

IIT Guwahati Advances Energy Conversion Research

Guwahati, Jun 02: A research team at Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) has developed a new technology on perovskite semiconductor material, known for its potential applications in solar cells and resistive-switching (memristor/R-RAM) devices.

Perovskites are a class of materials with a distinctive crystal structure that enables strong light absorption and efficient charge separation for high-performance solar cells, while their defect-tolerant electronic properties and ion migration behaviour make them highly promising for memristor devices.

Perovskite solar cells comprise multiple functional layers, where photogenerated charge carriers are extracted through selective transport layers to generate electricity. However, losses at interfaces arising from surface defects, chemical redox reactions and energy-level mismatches lead to charge trapping and recombination.

These challenges are further intensified under environmental stress, such as moisture, heat and oxygen, resulting in degradation and reduced operational stability, thereby limiting the practical use of perovskites in real-world scenarios.

However, the resistive switching behaviour of perovskite memristors is often affected by uncontrolled ion migration, defect-assisted con-

duction, and interfacial instabilities, leading to variability in switching parameters.

These issues result in poor switching uniformity, limited endurance, retention degradation, and an incomplete understanding of the underlying switching mechanism, thereby hindering the development of reliable perovskite-based memory devices for future neuromorphic computing and next-generation non-volatile memory applications.

To address these limitations, Prof. Parameswar K. Iyer, Professor, Department of Chemistry and Centre for Nanotechnology, along with his research team, developed a molecular interface engineering method using two specially designed bright donor-acceptor organic molecules. These strategic organic compounds are deposited as 10-15 nm ultrathin layers (a hundred thousand times thinner than a human hair) between the charge-transport layer and the perovskite layer as part of the device engineering tactic.

These organic molecules control how electrical charges behave at the interface and reduce defects, resulting in the easy and smooth flow of charges created by sunlight across the interface.

This approach enabled solar cells to achieve an efficiency of 25.73 percent, corresponding to the conversion of nearly one-quarter of incident sun-



light into electricity, which is highly competitive among state-of-the-art devices of this class.

The research team also found that the interfacial engineering approach retained approximately 90 percent of its initial performance after prolonged storage under ambient conditions and about 75 percent under continuous thermal and light stress, highlighting the robustness of the developed materials.

Beyond solar cells, the team demonstrated that the same (FA-based) perovskite material can be integrated into memristor devices using a thin 220-nm-active layer, showcasing its multifunctional potential. These devices exhibit stable low-power switching, multistate memory per-

formance, and reliable endurance, making them promising candidates for next-generation memory and crossbar arrays for neuromorphic computing.

The study also provides important insights into the switching mechanism governed by defect states and ion migration. Furthermore, the multistate memory behaviour highlights its potential for neuromorphic computing and artificial intelligence hardware. The stochastic formation of conductive filaments also enables true random number generation, offering promising opportunities for secure computing, cryptographic systems, and next-generation intelligent electronic technologies.

Speaking about the real-world us-

age of the developed materials, Prof. Parameswar K. Iyer, Professor, Department of Chemistry, IIT Guwahati, said, "This work demonstrates the potential of perovskite-based semiconductor technologies for next-generation solar cells and memory devices. The synthesised novel organic molecules enable improved interfacial engineering for highly efficient and stable solar energy conversion, while the same material platform exhibits reliable resistive switching for advanced memory and neuromorphic computing applications. Such advances could accelerate the large-scale commercialization of integrated optoelectronic systems combining energy harvesting, information storage, and intelligent computing within a single technological framework."

In addition to the development of low-cost and efficient solar cells and memory devices, these improved perovskite systems can also support energy-efficient computing approaches, such as neuromorphic systems, which emulate how the brain processes information using networks that mimic neurons and synapses.

The findings of this research have led to multiple patents filing for perovskite solar cell technology, memory devices and publication of two separate high-impact research articles recently in the prestigious international journal, 'Advanced Functional Materials' (Wiley).

Anti Drugs Operation: 15 Held, 111 Grams of Heroin Seized in Guwahati

Guwahati, Jun 02 (Agency): In a major anti-narcotics operation, Basistha Police apprehended four alleged drug peddlers and detained 11 drug addicts during a crackdown in Guwahati. The operation led to the seizure of 111 grams of heroin and 100 empty drug containers.

According to police sources, the action was carried out following specific intelligence inputs regarding the sale and consumption of narcotics in the city. The arrested peddlers were allegedly involved in supplying drugs to users across different localities.

Police officials expressed concern over the growing drug menace in Guwahati, stating that a significant number of youths, including those who have come to the city from reputed and well-off families for education and employment, are falling prey to substance abuse.

The seized heroin and other materials have been taken into custody and further investigation is underway to identify the larger network behind the drug trade. Police said efforts are being intensified to curb the spread of narcotics and protect young people from addiction.



Guwahati police busts IPL betting racket

Guwahati, Jun 02: Guwahati Police busted an IPL betting racket and seized cash, jewellery, luxury vehicles, digital devices and property-related documents during a raid conducted on the night of the IPL final.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Shambhavi Mishra said the operation was carried out following extensive intelligence gathering by a specially constituted team.

The raid was conducted at the residence of the prime accused, Alok Jain, while the IPL final match was underway. Investigators alleged that live betting activities were being conducted at the premises at the time of the operation.

Police stated that Jain had allegedly been involved in illegal gambling activities for a considerable period. During the search, officials recovered around 16 mobile phones, two laptops, two monitors and several tablet devices that were reportedly being used to facilitate betting operations and stream the IPL match live. The police also seized Rs 80,000 in cash and a substantial quantity of jewellery from the premises. In addition, several luxury vehicles and approximately 26 land-related documents linked to properties across Guwahati were recovered.

Officials said the recovered materials are being examined as part of the ongoing investigation. The financial assets and property records seized during the operation are expected to be scrutinised to determine the extent of the alleged betting network and its possible financial linkages. Police have indicated that further investigation is underway and additional arrests or legal action may follow based on the evidence collected during the raid.

Supreme Court Strength Reaches 37 as Five Newly Appointed Judges Take Oath

New Delhi, Jun 02 (Agency): The Supreme Court of India has welcomed five new judges, with Chief Justice Surya Kant administering the oath of office to them on Tuesday. With these appointments, the total strength of judges in the apex court has risen to 37.

The Chief Justice administered the oath to Justice Sheel Nagu, Justice Shri Chandrashekhar, Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva, Justice Arun Palli, and Justice V. Mohan as judges of the Supreme Court.

President Droupadi Murmu had approved the appointments of these judges to the Supreme Court on Monday.

The appointments were recommended by the Supreme Court Collegium during its meetings held on May 22 and May 27. Following the President's approval, the judges formally assumed office after taking the oath administered by the Chief Justice.

The induction of the five judges is expected to strengthen the functioning of the Supreme Court and help address the growing workload and pendency of cases before the country's highest judicial institution.

'Study, Research and Preservation of Manuscripts are Everyone's Responsibility'

Bhubaneswar, Jun 02 (Agency): The identity of a nation is not defined solely by its territory, political history or economic prosperity; rather, it is rooted in its preserved knowledge, collective memory, and cultural heritage. Manuscripts and ancient texts are among the most authentic and living records of that heritage. Inaugurating a workshop on Manuscriptology noted manuscriptologist and former Director of the National Mission for Manuscripts, Professor Dr. Prafulla Kumar Mishra emphasized that the preservation, study, and research of manuscripts are the responsibility of all.

Presiding over the workshop organized by the Odisha Virtual Academy, Secretary of the Academy, Dr. Pradeep Kumar Rout, stated that the objective of the programme is to promote the identification, survey, preservation, digitization, descriptive cataloguing, editing, publication and research of manuscript re-

sources.

Delivering the keynote address, eminent manuscript scholar Professor Harekrushna Mishra observed that the preservation and advancement of India's knowledge traditions can be achieved through the proper reading and interpretation of manuscripts. He further stated that the primary aim of the workshop is not merely to provide general information about manuscripts, but to establish manuscript studies as a well-structured academic discipline. Professor Bibhuti Bhushan Mahapatra, Head of the Department of Sanskrit at Rajadhani College and Course Director of the workshop, informed that the programme covers subjects such as manuscriptology, paleography, codicology, textual decipherment, textual criticism, critical editing, preparation of descriptive catalogues, digital preservation, and research methodology.

