful reaction and in the process also raised the cost for the U.S. to follow through on its commitment to help safeguard Israel. “It really does appear to me that Trump wants to bring this to an end, but his real challenge is that he’s looking for a victory lap and an exit ramp and those two things are not necessarily compatible,” Vaez said. Trump expresses frustration with war narrative. Trump has been boasting since the early weeks of the conflict that he’d already won the war — much of the Islamic Republic’s leadership has been killed in the bombings and the Iranian navy and air force have been severely degraded. But Iran continues to effectively keep the Strait of Hormuz closed, choking a waterway through which about 20% of the

world’s oil supply passed before the war, and has yet to agree to restart negotiations with the U.S. over its concerns about Iran’s nuclear program, the main reason Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave to justify launching the war. But the real problem, Trump grumbled Thursday, was largely a public relations issue. “They could wave the white flag of surrender. They could say: ‘We surrender, we surrender, we’re finished, we’ve had it. The United States is the greatest power, praise be to Allah,’” Trump said on Fox News. “They could say it loud and clear. And the fake news would say it was a great victory for Iran.” Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, a former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said Trump has grown impatient with Iran and the renewed strikes and threats on Kharg Island and Iran’s energy sector were intended to get the negotiations back to the “right place.” Polls show that the conflict is largely unpopular with Americans. McCaul said he believes the Iranians want to “try to drag this out as long as they can,” closer to the midterm elections in November, because they see that as being to their benefit. War will be high on agenda at next week’s G7. Deal or no deal, the war will loom large during next week’s talks at the Group of Seven summit in bucolic Évian-les-Bains, France. Trump has frequently criticized some of the group leaders — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz — for resisting his calls to aid the U.S. and Israeli war effort. The four leaders have also angered Trump by criticizing how he’s gone about executing the war and his lack of consultation with allies before jumping into a conflict that’s hurt the global economy as oil prices have surged. But Trump said he is optimistic he could have an agreement before his talks with leaders in France.

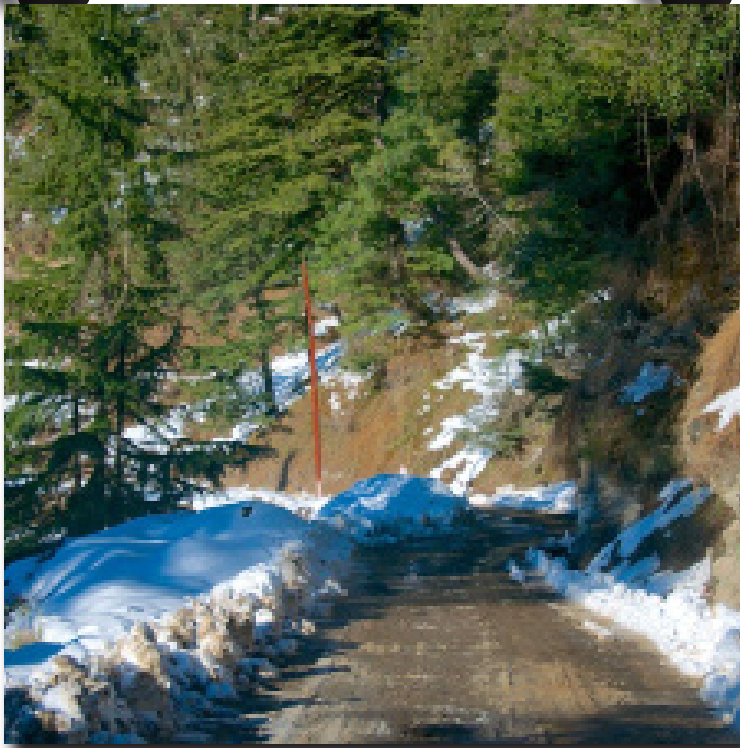


Mashobra is a tranquil hill village nestled in the picturesque sceneries of Himachal Pradesh. It is only a short drive from Shimla and provides a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of popular tourist sites. Mashobra is known for its natural beauty, deep forests, and peaceful surroundings, making it feel like a secret refuge. Unlike its more commercial neighbor, this little town has maintained its old-world charm and calm atmosphere. The pure mountain air, calm pace of life, and wide-open views make it perfect for those looking to unwind and reconnect with nature. Whether you love quiet hikes, photography, or simply resting in

a peaceful location, Mashobra offers a calming and unique hill experience. **Nature and Beauty of Mashobra:** Mashobra is bordered by extensive oak and deodar forests, which provide a pleasant and refreshing climate all year. The region is dotted with attractive walking routes, apple orchards, and stunning vistas that provide views of the Himalayan peaks. With fewer visitors and less commercial development, the town maintains its raw and unspoiled appeal. The serene atmosphere allows guests to properly enjoy nature, making every moment here relaxing and rejuvenating. It is an ideal location for folks who want calm natural environments. **Best Time To Visit Mashobra:**

**Summer (March to June):** The weather remains pleasant and comfortable, making it suitable for sightseeing, nature walks, and enjoying outdoor activities. **Monsoon (July to September)** During this season, the surroundings turn lush green and vibrant, though rainfall may sometimes affect travel plans. **Winter (October to February)** A great time for snow lovers, as Mashobra often experiences snowfall and transforms into a beautiful winter landscape. **How To Reach Mashobra** **By Road** Mashobra is well connected by road and is located around 12 km from Shimla. Taxis and private vehicles make travel

easy and convenient. **By Rail** The nearest railway station is in Shimla. From there, local taxis or buses can take you to Mashobra. **By Air** The closest airport is Jubbarhatti Airport, followed by a short road journey to reach Mashobra. **Who Should Visit Mashobra** Mashobra is ideal for travellers who prefer quiet destinations overcrowded tourist spots. It is well suited for nature lovers, couples looking for a peaceful escape, solo travellers, and families who want a calm and laid-back holiday. **Places To Visit In Mashobra** **Craignano Nature Park** A scenic spot known for its Italian-style design and peaceful surroundings, perfect for relaxed outings. **Reserve Forest Sanctuary** A protected forest area rich in natural flora and fauna, ideal for nature walks and spotting wildlife.



## 5 Amazing Ancient Cities Built Into Mountains Around the World

Ancient civilizations built into mountains continue to astonish travelers and historians all over the world. These places, built long before modern tools existed, demonstrate exceptional skill, patience, and foresight. Whole populations previously lived within rock surfaces, constructing houses, temples, and paths of solid stone. These locations served as not only safe havens, but also vital cultural, commercial, and religious centers. Many were abandoned and subsequently discovered, adding to their mystery. Today,



they present a unique look at how humans used their ideas to live in harsh environments. Visiting them is like entering into a stone-carved narrative. **Ancient Rock-Cut Cities Around The World You Must Know About** **1. Petra, Jordan:** Petra, often known as the Rose City, is one of the world's most spectacular rock-cut attractions. The Nabataeans carved it into pink sandstone cliffs, and

it grew to be a significant commercial hub. The iconic Treasury façade is elaborately crafted and represents the city's majesty. Beyond it is a massive network of tombs, temples, and waterways. Petra's smart engineering enabled it to flourish in a parched desert setting. Today, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a testimony to ancient inventiveness. **2. Machu Picchu, Peru:** Nestled high in the Andes,

Machu Picchu blends natural mountain contours with carefully carved stone structures. Built by the Incas in the 15th century, the city is known for its precise stonework and terraces. While not entirely carved into a single cliff face, many parts are shaped directly into the mountain. The site reflects a deep understanding of geology and astronomy. It remained hidden from the outside world for centu-

ries, preserving its beauty. Visitors today are drawn by both its history and breathtaking setting. **3. Lalibela, Ethiopia:** Lalibela is famous for its monolithic churches carved directly into volcanic rock. Built in the 12th and 13th centuries, these structures were designed to resemble a symbolic New Jerusalem. Each church was carved from a single block of stone, starting from the roof downwards. The complex includes passageways, trenches and hidden chambers connecting the buildings. These churches are still in use today, making Lalibela a living heritage site. Its spiritual and architectural significance continues to attract pilgrims and travellers. **4. Cappadocia, Turkiye** Cappadocia is known for its surreal landscape of soft volcanic rock, which allowed ancient inhabitants to carve entire

underground cities. These settlements include homes, storage areas, chapels and ventilation systems. People used them as shelters during invasions, sometimes living underground for extended periods. Above ground, the region's fairy chimneys also house cave dwellings and churches. The rock formations made it easy to expand living spaces over time. Cappadocia remains one of the most unique examples of how geography shaped human life. **5. Ajanta And Ellora Caves, India:** Located in Maharashtra, the Ajanta and Ellora caves showcase India's rich tradition of rock-cut architecture. These caves include monasteries, temples and halls carved into basalt cliffs. Ajanta is known for its Buddhist paintings and intricate carvings, while Ellora features Hindu, Buddhist and Jain monuments. The Kailasa temple in Ellora is especially remarkable, carved from a single rock. These sites reflect both artistic brilliance and spiritual devotion. They remain among the finest examples of ancient craftsmanship in India. These mountain-carved cities remind us that human creativity can turn even the toughest landscapes into lasting wonders.

## This Uttarakhand trek leads to a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is filled with flowers every monsoon

The Valley of Flowers National Park in Uttarakhand is one of India's most spectacular treks. The infinite green meadows here are covered in over 400 varieties of blossoming Himalayan flowers, with snow-capped hills in the distance. This gorgeous scenery does exist, and the monsoon season brings it to life in all its magnificence. This beautiful valley, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is one of India's most spectacular seasonal beauties. Hidden in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district at an elevation of roughly 3,600 metres, it transforms into a floral wonderland between July and September, making it one of the country's most memorable monsoon treks. Spread across 87 square kilometres, the valley is covered with beautiful alpine blooms in shades of pink, yellow, purple, red, and white. The valley was famously "rediscovered" in 1931 when British mountaineer Frank S Smythe and his team accidentally stumbled upon it after losing their way while returning from an expedition. Captivated by its beauty, they named it exactly what it looked like: The Valley of Flowers. The park is home to 500+ species of higher plants, with nearly 500 flowering varieties recorded here. During peak bloom, the valley explodes into colours with flowers like poppies, orchids, marigolds, primulas, daisies, lilies, geraniums, and a lot more. You'll also find rare medicinal plants like



Aconitum heterophyllum, Arnebia benthamii, and Taxus wallichiana, species valued for their ecological and medicinal significance. Wildlife Thrives Here Too The valley is part of the larger Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, which means it's also rich in wildlife. If luck is on your side, you might spot Himalayan musk deer, red foxes, langurs, Himalayan goral, flying squirrels, exotic butterflies, and more. And yes, though extremely rare to sight, this ecosystem is also home to the elusive snow leopard. **What The Trek Looks Like:** The journey begins at Govindghat, with Ghangaria serving as the base camp. The trek is considered moderate, making it ideal for fit beginners and experienced trekkers alike. You can fly, drive, or take a train to Dehradun, rest overnight, and prepare for the mountain drive ahead. Next comes a long but stunning 10-11 hour drive to Govindghat that takes you through scenic Himalayan roads. From here, the

15-km trail to Ghangaria takes you through forests, bridges, streams, and everything else nature has to offer. As night falls, you can stay at a guesthouse or choose to camp. Tiny, peaceful, and incredibly charming, Ghangaria is the final inhabited village before the valley. Here, you can walk around, meet locals, and soak in the rustic Himalayan simplicity. The next morning, a 4-km trek from Ghangaria leads to the valley itself. Suddenly, you will find yourself in a massive and colourful open meadow stretching endlessly. It's one of those rare travel moments that stays with you forever. This Should Be Your Monsoon Adventure This Year Most people avoid trekking in the monsoon, but that's exactly when this trek is best experienced. The rains turn the valley into a carpet of fresh flowers. The sweet spot is mid-July to early September, when the valley reaches peak bloom. This is what nature looks like at its absolute wildest and most beautiful.



# ENTERTAINMENT

## Divyanka Tripathi shares twin boys

**Mumbai:** New mother and television actress Divyanka Tripathi shared two adorable pictures cradling her twins as she expressed gratitude.

Divyanka, who has been married to actor Vivek Dahiya since 2016, shared two pictures on Instagram. In the two images, the actress is seen cradling her newborns and covered their faces with a sunflower emoji. It was in May when Divyanka and Vivek announced on social media that they have welcomed two baby boys. Vivek wrote on Instagram: “The wait is finally over... The Boys” are here and life already feels more beautiful than we ever imagined. Mere Karan Arjun aa gaye! Need all your love and blessings as Div and I begin this incredible new chapter of parenthood. #Divek #babyboys #DivekBabies #twins #newparents”The announcement post read, “We asked for happiness...God said, “Take double.’ Blessed with twin baby boys.” It was on Gudi Padwa in March, when the TV star couple announced that they are all set to become parents. Divyanka and Vivek’s love story kick-started on the sets of their show “Yeh Hai Mohabbatein”. Before getting married in Bhopal in 2016, the couple got engaged in January. The actress became a household name for playing Vidya Pratapsingh and Divya Shukla in Banoo Main Teri Dulhann and Dr. Ishita Bhalla in Yeh Hai Mohabbatein.