Home Minister Amit Shah to chair NEC meet in Shillong on Thursday

Shillong, Jun 02: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair the plenary meeting of the North Eastern Council (NEC) at State Convention Centre in Shillong on Thursday.

Governors and Chief Ministers of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, who are also members of the NEC, will

attend the plenary meet to. The members will deliberate on key initiatives for the growth, connectivity, and sustainable development of the North Eastern Region. Shah is the ex officio chairperson of the council, while Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) minister Jyotiraditya Scindia is its vice-chairman. Senior officers of DoNER and NITI Aayog will take part in

the plenary. Organisations like Assam Rifles, NEEPCO, NHIDCL, NEDFi, NER-CORMS, NERAMAC, NEH-HDCL, NESAC and NIC will also be attending the plenary. During the plenary meeting, Secretary of NEC Satinder Kumar Bhalla and Secretary of DoNER Sanjay Jaju will brief on the activities being undertaken in DoNER.

A pre-interaction meeting

with chief secretaries of NE states, secretaries of central ministries, representatives of NITI Aayog and planning secretaries of North Eastern states will be organised on Wednesday. During his Meghalaya visit, Shah will attend the 13th meeting of North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC) to be held at State Convention Centre in Shillong.

Record Participation Marks Successful Conclusion of Guwahati Open Pickleball Tournament

Guwahati, Jun 02: The Guwahati Open PWR 200, organised by the Assam Pickleball Association (APA) under the aegis of the Indian Pickleball Association (IPA), concluded on Sunday.

The two-day tournament witnessed enthusiastic participation from players across the country and marked another significant milestone in the growth of pickleball in Northeast India.

A total of 130 players competed across 22 events, playing 210 matches over the course of the championship.

As an officially sanctioned National Ranking and Pickleball World Rankings (PWR) event, the tournament provided players with an opportunity to earn valuable ranking points at both the national and international levels.

The championship attracted leading players from Nagaland, West Bengal, Delhi, and various districts of Assam, resulting in a highly competitive field across junior, open, and masters categories. Events were conducted for boys, girls, men, women, and senior age-group players, reflecting the broad appeal and inclusive nature of the sport. A total prize purse of Rs 80,000 was awarded across the Men's Open Singles and Doubles, as well as the 30+ and 40+ Men's Singles, Doubles, and Mixed Doubles categories, adding to the prestige and competitiveness of the tournament. The tournament showcased an impressive standard of play and highlighted the rapid growth of pickleball in Assam and the Northeast. The strong participation from both established and emerging players underscored



the increasing popularity of the sport and the expanding competitive ecosystem being developed in the region. Speaking on the occasion, officials of the Assam Pickleball Association expressed satisfaction with the successful conduct of the tournament and the encouraging response from players, coaches, and supporters. They noted that such events play a crucial role in talent identification and development while po-

sitioning Assam as an emerging destination for national-level pickleball competitions. With record participation, quality competition, national ranking significance, and international ranking opportunities, the Guwahati Open PWR 200 has further strengthened Assam's reputation as one of India's fastest-growing hubs for pickleball and reaffirmed the state's commitment to the development of the sport.

In Brief

Anti Drugs Operation

Guwahati: In a major anti-narcotics operation, Basistha Police apprehended four alleged drug peddlers and detained 11 drug addicts during a crackdown in Guwahati. The operation led to the seizure of 111 grams of heroin and 100 empty drug containers. According to police sources, the action was carried out following specific intelligence inputs regarding the sale and consumption of narcotics in the city. The arrested peddlers were allegedly involved in supplying drugs to users across different localities. Police officials expressed concern over the growing drug menace in Guwahati, stating that a significant number of youths, including those who have come to the city from reputed and well-off families for education and employment, are falling prey to substance abuse.

Guwahati police busts IPL betting racket

Guwahati: Guwahati Police busted an IPL betting racket and seized cash, jewellery, luxury vehicles, digital devices and property-related documents during a raid conducted on the night of the IPL final. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Shambhavi Mishra said the operation was carried out following extensive intelligence gathering by a specially constituted team. The raid was conducted at the residence of the prime accused, Alok Jain, while the IPL final match was underway. Investigators alleged that live betting activities were being conducted at the premises at the time of the operation.

EJAC seeks DA merger, pay hike from 8th Pay Panel

Jammu: The Employees Joint Action Committee (EJAC), J&K, has urged the 8th Central Pay Commission to recommend a substantial hike in salaries, merger of Dearness Allowance (DA) with basic pay once it reaches 50 per cent, and a comprehensive regularisation policy for daily wagers and other temporary workers. An EJAC delegation led by president Wajahat Hussain and general secretary Sajad Ahmad Parray met the chairperson and members of the 8th Central Pay Commission and submitted a memorandum outlining the concerns of Government employees, pensioners, contractual workers, consolidated employees and Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) staff in J&K.

Six held in Majuli Over Assault of Minor Girl

Majuli: Six individuals, including two juveniles, have been arrested in Assam's Majuli district after a 12-year-old girl was allegedly subjected to repeated sexual assaults over several months, which resulted in her being more than six months pregnant, police said. The arrests followed a complaint lodged by the victim's family at Garamur Police Station on June 1. Investigators stated that the accused exploited the absence of family members at the girl's home to assault her multiple times. She was also allegedly threatened with death if she revealed the abuse.

Guwahati Police uncover IPL betting racket, seize cash, jewellery and property records

Guwahati, June 02: Guwahati Police have busted an alleged Indian Premier League (IPL) betting racket operating from the city and seized cash, jewellery, luxury vehicles, digital devices and property-related documents during a raid conducted on the night of the IPL final.

The operation was carried out following extensive intelligence gathering by a specially constituted police team. According to officials, the team acted on specific inputs regarding illegal betting activities and conducted a raid while the IPL final match was underway. Addressing the media, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Shambhavi Mishra said the operation was led by the Additional Deputy Commissioner of



Police and involved the Assistant Commissioner of Police of Noonmati, Officers-in-Charge and other

police personnel. Police said the raid was conducted at the residence of the prime accused, identified

as Alok Jain.

Investigators alleged that live betting activities were taking place at the prem-

ises when the police team arrived. According to the police, Jain had allegedly been involved in illegal gambling operations for a considerable period. During the search, officers recovered around 16 mobile phones, two laptops, two monitors and several tablet devices. Investigators believe these electronic devices were being used to manage betting activities and stream IPL matches in real time. Apart from digital equipment, police seized ₹80,000 in cash and a substantial quantity of jewellery from the premises. Officials also recovered several luxury vehicles believed to be linked to the accused.

One of the significant findings during the operation was the recovery

of around 26 land-related documents connected to properties located in different parts of Guwahati. Police suspect these documents may provide crucial leads regarding the financial scale of the alleged betting network.

Officials said the seized materials are now being examined as part of the ongoing investigation. The financial assets, electronic devices and property records will be scrutinised to determine the extent of the betting operation and identify possible financial connections and beneficiaries. Police have not ruled out further action in the case. Investigators said additional arrests and legal proceedings may follow depending on the evidence gathered during the probe.

Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio Appoints Five MLAs as Advisors, Reshuffles Portfolios



Kohima, June 02: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has appointed five legislators as advisors to various government departments and reshuffled the portfolios of another MLA in a move aimed at strengthening governance by leveraging the experience and expertise of elected representatives.

According to an official notification issued by Chief Secretary Sentiyanger Imchen, the appointments and revised portfolio allocations came into effect immediately. Among the newly appointed advisors, Kuzholuzo Nienu has been assigned the Science and Technology Department, while Puthai Longon has been entrusted with the Taxes Department.

Picto Shohe has been appointed Advisor for New and Renewable Energy as well as the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Kikon has been given charge of the Forest and Food Processing Departments. The notification further stated that Nyushetho Nyuthe will continue as Advisor to the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA) and will additionally oversee the Inland Waterways Department.

However, he has been relieved of his responsibilities related to the New and Renewable Energy Department. In another significant reshuffle, MLA

Dolie Yimkhuih has been appointed Advisor to the Information and Public Relations, Social Welfare, and Soil and Water Conservation Departments.

The state government clarified that the advisors will provide recommendations and guidance on matters referred to them by their respective departments before final decisions are taken by the concerned ministers. It was also specified that the advisors will not receive any additional salary, remuneration, allowances, or perks beyond those already entitled to them as members of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly.

With the latest appointments, the number of advisors in the Rio-led government has risen to 29. The development marks the first expansion of advisors since the 2023 Nagaland Assembly elections.