## Poonam Dhillon pushes to end long pay delays in film industry



**Mumbai:** Thousands of ground-level workers and technicians in the Hindi film industry are forced to wait 90 days for payment, even as actors and stars are often paid before shooting ends. CINTAA President Poonam Dhillon is now pushing to abolish the practice. “For us, working hours and timely payments are a big issue. They get paid after 90 days. It’s so unfair,” she said. “We’re not talking about superstars. We’re talking about actors, character actors, technicians hired for one or two days who depend on daily wages to feed their families.” When asked if the wage gap stems from budgets skewed

toward star fees, Dhillon was cautious. “I don’t know if it’s about that. But I would say the big stars get paid according to what is promised to them. Whereas these guys at the ground level are only promised pay after 90 days. And even then producers often brush them off.” Dhillon called the discrimination in salary structure unacceptable. “Why after 90 days? I want to ask all producers — does your staff, your driver or househelp wait 90 days to get paid? Or the electrician, plumber, carpenter? Will you pay them after 90 days? Makes no sense. It’s absolutely illogical and absurd. That’s what we are fighting for.”

# Maharashtra cyber books Pranit more; Alia Bhatt’s ‘Alpha’ poster faces plagiarism heat

**Mumbai :** Maharashtra Cyber has filed an FIR against stand-up comedian Pranit More in connection with the recent controversy surrounding his Gurugram show. FIRs have also been filed against Himanshu Jangra, Dr Sejal Pawar and other people involved in the row. As reported by the news agency ANI, FIR has been registered at the Nodal Cyber Police Station under sections 75(1)(iv), 75(3), 294 and 353(2) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 r/w 67 Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, against stand-up comedian Pranit, Himanshu, Dr Sejal and others. They have been accused of making alleged obscene, offensive and objectionable remarks concerning women, consent and deceased persons. The latest poster of YRF’s highly-anticipated film ‘Alpha’, starring Alia Bhatt, Sharvari, Bobby Deol and



Anil Kapoor has sparked a wave of reactions online, with many netizens drawing comparisons to the poster of Dune. The newly unveiled poster presents the ensemble in a rugged, intense setting, with a sepia-toned muted colour palette and desert-like backdrop that sets a gritty, futuristic tone. However, soon after the

poster dropped, social media users began pointing out its striking resemblance to the visual style to the poster of the Hollywood film ‘Dune’. Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan has reportedly come on board for Rajinikanth starrer Jailer 2, bringing them together on-screen for the first time in nearly four decades since Bhagwaan Dada

(1986). According to Variety India, Hrithik gave his nod to the project after weeks of discussion and is expected to film his scenes in Chennai on June 22 and 23. Ahead of the shoot, the actor will undergo a series of look tests, with the team crafting a completely fresh look for his character. Akshay Kumar is all set to be seen in Welcome to the

Jungle. For the Ahmed Khan directorial, the actor will reunite with Raveena Tandon after several years. At the trailer launch event of the film, Akshay Kumar recalled an incident from the early days of their career together to highlight her dedication to her work. The actor said that despite the passage of time, Raveena’s commitment and work ethic have remained unchanged. Kriti Kharbanda, who was recently seen in the 2nd season of the streaming show ‘Rana Naidu’, has reacted to the ongoing controversy surrounding offensive remarks of an audience member during comedian Pranit More’s stand-up gig. The actress recently took to the Stories section of her Instagram, and shared a picture of herself, and wrote, “Manifesting (Not) the confidence of someone who treats Rs 370 like venture capital. Inflation is temporary. Delusion is forever”.

# Isha Rikhi confirms wedding with Badshah, shares romantic unseen pic

**Mumbai :** Rapper Badshah’s personal life has been a topic of discussion for some time now. A couple of months ago, photos of him getting married to Isha Rikhi had gone viral. All this while, there was no official confirmation from either Badshah or Isha, but now the latter has confirmed her marriage to the rapper. The Punjabi actor recently held an Ask Me Anything (AMA) session on Instagram, where she answered

several questions from fans. One of the questions was about her marriage. One netizen asked her why she and Badshah do not follow each other on Instagram, to which Isha replied, “I think I’m officially flooded with these questions. Yes, I am married. Now, coming to the most asked question: Why don’t you follow each other? Honestly, I think my husband owes all of an explanation. Pati Dev (Badshah), the audience has questions. Please

address them at your earliest convenience.” Another fan asked her why she hadn’t posted any photos with her husband. She responded to the query by sharing an adorable photo where she is seen sitting on Badshah’s lap. In March this year, photos of their wedding had gone viral. Isha’s mother, Poonam Rikhi, shared visuals on social media that appeared to be from an intimate wedding ceremony. In some of the clips, Badshah and Isha

were seen participating in the pheras in the presence of their close family members. Badshah and Isha Rikhi were reportedly in a relationship for nearly four years before getting married. The two are said to have met through mutual friends at a party, where they eventually grew close. Isha made her acting debut with the Punjabi film Jatt Boys Putt Jattan De in 2013 and later entered Bollywood with the 2018 film Nawabzaade, which starred

Raghav Juyal, Punit Pathak and Dharmesh Yelande. Badshah, on the other hand, was previously married to Jasmine Masih. The former couple shares a daughter named Jessemy Grace Masih Singh. However, they separated in 2020. Discussing the separation in a previous interview, Badshah said, “We both tried everything. We tried our best and gave everything that we had. We separated because it was not healthy for our child.



# Spider-Man: brand new day set for India release soon



**Mumbai :** Great news for Indian fans! Spider-Man: Brand New Day is now releasing a day before its previously scheduled release date. The news of the new release date comes after Spider-Man: Brand New Day made history by becoming the first movie trailer to cross 1 billion views.

The announcement of the new release date was made along with the news that advance booking for tickets are going live globally, including in India. Spider-Man: Brand New Day will open in all premium large formats across India. The anticipation for the film has been high ever

since it was announced. The film marks the return of Tom Holland as the titular character after almost five years. The trailer has offered glimpses of Peter Parker’s life after the events of Spider-Man: No Way Home. Four years have passed since the events of No Way Home,

and Peter is now an adult living entirely alone, having voluntarily erased himself from the lives and memories of those he loves. Crime-fighting in a New York that no longer knows his name, he’s devoted himself entirely to protecting his city — a full-time Spider-Man — but as the demands on him intensify, the pressure sparks a surprising physical evolution that threatens his existence, even as a strange new pattern of crimes gives rise to one of the most powerful threats he has ever faced. Directed by Destin Daniel Cretton, Spider-Man: Brand New Day stars Tom Holland as Peter Parker/Spider-Man, alongside Zendaya, Jacob Batalon, Jon Bernthal, and Sadie Sink. Sony Pictures Entertainment India will release Spider-Man: Brand New Day in theatres on 30th July 2026 in English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam across all premium formats in 2D and 3D.

# Ryan Reynolds reveals teen trauma: hit by drunk driver, hospitalized for weeks



**Agency :** Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds recalled and shared new details of his experience being hit by a drunk driver when he was 18. “When I was 18, I left a bar and I’d had a beer,” Reynolds shared in a GQ video with Welcome to Wrexham costar Rob Mac. The actor recalled thinking that “even if it’s four blocks home, absolutely not” would he drive home after drinking. Despite that “firmly positive and wise decision,” the star was still struck by a drunk driver while walking home, reports people.com. “I spent four weeks in the hospital,” Reynolds

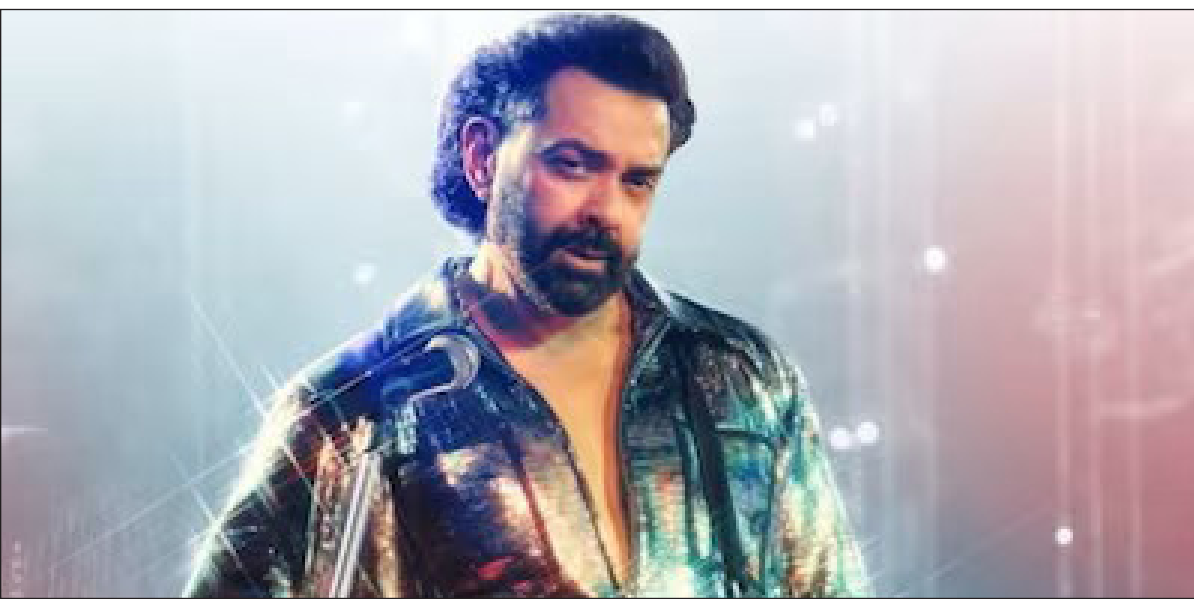
recalled. “What? That’s the first time I’ve heard that,” Mac said with surprise. Reynolds said: “Oh, yeah, broke every bone in my left side. He hit me so hard, his car was not operational.” Reynolds thanked the doctor at the Canadian hospital where he was treated “for putting me back together so kindly.” The actor had previously discussed the accident in a 2011 interview with CTV News. Despite the injuries, Reynolds has taken on physically demanding roles, most notably in the Deadpool movies. In 2022, he opened up about performing fewer stunts as he ages. “I think it’s important

to do as much of [the stunt work] yourself as you can, but I’ll step aside when there’s something that’s just too gnarly and there’s a trained professional ready to go,” Reynolds told Variety at the time. The actor went on to joke, “You’re not allowed to eat Advil like cereal.” “Things start to hurt,” Reynolds told Variety. “After I turned 35, being thrown onto cement wasn’t hilarious anymore. It had been upgraded to hell.” Reynolds’ next movie, Mayday, opens on September 4. He also plays Deadpool again in the upcoming Avengers: Doomsday, which is set to open on December 18.

# Bandar box office day 7: Bobby Deol starrer struggles, collects only ₹25 lakh

**Mumbai :** Critical acclaim has not always guaranteed box-office success, and Bandar appears to be the latest example. While the Bobby Deol-led legal drama has received appreciation from critics and sections of the audience, the film is yet to find momentum at the ticket window. A week into its theatrical run, the Anurag Kashyap directorial continues to post modest numbers, with collections remaining far below expectations. According to industry tracker Sacnilk, Bandar completed seven days in theatres with an estimated collection of around ₹3.65 crore net in India. The film was screened across roughly 820 shows nation-

wide on its seventh day. The film opened to ₹50 lakh on its first day before witnessing some growth over the weekend. Collections rose to ₹95 lakh on Saturday and touched ₹1 crore on Sunday, marking its best single-day performance so far. However, the momentum proved short-lived. As weekdays began, earnings started slipping steadily. The film earned approximately ₹45 lakh on both Monday and Tuesday before dropping sharply to ₹25 lakh on Wednesday. Early estimates suggest Thursday’s collection was also around ₹25 lakh, indicating little improvement in audience turnout. The film’s struggle comes at a time



when theatres are crowded with multiple releases competing for screens and au-

dience attention. Bandar is currently sharing exhibition space with major domestic

titles such as Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona and Peddi, both of which continue to

dominate across several markets. The competition is not limited to Indian films.

A number of international and Hollywood releases are also occupying screens, making it increasingly difficult for smaller and content-driven films to secure prime show timings. Trade reports had earlier indicated that the makers of Bandar faced challenges even before release. The team reportedly encountered difficulties while negotiating screen allocations with major multiplex chains, including PVR, INOX and Cinepolis. Directed by Anurag Kashyap, Bandar is inspired by real events and centres on Samar, played by Bobby Deol, a once-popular singer and actor whose life takes a dramatic turn after a woman

named Gayatri, portrayed by Sapna Pabbi, accuses him of rape. As Samar insists the encounter was consensual, he finds himself caught in an intense legal battle that quickly spills into the public domain. With media scrutiny growing and public opinion turning against him, both his professional and personal life begin to unravel. Through the case, the film explores themes such as media trials, public perception, accountability and the functioning of the legal system. Apart from Bobby Deol and Sapna Pabbi, the film also features Sanya Malhotra, Saba Azad, Raj B. Shetty and Indrajith Sukumaran in pivotal roles.