It is also notable as the first induction of two former Naga People's Front (NPF) legislators—Kuzholuzo Nienu and Kikon—into the Rio administration following the merger of the NPF with the ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) in October 2025.

The appointments are expected to further strengthen administrative coordination and enhance policy implementation across key sectors of the state government.

Governor of Telangana interacts with Meghalaya student delegation under Yuva Sangam Phase VI

Shillong, June 02: The Governor of Telangana, Shiv Pratap Shukla, interacted with a delegation of students from Meghalaya at Lok Bhavan, Hyderabad, informed an official press release today. The student delegation, led by the Indian Institute of Management Shillong, is visiting Telangana as part of an educational and cultural exchange programme aimed at fostering national integration and cross-cultural learning among youth. Earlier, the delegation received a warm welcome at the National Institute of Technology Warangal, the host institution for their visit to Telangana, marking the beginning of their immersive learning and cultural exchange journey across the State. During the interaction, the Governor highlighted the important role of youth in strengthening national integration, promoting cultural under-

standing, and contributing towards nation-building. The delegates shared their experiences from the Yuva Sangam journey and presented the Governor with a memento as a token of respect and remembrance. The interaction further enriched the participants' understanding of India's diversity, democratic values, and spirit of unity. The student delegation visited prominent cultural, educational, and innovation centres across Telangana, including iconic landmarks such as Hussain Sagar Lake, the Statue of Equality, Ramappa Temple, Warangal Fort, Bhadrakali Temple, and the Thousand Pillar Temple, gaining valuable insights into the State's rich heritage, cultural legacy, academic excellence, and developmental initiatives. Participants also visited Kanha Shanti Vanam and T-Hub, where they were introduced to holistic well-being



practices and India's growing innovation and startup ecosystem.

At NIT Warangal, they explored research and innovation facilities, participated in a plantation drive promoting environmental sustainability, and attended the valedictory programme, marking the culmination of their learning experiences and cultural exchanges during the Yuva Sangam journey. The student delegation departed for Meghalaya on May 31. Launched by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Yuva Sangam Phase VI seeks to strengthen national unity, cultural harmony, and emotional integration through immersive educational and cultural exchanges. The initiative brings together participants from 22 paired States and Union Territories, creating pathways for a deeper understanding of India's diversity, innovation ecosystems, and shared aspirations for nation-building. (EOM)

IIT Guwahati creates strategic devices for energy conversion

Guwahati, June 02: A research team at Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) has developed a new technology on perovskite semiconductor material, known for its potential applications in solar cells and resistive-switching (memristor/R-RAM) devices. Perovskites are a class of materials with a distinctive crystal structure that enables strong light absorption and efficient charge separation for high-performance solar cells, while their defect-tolerant electronic properties and ion migration behaviour make them highly promising for memristor devices. Perovskite solar cells comprise multiple functional layers, where photogenerated charge carriers are extracted through selective transport layers to generate electricity.

However, losses at interfaces arising from surface defects, chemical redox reactions and energy-level mismatches lead to charge trapping and recombination. These challenges are further intensified under environmental stress, such as moisture, heat and oxygen, resulting in degradation and reduced operational stability, thereby limiting the practical use of perovskites in real-world scenarios. However, the resistive switching behaviour of perovskite memristors is often affected by uncontrolled ion migration, defect-assisted conduction, and interfacial instabilities, leading to variability in switching parameters. These issues result in poor switching uniformity, limited



endurance, retention degradation, and an incomplete understanding of the underlying switching mechanism, thereby hindering the development of reliable perovskite-based memory devices for future neuromorphic computing and next-generation non-volatile memory applications.

To address these limitations, Prof. Parameswar K. Iyer, Professor, Department of Chemistry and Centre for Nanotechnology, along with his research team, developed a molecular interface engineering method using two specially designed bright donor-acceptor organic molecules. These strategic organic compounds are deposited as 10-15 nm ultrathin layers (a hundred thousand times thinner than a human hair) between the charge-transport layer and the perovskite layer as part of the device engineering tactic.

These organic molecules control how electrical charges behave at the interface and reduce defects, resulting in the easy and smooth flow of charges created by sunlight across the interface. This approach enabled solar cells to achieve an efficiency of 25.73 percent, corresponding to the conversion of nearly one-quarter of incident sunlight into electricity, which is highly competitive among state-of-the-art devices of this class. The research team also found that the interfacial engineering approach retained approximately 90 percent of its initial performance after prolonged storage under ambient conditions and about 75 percent under continuous thermal and light stress, highlighting the robustness of the developed materials.

Beyond solar cells, the team demonstrated that the same (FA-based) perovskite

material can be integrated into memristor devices using a thin 220-nm-active layer, showcasing its multifunctional potential. These devices exhibit stable low-power switching, multistate memory performance, and reliable endurance, making them promising candidates for next-generation memory and crossbar arrays for neuromorphic computing. The study also provides important insights into the switching mechanism governed by defect states and ion migration. Furthermore, the multistate memory behaviour highlights its potential for neuromorphic computing and artificial intelligence hardware. The stochastic formation of conductive filaments also enables true random number generation, offering promising opportunities for secure computing, cryptographic systems, and next-generation intelli-

gent electronic technologies. Speaking about the real-world usage of the developed materials, Prof. Parameswar K. Iyer, Professor, Department of Chemistry, IIT Guwahati, said, "This work demonstrates the potential of perovskite-based semiconductor technologies for next-generation solar cells and memory devices."

The synthesised novel organic molecules enable improved interfacial engineering for highly efficient and stable solar energy conversion, while the same material platform exhibits reliable resistive switching for advanced memory and neuromorphic computing applications. Such advances could accelerate the large-scale commercialization of integrated optoelectronic systems combining energy harvesting, information storage, and intelligent computing within a single technological framework."

In addition to the development of low-cost and efficient solar cells and memory devices, these improved perovskite systems can also support energy-efficient computing approaches, such as neuromorphic systems, which emulate how the brain processes information using networks that mimic neurons and synapses. The findings of this research have led to multiple patents filing for perovskite solar cell technology, memory devices and publication of two separate high-impact research articles recently in the prestigious international journal, 'Advanced Functional Materials' (Wiley).

Umiam Power Project Upgrade Halted Amid Alleged Assault on Workers in Meghalaya

Shillong, June 02: Renovation and upgradation work at the Umiam-Umreru Stage III Power Station in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district has remained suspended for nearly a week following allegations that members of a pressure group entered the project site to verify labour licences and allegedly assaulted several workers, including both non-local labourers and local Khasi employees. The incident has raised fresh concerns over worker safety and the investment climate in the state, coming just days after a similar attack on workers employed by the Centre Point Group at its upcoming Ri Kynjai resort project in Laitkynsew village near Sohra. According to reports, on May 28, around 15 youths allegedly trespassed into the Umiam project site and assaulted a number of workers.

At least five people were injured in the incident, including Raj Kumar Sharma, who sustained serious head injuries and required hospitalization. Expressing concern over the repeated incidents, authorities of Nongdiengnagan and Nongmahir villages stated that the situation had become so serious that the company executing the project was forced to suspend operations after several non-local workers fled the site fearing for their safety.

The suspension of work has reportedly affected local youths and labourers who have been employed at the project for more than a year. Village leaders



claimed that wages have been withheld due to the disruption, while senior officials of the company have left the area. Speaking on Monday, Nongdiengnagan village headman Dip Pathaw and Nongmahir village secretary J. Thangkiewicz clarified that they were not opposed to the verification of labour licences of non-local workers.

However, they strongly condemned the alleged use of violence by certain pressure groups and cited the recent attack on Centre Point workers in Sohra as a matter of grave concern. The village leaders warned that such incidents could negatively impact investor confidence and hamper development activities in Meghalaya.

They stressed that any verification of documents should be conducted

through legal procedures and in coordination with local authorities and law enforcement agencies. They further lamented that the ongoing disruptions were delaying important infrastructure projects that were expected to benefit local communities and generate employment opportunities. The village authorities also pointed out that the suspension of work at the Umiam project has contributed to a decline in water levels in the area, adversely affecting tourism and related economic activities.

Appealing for immediate intervention, the village leaders and affected workers urged the Meghalaya Government and the Meghalaya Energy Corporation Limited (MeECL) to ensure the safety of workers and facilitate the early resumption of the project.

Telangana Governor Meets Meghalaya Students Under Yuva Sangam

Shillong, Jun 02: The Governor of Telangana, Shiv Pratap Shukla, interacted with a delegation of students from Meghalaya at Lok Bhavan, Hyderabad, informed an official press release today.

The student delegation, led by the Indian Institute of Management Shillong, is visiting Telangana as part of an educational and cultural exchange programme aimed at fostering national integration and cross-cultural learning

among youth.

Earlier, the delegation received a warm welcome at the National Institute of Technology Warangal, the host institution for their visit to Telangana, marking the beginning of their immersive learning and cultural exchange journey across the State.During the interaction, the Governor highlighted the important role of youth in strengthening national integration, promoting cul-

tural understanding, and contributing towards nation-building. The delegates shared their experiences from the Yuva Sangam journey and presented the Governor with a memento as a token of respect and remembrance. The interaction further enriched the participants’ understanding of India’s diversity, democratic values, and spirit of unity. The student delegation visited prominent cultural, educational, and innovation centres

across Telangana, including iconic landmarks such as Hussain Sagar Lake, the Statue of Equality, Ramappa Temple, Warangal Fort, Bhadrakali Temple, and the Thousand Pillar Temple, gaining valuable insights into the State’s rich heritage, cultural legacy, academic excellence, and developmental initiatives. Participants also visited Kanha Shanti Vanam and T-Hub, where they were introduced to holistic well-being practic-

es and India’s growing innovation and startup ecosystem. At NIT Warangal, they explored research and innovation facilities, participated in a plantation drive promoting environmental sustainability, and attended the valedictory programme, marking the culmination of their learning experiences and cultural exchanges during the Yuva Sangam journey. The student delegation departed for Meghalaya on May 31.

Six held in Majuli Over Assault of Minor Girl

Majuli, Jun 02: Six individuals, including two juveniles, have been arrested in Assam’s Majuli district after a 12-year-old girl was allegedly subjected to repeated sexual assaults over several months, which resulted in her being more than six months pregnant, police said.

The arrests followed a complaint lodged by the victim’s family at Garamur Police Station on June 1. Investigators stated that the accused exploited the absence of family members at the girl’s home to assault her multiple times. She was also allegedly threatened with death if she revealed the abuse.

The pregnancy was discovered only recently, prompting the family to approach the authorities. Medical examinations indicated that the abuse began when the girl was around 11 years old; she turned 12 about four months ago.

Police identified the four adult accused as Khagen Doley (59), Dharmakanta Pegu (50), Yogen Doley (52), and Nathuram Doley (32). Two juveniles have also been implicated and are being dealt with under the juvenile justice system.The four adult accused were produced before a local court on June 2 and remanded to judicial custody for two days. Police said the investigation is ongoing and further evidence is being collected.

High Court Petition Filed by Meghalaya Government Challenging Sonam’s Bail

Shillong, Jun 02: The Meghalaya Government on Monday concluded its arguments before the High Court of Meghalaya in a criminal petition challenging the bail granted to Sonam Raghuvanshi. Representing the state, Advocate General Amit Kumar presented the government’s case before the single bench of Justice Wanlura Diengdoh. The matter has now been listed for further hearing on June 3, when lawyers representing the respondent, Sonam Raghuvanshi, are expected to present their arguments.

The state has approached the High Court seeking to challenge an order dated April 27, 2026, passed by the Sessions Judge of East Khasi Hills District, Shillong, in Bail Application No. 93(T) 2026 connected with Sessions Case No. 41(T) 2025.

According to the petition, the Sessions Court had directed that Sonam Raghuvanshi be released on bail subject to certain conditions. The Meghalaya Government has expressed dissatisfaction with the order and has sought judicial intervention. In its petition, the state has prayed for the impugned bail order to be quashed and set aside. It has also requested the High Court to cancel the bail granted to Sonam Raghuvanshi. The case will come up for further hearing on June 3, when the respondent’s counsel will place their submissions before the court.



Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio Appoints Five MLAs as Advisors, Reshuffles Portfolios

Kohima, Jun 02: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has appointed five legislators as advisors to various government departments and reshuffled the portfolios of another MLA in a move aimed at strengthening governance by leveraging the experience and expertise of elected representatives.

According to an official notification issued by Chief Secretary Sentianger Imchen, the appointments and revised portfolio allocations came into effect immediately.

Among the newly appointed advisors, Kuzholuzo Nienu has been assigned the Science and Technology Department, while Puthai Longon has been entrusted with the Taxes Department. Picto Shohe has been appointed Advisor for New and Renewable Energy as well as the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Kikon has been given charge of the Forest and Food Processing Departments.

The notification further stated that Nyushetho Nyuthe will continue as Advisor to the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA) and will additionally oversee the Inland Waterways Department. However, he has been relieved of his responsibilities related to the New and Re-

newable Energy Department.

In another significant reshuffle, MLA Dolie Yimkhiung has been appointed Advisor to the Information and Public Relations, Social Welfare, and Soil and Water Conservation Departments. The state government clarified that the advisors will provide recommendations and guidance on matters referred to them by their respective departments before final decisions are taken by the concerned ministers.It was also specified that the advisors will not receive any additional salary, remuneration, allowances, or perks beyond those already entitled to them as members of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly.

With the latest appointments, the number of advisors in the Rio-led government has risen to 29.

The development marks the first expansion of advisors since the 2023 Nagaland Assembly elections. It is also notable as the first induction of two former Naga People’s Front (NPF) legislators—Kuzholuzo Nienu and Kikon—into the Rio administration following the merger of the NPF with the ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) in October 2025.

Kerala launches ‘Operation Thufan’ to crack down on drug networks

Thiruvananthapuram, Jun 02 (Agency): Kerala Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala on Tuesday issued a stern warning to drug traffickers and users across the state, declaring that the government would intensify its fight against narcotics through a new statewide anti-drug initiative titled “Operation Thufan.”

Speaking at the launch of the operation, Chennithala said no individual would be beyond the reach of the law and cautioned against any assumption that wealth, status, or influence could shield offenders from police action.“Those involved in the drug trade should understand that it is in their best interest to stop today itself. The police will not hesitate to act against anyone, irrespective of their social stand-

ing, financial power, or position,” he said. The Home Minister specifically warned that luxury caravans, high-end venues, and exclusive gatherings would not be exempt from scrutiny. “Nobody should believe that police will refrain from inspecting caravans or other private spaces. Law enforcement will function strictly according to the law, without considering status, money, or influence,” he added. Chennithala also revealed that the state’s cyber intelligence units had been directed to track digital footprints linked to narcotics trafficking conducted through the dark web and other online platforms. He said special instructions had been issued to cyber cells to identify and dismantle digital networks facilitating

drug distribution.Expressing concern over the increasing use of narcotics at high-profile social events, the minister said drug consumption at five-star hotels and DJ parties must come to an end. Organisers of such events, he noted, must ensure that their gatherings are not being used as channels for drug distribution or abuse.“If these events become hubs for narcotics use or supply, the long arm of the law will reach there as well,” he warned.Highlighting the wider dimensions of the drug menace, Chennithala said narcotics networks often maintain interstate connections and that Kerala Police had already initiated extensive measures to identify and dismantle such operations.

EJAC seeks DA merger, pay hike from 8th Pay Panel

Jammu, Jun 02 (Agency): The Employees Joint Action Committee (EJAC), J&K, has urged the 8th Central Pay Commission to recommend a substantial hike in salaries, merger of Dearness Allowance (DA) with basic pay once it reaches 50 per cent, and a comprehensive regularisation policy for daily wagers and other temporary workers.An EJAC delegation led by president Wajahat Hussain and general secretary Sajad Ahmad Parray met the chairperson and members of the 8th Central Pay Commission and submitted a memorandum outlining the concerns of Government employees, pensioners, contractual workers, consolidated employees and Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) staff in J&K.

The delegation sought a significant upward revision in pay scales and an employee-friendly fitment factor to offset inflation and the rising cost of living since the implementation of the 7th Central Pay Commission.It also called for a realistic minimum wage and a mechanism for automatic and timely compensation against inflation through regular DA neutralisation. EJAC further demanded that DA be merged with basic pay whenever it touches the 50 per cent mark.Seeking parity with Central Government employees, the delegation urged the Commission to ensure comparable pay structures, allowances and service benefits for J&K employees, arguing that the Union Territory’s administrative status warrants similar treatment.