# Screams for help, saari for rescue: Locals recall harsh firefight at residential building in Delhi’s Tughlakabad

**New Delhi:** At least three people, including a 22-year-old man and two women, lost their lives while two others remain in critical condition after a fire engulfed a multi-storey residential building in southeast Delhi’s Tughlakabad in the early hours of Friday. The fire was reported around 2.03 am from Gali No. 1 in Tughlakabad, according to officials. The blaze started in the parking area on the ground floor of a building comprising a ground floor and five upper storeys, before thick smoke spread rapidly through the structure, earlier HT reported. The incident comes days after a massive fire at a bed-and-breakfast facility in Hauz Rani on June 3, in which 23 people were killed. Residents of the neighbourhood launched rescue efforts on their own, with several locals rushing into the smoke-filled building to save those trapped inside. Among them was 45-year-old Renu Bhutani, who said that she was awake at the time due to her habit of watching crime dramas at night. “My son and I entered by going to the terrace of the building behind this one. Since that is only a two-storey building and this is a five-storey one, we found two wooden ladders, tied them together, and then climbed up to the roof of this building, while two other people held the ladder to ensure we didn’t fall. As the roof was locked from the inside, my son had to break it open with a rock. Instantly, clouds of extremely heavy smoke hit us. We used stones to puncture the water tanks on the roof so that the water could flow down the stairs, reduce the smoke,



and hopefully quell the fire, Bhutani said. “We then drenched ourselves in water and entered the building. We saved two girls who had called to us from the fourth floor, by making them escape the same way we entered, and another couple on the third floor, whom we had to rescue by breaking down the door to their flat with a grinder. We heard two girls trapped further down as well, but were not able to travel below the third floor as the smoke made it impossible. We signalled a person in the opposite building to throw over a sari, which the girls on the second floor tied on the balcony railing and were able to use to climb down. Fortunately, the firefighters had arrived

by this point, and they took over,” she added. Sixteen-year-old Krishna Kashyap, who lives next door, said screams for help alerted residents and the entire locality rushed to assist. “Since my father has night duty, my mother was awake and waiting for him to return when she started hearing screams for help, and saw a lot of smoke. Within minutes the smoke had engulfed not only that building but had entered our house as well, and filled the entire alley. Many people in the building had gathered on the roof. Despite the smoke, neighbours, shopkeepers, and others had rushed to the spot, to help people,” Krishna Kashyap told. “One person on the second floor tied his wife’s saari to the balcony rail, and climbed

down and jumped. My brother was among the people who caught him with nothing but their hands. Since we live in the neighbouring building, I was speaking to the trapped people from my roof to find out where they were in the building. The problem is that there is no ventilation in this building, and in a lot of new buildings being made. This one was constructed within the last five years, and it has very cramped rooms, and a cramped staircase. Older houses like mine have better ventilation, but it feels as if new buildings are made with the goal of utilising as much space as possible for living areas,” he added. “I live one building over, and was thankfully awake since my children had kept me up. At around

2:00 am they said that they could smell smoke. When i looked out of the building, I heard people screaming and saw that thick smoke had engulfed the lane. We all ran out of the building and went to the end of the lane, where many other residents had gathered. It is really scary, as the smoke was trapped within the building due to its lack of ventilation,” Pushpa Devi (40), another resident of the area said.

“Many other buildings here, including my house, are built like this, and I know that if an incident like this happens in my house, my family will also be trapped and not be able to escape. It is not as if the fire itself is the only cause for the deaths, but instead also the building layout. A few years ago, a CNG cylinder godown a few lanes over had caught on fire, with many cylinders exploding as well, but no one died in that, as the building layout had allowed people to escape. My 8 year-old daugter is so scared now, and I don’t know what to tell her” she added. Police personnel reached the location soon after the incident and were joined by senior officers, while four fire tenders, CATS ambulances and other emergency response units were deployed.

Firefighters rescued five occupants from inside the building and later climbed to the terrace, where they cut open a locked gate to rescue two girls believed to have taken shelter on the rooftop to escape the smoke. Officials said the blaze was brought under control around 3.45 am and completely extinguished by 4 am.

# ‘Cockroaches stay in gutter’: Andhra deputy CM Pawan Kalyan reacts to CJP craze

**New Delhi:** As conversations around youth-led political movements gain momentum across the country, Andhra Pradesh deputy chief minister and Jana Sena Party supremo Pawan Kalyan has shared his thoughts on the emergence of the Cockroach Janta Party and what it may signify about India’s younger generation. Pawan Kalyan said the movement should not be viewed as an entirely new phenomenon, according to ANI news agency. Instead, he described it as part of a recurring cycle in which every generation seeks to redefine politics and society in its own way. During the interaction, the anchor referred to the rise of the Cockroach Janta Party and asked whether the growing youth participation reflected dissatisfaction with traditional political structures. Pawan Kalyan replied that

generational shifts in political thinking have always existed “I don’t know, I feel one thing is, you know, the concept of Gen Z, Gen Z is a more of a very people, everyone is constructing as if this argument is suddenly, no, it sprung up. I feel every age, if you look at 1920s or 1940s, every age, every 25, 30 years, some young generation will come up, they take the thought forward,” he was quoted as saying. “In the 80s, it was there, and in 2000, some generation was there, and in 2020, some younger generation will be there. They have their own aspirations,” Kalyan added. Rather than dismissing the movement, the Jana Sena chief said it is important to understand the reasons behind the frustration expressed by younger citizens. “Somehow, why they are angry, you have to look at it,” he said. Referring to the

“Cockroach Janta Party” by name, he remarked: “Cockroach is the one which stays in gutter... that means maybe I can understand the pain.” The Cockroach Janta Party emerged as a satirical response to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant using the term cockroach to describe certain youths. Rather than dismissing the movement, the Jana Sena chief said it is important to understand the reasons behind the frustration expressed by younger citizens. “Somehow, why they are angry, you have to look at it,” he said. Referring to the “Cockroach Janta Party” by name, he remarked: “Cockroach is the one which stays in gutter... that means maybe I can understand the pain.” The Cockroach Janta Party emerged as a satirical response to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant using the



term cockroach to describe certain youths. Pawan Kalyan also described a personal conversation with his son to understand how young people perceive such movements. “I was talking to my son today morning, and I was asking the same question. I said, how many of your friends are there, they have a huge group of friends, around 20 people, and asked him how many of

them are there. I think three of them subscribed,” Kalyan said. According to him, the support may not always turn into visible activism, but it does indicate a willingness among some young people to express dissatisfaction. “They want to show their dissent, or maybe they liked certain things, they didn’t like something what happened or something maybe they found

a platform to show their dissent,” he said. The deputy CM added that his conversations with young people over the past several days pointed towards a common expectation, that is a different style of politics “We have our own ideas, not necessarily we align... but one thing is, we want politics to change.” “This kind of cliched politics has to stop. This kind of regional bias, this kind of destructive approach, we need something different. We want people who make sense in what they are saying,” Kalyan added. While Pawan Kalyan neither accepted nor rejected the movement, his remarks suggested that emerging youth-led platforms are something that should be viewed as signals of changing political expectations rather than isolated trends.