On pension-related issues, EJAC demanded strengthening of pensionary and social security measures, including enhancement of pension, gratuity and leave encashment benefits to ensure financial security for employees after retirement.

The delegation also called for strengthening the Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) Scheme and addressing stagnation in government services through cadre restructuring, improved promotion policies and better career progression mechanisms.

Assam, Centre Review Major Infrastructure Projects to Boost Growth: CM



Guwahati, Jun 02: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday held a detailed discussion with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on the progress of several transformative infrastructure projects aimed at accelerating the state’s development.

In a post on X after the meeting, Sarma described his interaction with the Union Minister as a valuable learning experience and credited Gadkari’s support for the significant advancement of infrastructure in Assam.

“Meeting Hon’ble Union Minister Nitin Gadkari Ji is always a learning experience. Assam’s infrastructure has benefited tremendously from his support and he has always been available to help solve ongoing issues,” the Chief Minister wrote.

Chief Minister Sarma also expressed his gratitude to the Union Minister for his guidance during the Assam elections and discussed a range of ongoing and upcoming infrastructure initiatives across the state.

The two leaders reviewed the progress of major projects including the proposed Brahmaputra underwater tunnel, the Kaziranga Elevated Corridors, National Highway expansion works and road repair projects being undertaken across Assam.

“We discussed the progress of transformative projects such as the Brahmaputra underwater tunnel, Kaziranga Elevated Corridors, National Highway expansion and repair projects across the State among other issues to further accelerate Assam’s growth trajectory,” Sarma said in his post.

Union Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita and Resident Commissioner, Assam Bhawan, Kavitha Padmanabhan were also present during the meeting.

The Chief Minister noted that these projects are expected to significantly improve connectivity, boost economic activity and strengthen Assam’s infrastructure network, contributing to the state’s long-term growth and development.

CM Assigns Advisory Posts to Five Nagaland MLAs

Kohima, Jun 02: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Monday appointed five legislators as advisors to various departments and reshuffled the portfolios of another legislator in a move aimed at utilising the experience of elected representatives in governance.

With the latest appointments, the number of advisors in the Rio-led Cabinet has increased to 29.

Among the newly appointed advisors, Kuzholuzo Nienu was assigned the Science and Technology department, while Puthai Longon was given charge of Taxes. Picto Shohe was appointed advisor for New and Renewable Energy and the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, while Kikon was entrusted with Forest and Food Processing.

The appointments and portfolio allocations came into immediate effect with an official notification issued by the Chief Secretary S. Imchen.



The notification stated that Nyushetho Nyuthe would continue as advisor to the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority and would additionally oversee Inland Waterways. However, he was relieved of the New and Renewable Energy portfolio.

The portfolios of Assembly member Dolie Yimkhiung were also reshuffled and has been appointed advisor to the

Information and Public Relations, Social Welfare, and Soil and Water Conservation departments.

The advisors would provide suggestions and recommendations on matters referred to them by the respective departments before final decisions are taken by the ministers concerned.

However, the advisors would not receive any salary, remuneration, allowances or additional perks from the state government beyond what they are entitled to as members of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly.

The development is significant as it marks the first expansion of advisors since the 2023 Assembly elections. It is also the first time that two MLAs from the Naga People’s Front (NPF)—Kuzholuzo Nienu and Kikon—have been inducted into the Rio government following the party’s merger with the ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) in October last year.

Assam CM Meets New NITI Aayog Vice Chairman, Pushes for Deeper Reform Collaboration

New Delhi, Jun 02: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday congratulated Dr Ashok Lahiri on his recent appointment as the Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog and expressed the state’s commitment to strengthening its partnership with the national policy think tank.

Sharing details of his meeting with Dr Lahiri in the national capital, Sarma said the newly appointed Vice Chairman ‘brings with him extensive experience in public policy and finance,’ highlighting the expertise he is expected to bring to NITI Aayog’s policymaking and reform agenda.

The Chief Minister noted that the Assam Government is keen to deepen its engagement with NITI Aayog in implementing reforms and developmental policies.

“The Assam Govt aims to deepen its partnership with NITI Aayog in implementing reforms and policies that will improve the Ease of Living of our people,” Sarma said in a post on X after the meeting.

The interaction comes as Assam continues to pursue governance reforms, infrastructure development and welfare initiatives with support from central institutions. Officials believe closer collaboration with NITI Aayog will help accelerate policy implementation and enhance outcomes across key sectors.

Dr Lahiri, a distinguished economist and public policy expert, has held several important positions in government and academia. His appointment as Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog is expected to bolster the institution’s role in shaping India’s development priorities and



supporting states in achieving sustainable and inclusive growth.

Worker Assault Claims Lead to Suspension of Umiyam Power Project Upgrade

Shillong, Jun 02: Renovation and upgradation work at the Umiyam-Umtru Stage III Power Station in Meghalaya’s Ri-Bhoi district has remained suspended for nearly a week following allegations that members of a pressure group entered the project site to verify labour licences and allegedly assaulted several workers, including both non-local labourers and local Khasi employees.The incident has raised fresh concerns over worker safety and the investment climate in the state, coming just days after a similar attack on workers employed by the Centre Point Group at its upcoming Ri Kynjai resort project in Laitkynsew village near Sohra.According to reports, on May 28, around 15 youths allegedly trespassed into the Umiyam project site and assaulted a number of workers. At least five people were injured in the incident, including Raj Kumar Sharma, who sustained serious head injuries and required hospitalization. Expressing concern over the repeated incidents, authorities of Nongdiengngan and Nongmahir villages stated that the situation had become so serious that the company executing the project was forced to suspend operations after several non-local workers fled the site fearing for their safety.The suspension of work has reportedly affected local youths and labourers who have been employed at the project for more than a year. Village leaders claimed that wages have been withheld due to the disruption, while senior officials of the company have left the area.Speaking on Monday, Nongdiengngan village headman Dip Pathaw and Nongmahir village secretary J. Thangkhiw clarified that they were not opposed to the verification of labour licences of non-local workers. However, they strongly condemned the alleged use of violence by certain pressure groups and cited the recent attack on Centre Point workers in Sohra as a matter of grave concern.

The village leaders warned that such incidents could negatively impact investor confidence and hamper development activities in Meghalaya. They stressed that any verification of documents should be conducted through legal procedures and in coordination with local authorities and law enforcement agencies.

North East Chronicle

JUNE 03 2026 VOL 02 NO. 99



The Growing Problem of Decision Fatigue

Modern life demands an endless stream of decisions. From choosing what to buy and what to watch to making career and financial choices, people are constantly required to evaluate options. While choice is often seen as freedom, too many decisions can become mentally exhausting. Decision fatigue affects judgment, reduces productivity, and increases

stress, particularly in fast-paced urban lifestyles. Digital platforms have amplified this challenge by offering limitless alternatives for even the simplest tasks. Not every decision needs extensive deliberation. Simplifying routines and prioritising important choices can help preserve mental energy for matters that truly deserve attention.

Parents: The silent creators of the soul and the first gurus

The story of humanity starts in the sacred space of the family, not in institutions, texts, or systems, in every civilization. A child learns love from their mother's embrace and trust from their father's presence before they acquire language, religion, philosophy, or success. Parents are the earliest spiritual architects of human awareness, not just biological creators. Success in today's world is frequently determined by accomplishments, fortune, and social standing. However, via their silent teachings, morals, and unseen sacrifices, parents set the groundwork for a fulfilling life far earlier. They serve as a child's first exposure to a living scripture, a school, and a temple. Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava—"Let the mother be revered as divine; let the father be revered as divine"—is a magnificent expression of this truth found in ancient Indian wisdom. This is a profound spiritual revelation rather than just a cultural assertion. A father's direction and a mother's compassion are the first experiences of divinity. A mother does not simply nurture a child's body; she shapes sensitivity, empathy, tenderness, and emotional intelligence. Her quiet perseverance serves as the child's first introduction to unconditional affection. In his own way, the father comes to represent power, accountability, self-control, and vision. Together, they build a sacred habitat where character flourishes in addition to a home.

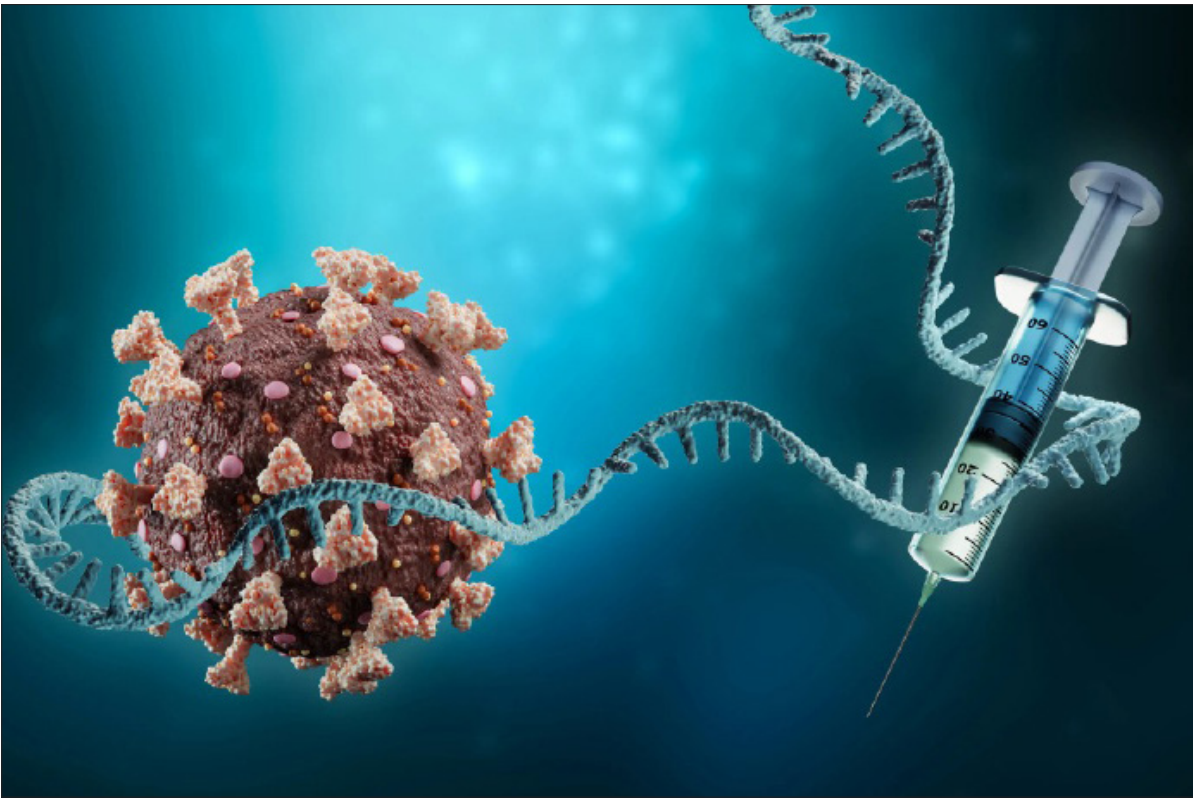
like praying before meals, spending time in quiet as a family, reading motivational books, expressing gratitude at the end of the day, celebrating kindness, encouraging service, or just having meaningful discussions can become transformational spiritual experiments. They produce inner richness and emotional balance. Children learn values by observation rather than by being taught them. Children learn tranquility when their parents lead balanced lives. Children develop humanity when their parents show compassion.

Children acquire character when their parents exhibit integrity. Parenting thus turns into a quiet transmission act. The family is the foundation of civilization, according to the world's main spiritual traditions. Broken homes cannot produce a harmonious society. Respect starts at home, and harmony in relationships is the first step toward world peace. As a result, parents not only create families but also the future. However, spirituality also leads to another lovely realization: parents themselves need to keep changing. Age ought to be a celebration of wisdom rather than a burden of memories. They must continue to be seekers, learners, and joy producers. A calm parent exudes stability, while a happy parent conveys hope. The later years of life are intended to blossom into deeper consciousness rather than to retreat from purpose. Growing older can be a time for introspection, creativity, inner fulfillment, and direction. An unwritten scripture of experience is carried by every parent. Future generations will gain priceless wisdom from their experiences, hardships, sacrifices, and triumphs. Families that pay attention to their elders acquire consciousness rather than just hearing stories. For this reason, World Parents Day is more than just a time to express gratitude. It is a call to rediscover the sanctity of parenthood. Parents are roots beneath us, not shadows behind us. Not only do they teach us how to walk, but they also teach us how to live. Perhaps mankind has to return to its ancient wisdom—that a loving family is more than just a social unit; it is a spiritual sanctuary—in a time when people are yearning for mental tranquility, emotional equilibrium, and spiritual fulfillment. And parents are its silent lights, bringing grace, love, and morals into the world.

Nowadays, cancer is a tale of hope as well as good, bad, and ugly

Approximately 10 million people die from cancer each year, accounting for nearly one in six deaths worldwide. Although that figure is astounding, it also obscures the fact that certain tumors are more fatal than others. For instance, melanoma and prostate cancer now have five-year survival rates of well over 90% in the majority of wealthy nations due to our extraordinary advancements in their detection and treatment. Some are more challenging, like pancreatic cancer. Five years after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, slightly more than one in twenty patients in the UK are still living. That is why a new drug for pancreatic cancer, called daraxonrasib and announced at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's (Asco) annual meeting in Chicago at the weekend, has been met with such jubilation. In a 500-person trial, the medication, which is taken as a pill once daily, increased the survival time of participants and had less adverse effects than conventional chemotherapy. The medication functions by inhibiting Kras, a protein that promotes the growth and division of cancer cells. When she read the data, a longtime cancer researcher said she started crying. The medication is probably going to be a huge game-changer because there aren't many viable treatments for this malignancy. However, as with any news pertaining to cancer research, it can be challenging for people to understand what all of this means for themselves and their loved ones, as well as whether we are making any progress. Overly hopeful discussions about a possible "cure" or eradication are occasionally heard.

There will never be a successful "moonshot" for cancer. I'll attempt to analyze our current situa-



tion and present you with the positive, negative, and ugly aspects. First of all, cancer is not a single disease; rather, it refers to a wide range of disorders that share a common cause, which is unchecked cell development and the capacity of these malignant cells to invade tissues and spread throughout the body. Each of the more than 200 distinct cancer kinds has unique molecular causes, risk factors, symptoms, and available treatments. Even taking one type of cancer — such as breast cancer — reveals that there are dozens of molecular subtypes, which are simplified into four groups for treatment decisions. This implies that we are unlikely to have a single "cure" for cancer; instead, we must make advancements in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and survival of certain malignancies. However, there is a lot of good news: we are increasing the majority of cancer types' survival rates, both in terms of the medications available and the people who can get them. This weekend

witnessed the announcement of a new vaccination (amivantamab) for head and neck cancer, the sixth most prevalent malignancy, in addition to the development of daraxonrasib. In a trial with 102 participants, it reduced the tumors of over one-third of the patients. It disables two proteins that aid in the growth of tumors and stimulates the immune system to attack the tumor. Although it's not always the case, a breakthrough in the treatment of one type of cancer may be applicable to others. Other cancer types are currently undergoing trials for both of these treatments. Precision medicine, which focuses specific medications on patients who are most likely to react, is another area in which we are improving. Many years ago, at a World Economic Forum gathering, I was shocked to discover that, depending on a person's genetic makeup, blockbuster medications—those thought to be game-changers for treatment—often only function in a small fraction of the population.

However, doctors frequently give the same drugs to every patient since they are unsure of who will react to them. According to a recent multinational study, a DNA test can differentiate between patients who would benefit from specific chemotherapy treatments for breast cancer and those who wouldn't, sparing this group the stress and side effects of undergoing an ineffective (and painful) treatment. But there's also bad news in almost every country: 100,000 people are diagnosed each day with cancer, and not enough medical staff are there to treat them. According to recent research, there will be a shortage of 100 million cancer care workers worldwide by 2050, including 65 million nurses and 16 million diagnostic personnel. The NHS faces the same problem: there aren't enough lab technicians, cancer specialists, nurses, or support personnel across.

Higher survival is largely due to early diagnosis and prompt treatment, which depend on staff availability.