# Midnight panic in Delhi-NCR as phones scream ‘extremely severe weather’ alert till 1 am

**New Delhi:** Phones buzzed multiple times across Delhi and adjoining areas, from Thursday evening till the early hours of Friday, with emergency alert warnings of a severe thunderstorm, along with lightning, heavy rainfall and strong winds in several parts of the national capital region. Rain, thunderstorms and gusty winds lashed parts of Delhi on Thursday night and continued into the early hours, offering little relief from the intense heat and humidity experienced during the day. As alerts from the government’s cell broadcast emergency warning system appeared on mobile phones, many people shared their reactions on social media, raising concerns about the loud notification sounds. The warning is part of the Centre’s efforts aimed to improve emergency communication during disasters, emergencies and severe weather events. Residents in Delhi, along with people in Noida and Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh, received repeated weather warnings from Thursday night onwards, warning them about severe thunderstorms, lightning and moderate to heavy rainfall. Titled “Extremely Severe Alerts”, one of the alerts said, “Severe Thunderstorm (wind speed 70-90 Kmph gusting to 100 kmph or more) with Lightning and Moderate to intense spell of rain and Hail is very likely to occur at a few places over Agra, Aligarh, Baghpat, Bijnor, Ghaziabad, Hapur, Hathras, Mathura, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur, Shamli in next 3 hours (sic).” The alerts were reportedly sent to smartphones across Delhi-NCR three times: 8.50 pm, 10 pm and 1.15 am. The warnings appeared on mobile phones, accompanied by a loud notification sound. As the alerts continued to sound on phones, several residents turned to social media to share their views, especially about the warning sent after 1 am on Friday: “How do I stop my phone from beeping for emergency alerts for wind and rain. Got two alerts since evening, and it didn’t even rain yet,” a user wrote on X. Most users complained about the loud sounds saying it “may trigger anxiety” during the night. A user wrote on Reddit that it “gave me a heart attack” when the warning arrived early in the morning. “The worst thing I was about to fall asleep,” the user added. “While safety matters, blasting a loud alarm in the middle of the night can seriously disturb people who are sleeping and may trigger anxiety or knee-jerk reactions in some,” an X user posted. “More people will die due to this alert than the actual storm,” a netizen wrote. Another said, “Who are these retards, who are disturbing our sleep just to tell that wind and rain is coming, that too at midnight time?” “Emergency alerts are creating more panic than real storms. Stop this menace. Save these alert systems for real threats, not some silly weather changes. In the middle of night, phones start buzzing with an irritating sound,” another user posted. A user posted on Reddit, “The automated messages about weather and stuff, why are we receiving it around 1am?” “This alert thing is highly annoying. Should only be used in the rarest situations like airstrikes,” another user wrote on X. Notably, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert for Delhi during the early hours of Friday. However, an orange alert remained in place overall, advising residents to be careful due to severe weather conditions. According to the weather office, thunderstorms, lightning and strong surface winds of 70-80 kmph, gusting up to 90 kmph, were expected. It also forecast rain in most areas, including moderate showers at isolated places. Dust-raising winds were also likely in several parts of the city.



# ‘Jaspal Rana carried pride of country’: Abhinav Bindra leads tributes after passing of one of India’s greatest shooters

**New Delhi:** Former Indian shooter Jaspal Rana passed away in New Delhi on Thursday night. Last week, he underwent a medical procedure after feeling ill on the flight back home from Munich. 49-year-old Rana’s passing has cast a pall of gloom over Indian sports, and ever since the terrible news broke out on early Friday morning, tributes have been pouring in for him. Abhinav Bindra, India’s first individual gold Olympic medallist, has taken the lead in paying tribute to his former team-mate and one of the giants of Indian shooting. “Heartbroken to hear about Jaspal Rana’s passing. Jaspal was my teammate, and in many ways, part of a generation that helped shape Indian shooting. He was intense, gifted, and carried the pride of the country every time he stepped onto the range. This is a huge loss for our sport. My deepest condolences to his family, friends, students and everyone whose life he touched,” Bindra wrote on X. Rana won many prestigious government awards: the Arjuna Award in 1994, the Padma Shri in 1997 and the Dhronacharya Award in 2020. He once dabbled in politics and even contested the Lok Sabha elections for the BJP. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised Rana’s contribution to Indian sports. “Deeply saddened by the passing of Shri Jaspal Rana Ji. His passing is a profound loss to the world of In-



dian sports. He brought immense glory to the nation through his extraordinary achievements in shooting. Equally remarkable was his contribution as a mentor, shaping and guiding young athletes with great dedication. His unwavering commitment to excellence, discipline and service to the sporting world earned him immense admiration. My thoughts are with his family, friends and the entire sporting fraternity in this hour of grief. Om Shanti,” he wrote on X. Rana touched all and sundry as a professional shooter as well as a coach. He played a huge role in Manu Bhaker winning two Olympic medals at Paris 2024. His untimely death has not only saddened the shooting fraternity but also the overall sports fraternity in India. Former India cricketer Shikhar Dhawan also exalted the four-time Asian Games and nine-time Commonwealth Games gold medallist. “A

champion, a coach and an inspiration to many. Jaspal Rana’s impact on Indian shooting will be felt for generations. My thoughts are with his family and loved ones during this difficult time,” Dhawan posted on X. India cricket head coach Gautam Gambhir also reacted to the tragic news. “Shri Jaspal Rana was a stalwart of Indian Sports. His passing has left a huge void. Om Shanti,” Gambhir wrote on X. Vijender Singh, former boxer who won a bronze medal at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, was also one of the sports celebrities in India who were left devastated by the passing of Rana. “Deeply saddened by the sudden demise of Jaspal Rana ji. His extraordinary contributions to Indian shooting, both as a champion athlete and a mentor, inspired generations of sportspersons. Indian sport has lost a true legend. Respect Bhaisab,” he wrote on X.

# WFI cracks down on age fraud, disqualifies 500-plus wrestlers at U-17 ranking meet

**New Delhi:** In a sweeping crackdown on age fraud, more than 500 wrestlers were disqualified from the U-17 National Open Ranking Tournament in Gonda after the Wrestling Federation of India introduced a stringent Aadhaar-based verification system that exposed widespread discrepancies in age and birth records. The tournament, held from June 6 to 8 in Uttar Pradesh’s Gonda district, saw around 1,200 wrestlers register across men’s freestyle, Greco Roman and women’s categories. Apart from the mandatory birth certificates used for age verification, wrestlers were asked to produce Aadhaar cards linked to their mobile numbers and provide OTP authentication through the Aadhaar app, which maintains a record of changes made to the document. The exercise led to the disqualification of nearly 500 wrestlers around 300 in men’s freestyle, 125 in



Greco Roman and about 50 in women’s wrestling after discrepancies emerged between details mentioned in birth certificates and Aadhaar records. In several cases, the place of birth and date of birth recorded in Aadhaar did not match those mentioned in birth certificates, many of which had been issued years after the wrestler’s birth. One of the cases that raised suspicion involved a wrestler who produced a birth certificate showing his date of birth as 2007 and place of birth as Del-

hi’s Narela area, while his Aadhaar records indicated that he was born in Haryana in 2004. The discrepancy prompted the WFI to seek clarification from the hospital that had issued the birth certificate. Following the verification process, only 350 wrestlers in men’s freestyle, 185 women wrestlers and 160 Greco Roman wrestlers were cleared to compete in the tournament. WFI president Sanjay Singh said the federation was committed to ensuring a level playing field

and would continue with the enhanced verification mechanism in age-group competitions. “We are determined to eradicate age fraud from wrestling. Genuine athletes suffer when overage competitors participate in age-group events. The Aadhaar verification process has helped us identify discrepancies and we will continue to implement it strictly in all future U-15, U-17 and U-20 competitions,” Singh said. The federation recently suspended five wrestlers after detecting fake birth certificates during scrutiny of documents, underlining its resolve to tackle manipulation of age records. WFI officials said the same verification protocol would be enforced at upcoming age-group events, including the U-17 World Championship women’s trials in Sonapat on June 14 and the men’s trials in Lucknow on June 15, as the federation intensifies its crackdown on age fraud.

# Indian shooting legend and renowned coach Jaspal Rana passes away at 49

**New Delhi:** Indian shooting legend and renowned coach Jaspal Rana passed away on Friday at the age of 49 after suffering a cardiac emergency earlier this week. Rana, who was serving as the high-performance coach for India's pistol shooters, had reportedly felt discomfort while returning to India from the ISSF World Cup in Munich. After landing in New Delhi, he was admitted to Max Hospital in Saket, where he underwent treatment. Doctors identified a cardiac blockage and inserted a stent. A second stent procedure was expected to be carried out in the coming days. While initial reports suggested that he was stable and recovering, news of his death emerged on Friday morning. "He experienced chest pain and discomfort during the ISSF World Cup in Munich, which he initially mistook for acidity, and continued with his travel plans.

However, the discomfort returned during the journey back to India, prompting immediate medical attention upon his arrival in Delhi," his brother Subash Rana told the media. Rana's death has come as a major blow to Indian shooting. One of the country's most accomplished shooters and respected coaches, he played an important role in shaping several generations of pistol shooters and remained actively involved with the national programme until his final days. In recent years, Rana was widely recognised for his work with Manu Bhaker. The two shared a successful partnership that culminated at the Paris Olympics in 2024, where Bhaker won bronze medals in the women's 10m air pistol and the mixed team 10m air pistol events, becoming the first Indian athlete to win two medals at a single edition of



the Olympics after Independence. Apart from Bhaker, Rana worked closely with several leading pistol shooters, including Saurabh Chaudhary, Anish Bhanwala and Chinki Yadav. His tenure with the junior programme helped create a strong pool of talent that consistently delivered results for India at international competitions.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) appointed Rana as the High-Performance Coach for the 25m pistol discipline in February 2025. Five years earlier, he had been conferred the Dronacharya Award for his contribution to coaching. Long before he became one of India's most respected coaches, Rana had established himself as one of the finest pistol shooters the country had produced. Born on June 28, 1976, in Uttarakhand, Rana announced himself on the international stage in 1994. At the World Shooting Championships in Milan, he won gold in the junior category with a world-record score. Later that year, he claimed

gold in the 25m Centre Fire Pistol event at the Asian Games, beginning a career that would span more than a decade at the highest level. Rana went on to become one of India's most successful shooters, winning medals across the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and Asian Championships. He remains India's most successful Commonwealth Games shooter, with 15 medals, including nine gold medals. His most memorable performance came at the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, where he won three gold medals and equalled the world record in the 25m Centre Fire Pistol event. The success came early in his career as well. Rana received the Arjuna Award at the age of 18 and was honoured with the Padma Shri three years later. Over four editions of the Commonwealth Games — 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2006 — he remained among India's most reliable medal contenders and helped establish shooting as one of the country's strongest disciplines at multi-sport events.

# Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois will retire from football after the 2026 World Cup

**New Delhi:** Real Madrid and Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois has hinted that he could retire from international football after the ongoing FIFA World Cup, raising uncertainty over his future with the national team. The 34-year-old made the remarks as Belgium prepared for their Group G opener against Egypt in Seattle. Courtois' comments come amid a broader phase of transition for the Belgian national team, with several senior players, part of the 'golden' generation including Kevin de Bruyne, approaching the latter stages of their international careers. "I don't know if we should be talking about the future right now, but the chances are greater that I won't continue after this tournament than that I will," Courtois said. "I still want to play for a few more years. And then you have to take care of your body.

My family is here because this could be my last tournament." However, the Real Madrid goalkeeper left the door open for a potential continuation depending on Belgium's World Cup campaign and his personal discussions after the tournament. "If we have a good World Cup, of course. And continuing to feel the good atmosphere



within the group. Afterward, I'll need to have an internal discussion with the coach, (technical director) Vincent Mannaert, and the doctors," he added. Courtois' remarks come at a time when Belgium are gradually rebuilding their squad, with younger talents being integrated alongside experienced figures. The goalkeeper has been a central figure for more than a decade, earning over 100 caps since his debut in 2011 and playing a key role in Belgium's deep runs at major

tournaments. Courtois also reflected on the physical demands of international football and how recent seasons have influenced his thinking about stepping away. "I noticed that during those international breaks you can get some rest and work quietly in the gym. In addition, over the last year and a half, I've had more little physical problems and injuries, so you naturally think more about the future. I'm considering passing the torch. There's a lot of talent coming through

with Senne Lammers and Mike Penders." He added that he feels fully prepared for Belgium's opening match against Egypt, despite earlier injury setbacks. "Yes, I'm very hungry, just like the rest of the group. I feel very good and I'm looking forward to it. I also worked very hard on my comeback during the spring. The quadriceps injury was unfortunate because at that moment I felt almost unbeatable. But I'm ready to maintain my level now and stay focused," he said.

# Holder and Joseph power West Indies to victory in first T20I against Sri Lanka



**New Delhi:** West Indies captain Shai Hope struck an unbeaten half-century after Jason Holder's decisive spell with the ball as the hosts defeated Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the first T20I at Sabina Park on Thursday to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Chasing 148, West Indies completed the task with four balls to spare, though Sri Lanka's bowlers ensured the contest remained alive until the final over. Hope anchored the chase with a composed 65 not out off 54 deliveries, guiding his side home after a blazing start from the opening pair. Hope and Brandon King put Sri Lanka immediately on the back foot with a

67-run stand in just 38 balls. King, who survived multiple early scares, made 37 off 22 deliveries before falling to Wanindu Hasaranga. The aggressive power play left the West Indies firmly ahead of the chase despite the sluggish nature of the surface. Sri Lanka fought back through the middle overs, led by Hasaranga's 2 for 32 and a disciplined spell from Maheesh Theekshana, who conceded just 20 runs from his four overs. Eshan Malinga also impressed with figures of 1 for 26 as the visitors slowed the scoring considerably and dragged the chase into the final over. However, with six runs required off the last six balls, Rovman

Powell ended the contest swiftly, launching Dilshan Madushanka over deep mid-wicket for six to seal victory. Earlier, Sri Lanka failed to capitalise on a promising start after Kusal Mendis provided early momentum with a brisk 36 off 23 balls. The visitors raced to 43 without loss before Holder turned the match in West Indies' favour. Introduced in the fifth over, Holder struck immediately by dismissing Pathum Nissanka and then trapped Lasith Croospulle lbw with the very next delivery after a successful review. Sri Lanka slipped from 43 for no loss to 56 for 3 by the end of the Powerplay and never fully recovered.