Currently, one in three cancer cases worldwide go undiagnosed; this burden is primarily in Africa and other poorer regions of the world, but it is also a problem in G7 nations like the UK, where roughly 50% of cancer cases are diagnosed at a late stage. Nearly all hospital trusts in England failed to fulfill the primary NHS goal of treatment within 62 days, even after diagnosis. Just 69% of patients in England began treatment within 62 days after an urgent referral; equivalent rates were 71% in Scotland, 61% in Wales, and 33% in Northern Ireland. These delays have an impact on patient survival; generally speaking, a four-week delay lowers patient survival by 10%, though this could vary depending on the kind of cancer. When lab results from a test to identify possible cervical cancer took months to return and were positive (I was treated by the NHS and am now clear), I became acutely aware of this. Let's move on to the ugly. Unfortunately, the number of cancer cases among those

under 50 is on the rise. It is no longer merely an age-related illness. As I've previously stated, between 1990 and 2019, cancer rates in industrialized nations rose by 22% among those aged 25 to 29. Harvard University researchers contend that every cohort of individuals born later in life—for example, a decade—has a higher chance of getting cancer in the future. According to the findings, you are more likely than your parents and grandparents to get cancer at a younger age, and your children, nephews, and nieces are eventually more likely to get cancer than you are. This is not development at all. Why? There isn't a single answer, but more and more research points to a changing environment, including the food we eat (particularly ultraprocessed meals), the rise in obesity and weight gain, alcohol, stress, and greater insomnia. But don't give up. My father, an oncologist and lung cancer researcher, passed away at the age of 49 from leukemia and lymphoma in 2001, one month after I turned seventeen. Survival rates have significantly improved in the 25 years after his passing, thanks to a switch from broad-spectrum chemotherapy to targeted drugs and precise immunotherapy for his particular cancer subtype. His odds of surviving in 2026 would have been significantly higher because of the steady and ongoing funding for healthcare and scientific advancements, as well as the research teams that support them. Even if we might not be nearing a single "cure," there is cause for optimism and this trend appears likely to continue in the coming months and years. Therefore, if the thoughts that come to mind when we think of cancer are good, awful, and ugly, cling to the idea that there is more good than evil.

Enhancing India's Eastern Frontier via a Defense Corridor for Assam



The Union government should give Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's proposal to create a Defence Industrial Corridor in Assam careful thought. The Chief Minister made the case that such a corridor would enhance India's Act East Policy, improve military readiness in the eastern sector, and open up new economic prospects for the Northeast during recent meetings with union ministers in New Delhi. In an increasingly unstable regional security environment, India is reevaluating the strategic importance of its eastern frontier at the time of the proposal. The establishment of Defence Industrial Corridors in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh has already completely changed India's defence-industrial landscape. These programs were created to encourage domestic defense production, draw in private capital, lessen reliance on imports, and advance Atmanirbhar Bharat's overarching goals. Therefore, Assam's demand is a logical extension of a national policy that aims to decentralize defense production and create robust supply chains throughout the nation, rather than an isolated regional goal. There is strong strategic justification for establishing a defense corridor in Assam. China, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar are the countries that border the Northeast. It is one of India's most delicate security zones, where infrastructure, logistics, and military readiness are still vital. Due to the ongoing tensions between China and India along the Line of Actual Control and the

intensifying geopolitical rivalry in the Indo-Pacific, the area has become even more significant. Reducing reliance on far-off production facilities and shortening supply chains during emergencies would be achieved by bolstering defense manufacturing and logistics capabilities closer to operational zones. The enormous expenditures already being made in roads, railroads, bridges, and border infrastructure in the Northeast would be enhanced by a defense corridor in Assam. The Center has acknowledged that connectivity is a strategic requirement rather than just an economic one. Improved railway networks, highways and logistics hubs are steadily transforming the region. A dual-use framework that supports both military and civilian goals would be created by integrating defense manufacturing with this growing infrastructure environment. The proposal gains further significance when viewed through the lens of the Act East Policy. Due to its geographic location and poor infrastructure, the Northeast was considered a peripheral region for many years. New Delhi now aims to establish the area as India's entry point to Southeast Asia. Due to its location, transportation systems, and economic potential, Assam plays a crucial role in this vision. In addition to strengthening national security, a defense corridor would promote the development of cutting-edge manufacturing skills that might aid in the region's overall industrial growth.

The economic benefits could be substantial. High-value jobs are created by defense production, which also supports a large network of related sectors. Around the corridor, small and medium-sized businesses in the fields of electronics, precision engineering, metallurgy, aerospace components, communication systems, and logistics may appear. Such industrial clusters have the potential to create skilled jobs for thousands of young people in Assam and neighboring states. The Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor's experience, which has drawn large investment pledges and job opportunities, demonstrates the revolutionary potential of such initiatives. For Assam, the timing is particularly favourable. In an effort to promote innovation and draw in investment, the state government has already introduced an Aerospace and Defense Manufacturing Policy.

The state is laying the institutional foundation required for a defense-industrial ecosystem through incentives like capital subsidies, tax refunds, and production-linked support. These initiatives may be expedited by a formal corridor supported by the Center, which would also give confidence to both domestic and foreign investors. Beyond manufacturing, there is also a national security dividend. The strategically precarious Siliguri Corridor, often known as the Chicken's Neck, is the main means by which the Northeast is still connected to the rest of India. Logistics and military movement would be severely impacted by any damage to this limited land route. A defense corridor in Assam can increase the region's self-sufficiency in defense supply, maintenance, and support services, but it cannot completely remove this risk. In a time when resilience is just as vital as military might, such dispersed capabilities are becoming more and more significant. However, meticulous planning will be necessary for the endeavor to succeed. Defense corridors prosper not only as a result of government announcements but also as a result of ongoing investment, highly qualified personnel, collaborations in research, and industrial connections. It is crucial to incorporate organizations like the Defense Research and Development Organization, public sector projects, private defense manufacturers, and academic institutions into the ecosystem. In addition to producing conventional weapons, the corridor should concentrate on developing fields like cybersecurity, drones, artificial intelligence, electronic warfare, and innovative materials. Assam's proposal has a clear overarching message. It is no longer possible to evaluate India's eastern frontier only from a security or development perspective. The two cannot be separated. Assam's Defence economic Corridor would be a critical meeting point of regional development, economic expansion, and national security. If carried out successfully, it might turn the Northeast from a frontier area into a crucial cornerstone of India's geopolitical and economic ascent in the Indo-Pacific. In this way, the proposal is about reimagining India's eastern gateway for the opportunities and challenges of the twenty-first century, not just about Assam.

Kotak gets over 500 ECLGS 5.0 applications; sees demand erosion from West Asia conflict

Mumbai: Kotak Mahindra Bank has received over 500 applications under the government’s Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 5.0 as businesses seek to build liquidity buffers against disruptions arising from the ongoing conflict in West Asia, Shekhar Bhandari, head-SME at the bank said. The applications received under ECLGS 5.0 have come from across sectors, with most borrowers seeking sanctions as a precaution rather than an immediate funding requirement. “Entrepreneurs are taking precautionary steps with ECLGS 5.0 rather than requiring money today,” he said.While lenders are yet to witness any deterioration in borrower behaviour, the impact of higher fuel prices, currency movements and rising input costs could begin reflecting in business activity from the second quarter of the current financial year, he



said. “Our general estimate is that you should see a demand erosion of 4-4.5% for Q2,” Bhandari said, adding that he expects a resolution to the conflict only after couple

of months and not in the immediate term. Kotak Mahindra Bank’s small and medium enterprise book grew 19% on year to Rs 1.22 lakh crore as on March 31. The book

forms 24% of the total advances. According to him, rising costs could weigh on consumer spending and corporate profitability, leading to a more cautious operating environment for businesses. Despite these concerns, banks have not seen any stress in cash flows or repayments so far. He said that any impact is likely to emerge with a lag. Bhandari said FY26 was a healthy year for lending, with MSME credit growing by around 14%, but expects corporates and smaller businesses to become more cautious if geopolitical uncertainties persist. However, he does not foresee a significant rise in delinquencies, particularly in the organised MSME segment. For the full year, Bhandari remains optimistic, saying any weakness in the first half could be offset if geopolitical tensions ease by August, allowing demand to recover in second half.

Several Tamil Nadu highway projects are facing delays despite ongoing construction

Mumbai: Several ongoing state and national highway projects across Tamil Nadu have slowed down or faced disruptions due to a shortage of bitumen and a sharp increase in its prices amid the ongoing West Asia crisis.Big Boost for MP farmers as Rs.944 Cr Boregaon–Shahpur Highway nears completion; 85% work already doneAccording to The New Indian Express, officials in the state highways department said projects involving road widening, relaying, new road construction and routine maintenance have been affected as oil marketing companies have reduced supplies of the key road-construction material.Among the projects impacted are works being carried out under the Chief Minister’s Road Development Scheme, the Chennai–Kanniyakumari Industrial Corridor Project and the Chief Minister’s Village Roads

Development Scheme.