# Wataru Endo retires from international football after injury shatters his 2026 World Cup dream

**New Delhi:** Japan captain and Liverpool midfielder Wataru Endo has been ruled out of the FIFA World Cup 2026 through injury, bringing a heartbreaking end to his international career just days before the Samurai Blue begin their campaign. The 33-year-old also announced his immediate retirement from international football, closing the curtain on a decade-long journey with Japan. Japan's preparations for the tournament have been dealt a major blow ahead of their Group F opener against the Netherlands on June 15. In a statement shared on social media, Endo confirmed that he would no longer be part of the World Cup squad and would be stepping away from international football altogether. Announcing his decision, Endo wrote that he had done everything possible to recover from the injury and had no regrets about the effort he put into returning for the tournament. "As announced, I will be stepping away from the World Cup squad. Since my injury, I've done everything I possibly could up to this point, so I



have no regrets whatsoever. Of course, there's frustration at not being able to participate in this World Cup, but more than that, I'm proud of how we've grown together since the Qatar World Cup." The Liverpool midfielder also paid tribute to the current generation of Japan players and expressed his belief that they could achieve something special in North America. "The current team is truly a wonderful team. I

believe they will overcome any adversity and show us sights we've never seen before. With this campaign, I will be retiring from the national team. So from here on, I'll be cheering for the Japan national team as one of the fans. The moment when the Japan national team wins the World Cup will surely come someday." Liverpool later acknowledged Endo's announcement, confirming

that the midfielder had withdrawn from Japan's World Cup squad because of injury. The setback comes after months of uncertainty surrounding Endo's fitness. The veteran midfielder had been battling a foot injury suffered while on club duty with Liverpool earlier this year and underwent surgery in an attempt to recover in time for the World Cup. Although he was included in Japan's final 26-man squad, concerns

resurfaced when he played only one half during a warm-up friendly against Iceland before experiencing further discomfort. Endo has been struggling with a foot injury since February after sustaining the problem while playing for Liverpool. The midfielder underwent surgery and spent several months attempting to regain full fitness before the World Cup. His inclusion in Japan's final squad initially suggested that he had won the race against time, especially as other notable stars such as Kaoru Mitoma and Takumi Minamino were unavailable. However, concerns emerged during Japan's final preparations when Endo was substituted at half-time during a friendly against Iceland on May 31. While initial medical assessments remained optimistic, Japan ultimately decided not to risk their captain's fitness heading into the tournament. The decision was made just three days before Japan's opening match against the Netherlands, ending Endo's hopes of leading his country at what would likely have been his final World Cup.

# Manu Bhaker is set to spearhead the Indian challenge in two Asian Games pistol events

**New Delhi:** Asian Games shooting competitions are where Indian shooters bloom and win a handful of medals. With medals at the Olympics and shooting World Championships, Indian shooters are among the top players in the world. Expectedly so, India have decided to take their entire quota of shooters to the Asian Games in September 19 to October 4 at Aichi-Nagoya, Japan. Spearheaded by the double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker and up and rising Esha Singh, India named a 18-member pistol and rifle shooting team on Thursday. India have already named a 12-member shot guns shooting team. Esha and Manu will be competing in both pistol events while Rudranksh Balasaheb Patil and Vidarsa K Vinod will be part of both rifle events. Rudranksh will be joined by teenagers Parth Rakesh Mane and Himanshu Dhillon in the 10m Rifle Event while Niraj Kumar



and World Championship medallist Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar will join Rudranksh in the 50m Rifle 3 Positions event. In the women's rifle events, Elavenil Valarivan, Sonam Uttam Maskar and Vidarsa K. Vinod will compete in 10m Air Ri-

fle while Vidarsa will be joined by Ashi Chouksey and Tilotama Sen in the 50m 3 Positions event. Joining Manu and Esha in the 25m pistol event will be 2018 Asian Games champion Rahi Sarnobat. In the 25m Rapid Fire Pistol event, India's

hopes will be on Anish Bhanwala who is the only shooter named in the squad. In the 10m Air Pistol men's event India will be represented by Kedarling Balakrishna Uchaganve, Gaurav and Kamaljeet. Indian squad for the 20th Asian Games Men 10m Air Rifle: Parth Rakesh Mane, Himanshu Dhillon, Rudranksh Balasaheb Patil 50m Rifle 3P: Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Niraj Kumar, Rudranksh Balasaheb Patil 10m Air Pistol: Kedarling Balakrishna Uchaganve, Gaurav, Kamaljeet 25m Rapid Fire Pistol: Anish Bhanwala Women 10m Air Rifle: Elavenil Valarivan, Sonam Uttam Maskar, Vidarsa K. Vinod 50m Rifle 3P: Ashi Chouksey, Vidarsa K. Vinod, Tilotama Sen 10m Air Pistol: Suruchi Inder Singh, Esha Singh, Manu Bhaker 25m Pistol: Esha Singh, Manu Bhaker, Rahi Sarnobat Mixed Team 10m Air Rifle: Parth Rakesh Mane and Elavenil Valarivan.

# Morocco suffers huge World Cup blow as star winger Ezzalzouli and Aguerd exit injured



**Basking Ridge, N.J:** Morocco replaced two injured players in its World Cup squad ahead of an opening game against Brazil, including star winger Abde Ezzalzouli. FIFA confirmed late Wednesday that former Barcelona player Ezzalzouli and Marseille defender Nayef Aguerd were withdrawn from the Morocco squad for the tournament. Ezzalzouli helped Real Betis qualify for next season's Champions League and was a potential breakout star at the World Cup. Aguerd was a cornerstone of Morocco's historic semifinals team at

the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. They were replaced by Amine Sbati of French club Angers and Marwane Saadane, who plays in Saudi Arabia for Al Fateh. Morocco opens against Brazil on Saturday at MetLife Stadium near New York, then plays Scotland on June 19 near Boston and finishes Group C against Haiti on June 24 in Atlanta. Ezzalzouli injured his right knee in a warmup game against Norway last weekend, though initial tests suggested he could be retained in coach Mohamed Ouahbi's squad to play in the knockout rounds.