These projects include conversion of two-lane roads into four-lane corridors, upgrading intermediate roads into two-lane stretches with paved shoulders and construction of new road infrastructure across the state.Industry sources said the supply disruption is linked to challenges in sourcing the specific crude oil varieties required for manufacturing Viscosity Grade (VG)-30 bitumen, the most commonly used grade for highway construction projects. “VG-30 grade bitumen is the most widely used material for laying state and national highways as well as roads in Chennai city,” said an official from an oil marketing company, according to The New Indian Express. Officials said the supply situation has become more challenging following changes in crude procurement

patterns triggered by the West Asia conflict.“Due to the West Asia war, crude oil is now being sourced from more than 10 countries across the world. However, the crude oil currently procured from certain countries is not yielding the VG-30 bitumen required for road projects. The overall functioning of refineries, however, remains unaffected,” the official added, according to The New Indian Express.Bitumen manufacturers, including refineries in Chennai, Kochi and Visakhapatnam as well as private sector facilities, produce VG-10, VG-30 and VG-40 grades of bitumen from processed crude oil.While VG-10 is generally used for rural road construction, VG-40 is primarily deployed in airport runway projects. VG-30 remains the preferred grade for most state highway, urban road and national highway works

Two-wheelers post steady growth in May



New Delhi: The two-wheeler industry maintained its growth momentum in May, with leading manufacturers reporting healthy increases in domestic sales and strong export growth, indicating resilient demand in the domestic market and improving conditions in overseas geographies.Domestic sales growth ranged from high single digits to mid-double digits across major manufacturers, supported by sustained demand for motorcycles and scooters. At the same time, exports continued to recover, providing an additional growth driver for the industry.

TVS Motor Company emerged as the strongest performer among major manufacturers, reporting a 24.3% year-on-year increase in domestic two-wheeler wholesales to 384,565 units in May, compared with 309,287 units in the year-ago period.The company’s motorcycle sales rose 29.5% to 273,802 units from 211,505 units a year earlier, while scooter sales increased 32.4% to 220,740 units from 166,749 units. TVS also reported a 48.3% rise in two-wheeler exports to 158,546 units, compared with 106,879 units in May 2025. Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) reported a 10.2% increase in domestic wholesales to 459,611 units, compared with 417,250 units in the cor-

responding month last year. The company said its network of more than 7,000 customer touchpoints continued to support demand across urban and rural markets. Exports rose 23.6% to 59,166 units in May, compared with 47,859 units a year ago. Bajaj Auto reported a 9.5% increase in domestic two-wheeler sales to 209,528 units, compared with 191,412 units in May 2025. Exports grew 30.3% to 183,676 units from 140,958 units in the year-ago period, aided by improved demand across international markets.Why Indian carmakers are pivoting to SUVs over hatchbacks

Sales numbers indicate that demand conditions remained favourable during the month despite concerns over higher fuel prices and broader consumption trends. Industry executives have previously pointed to improving rural demand and stable urban consumption as key factors supporting two-wheeler sales.The strong export performance across manufacturers is also significant as overseas markets have remained volatile over the past few years due to currency fluctuations and economic uncertainties in several regions. The recovery in exports suggests improving demand in key international markets and provides an additional avenue for growth beyond the domestic market.

ED searches Vedanta Group premises in FEMA case:

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is conducting searches at the premises of the Anil Agarwal-led multinational mining company Vedanta Group in connection with a Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) case. The searches have been ongoing since Monday, and more details on the raid are awaited, according to the news agency.The searches were reportedly conducted at Vedanta offices in Delhi and Rajasthan, apart from some other locations, as per officials. According to officials, the searches began after the central agency initiated a probe against the multinational mining company under the FEMA Act. The scrutiny against Vedanta comes almost a month after the company secured approval from its secured creditors for a massive demerger plan to split into 6 independent companies.

According to a CNBC TV18 report, the search operations are related to the royalty payment made by Vedanta to its parent company, Vedanta Resources.Commenting on the raids, a Vedanta spokesperson said, “We are extending full cooperation to the authorities and are providing all information sought. The company remains committed to compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. As

the matter is currently under regulatory process, we are unable to comment further at this stage.” The ED acts under FEMA when it suspects violations in foreign currency transactions on the part of an individual or a company. This mostly involves cases like illegally transferring money abroad, acquiring assets abroad illegally, or failing to comply with regulations related to foreign investment. Did Vedanta purchase electoral bonds?Notably, Vedanta purchased electoral bonds worth over ₹400 crore, which are now banned. Of this, the BJP emerged as the biggest beneficiary as it received roughly ₹230 crore.It donated approximately ₹125 crore to the Congress, over ₹40 crore to the Naveen Patnaik-led Biju Janata Dal, over ₹5 crore to the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and around ₹20 lakh to the Trinamool Congress. This is not the only controversy involving the multinational mining giant. In April 2026, an FIR was filed against the top leadership, including Anil Agarwal, after a boiler explosion at a power plant in Chhattisgarh claimed the lives of more than 20 workers. Last month, the Burla Irrigation Division imposed a penalty of ₹233.11 crore on Vedanta Aluminium for unauthorised water lifting from the Bheden river/canal in Odisha.

FulcrumQ has entered the Indian market to companies in transitions

Mumbai: Global leadership advisory firm FulcrumQ is entering India with a model aimed at helping companies execute large strategic pivots, betting that AI disruption, global expansion plans and shifting business models are forcing firms to rethink how talent is deployed across organisations.

The New York-headquartered firm positions itself between traditional strategy consultants and executive search firms, arguing that companies often fail not because of weak strategies, but because they do not identify which roles and teams are critical to executing those strategies quickly.“We help busi-

nesses move their strategy faster,” co-founder Shefali Vaidya said in an interaction, describing India as the “mother of pivots” because of the pace at which companies are being forced to adapt to changing technologies, evolving consumer markets and competitive pressures.FulcrumQ emerged from its founders’ work with Unilever, where they developed “talent-to-value” frameworks to help companies execute strategic pivots more effectively. The firm said it typically works with companies after a new strategy has already been formulated, helping identify “critical roles” that can disproportionately influence

execution outcomes. It focuses less on succession planning or traditional talent management and more on aligning decision-making authority, budgets and organisational structures around high-impact roles. The company is also bringing an academy-led model to India, under which organisations can train internal teams in its proprietary “talent-to-value” methodology instead of relying indefinitely on external consultants.According to the firm, large companies increasingly want to build in-house capabilities and reduce long-term dependence on third-party advisers.

FulcrumQ said private

equity companies are expected to remain a major growth driver globally and in India, particularly as investors seek faster execution at portfolio companies. Brajesh Kumar Singh takes over as Canara Bank MD

The firm said private equity could account for 30–40 % of its global business, especially among mid-market funds looking to accelerate growth and operational transformation.

FulcrumQ is also exploring flexible compensation structures for startups and founder-led.

businesses, where advisory fees could be linked partly to future upside rather than fixed retainers alone.

For Air India, flight back home was the easy part

Mumbai: For most Indians, Air India isn’t just an airline. It’s a memory — of a time when flying felt like an occasion, when the maharaja mascot meant something, when the country had a carrier it was genuinely proud of. When the Tata Group brought it back home in January 2022, there was a real sense of homecoming. Nearly nine decades after JRD. Tata founded it, the airline was returning to its original owner. Finally, someone capable was going to fix it.Four years on, that optimism hasn’t disappeared. But it has grown considerably more complicated.The numbers tell part of the story. Air India is expected to post losses of around Rs 26,000 crore in FY26 alone. The group has commitments worth nearly Rs 7.65 lakh crore in the pipeline — covering 570 aircraft on order from Airbus and Boeing, fleet refurbishments, technology overhauls, pilot training programmes, maintenance facilities, airport infrastructure and the enormous task of merging four separate airlines (Air India, Vistara, AirAsia India and Air India Express) into one coherent operation. This is not a small bet. It is, by almost any measure, one of the most ambitious turnarounds in global aviation history. And it is genuinely hard. The airline that Tata inherited wasn’t just loss-making — it was decades behind. Underinvestment had seeped into everything: aircraft, systems, culture, morale. Fixing it means rebuilding almost from

scratch while simultaneously running a full-scale airline, competing against a dominant IndiGo at home and well-resourced Gulf carriers on international routes. Both are formidable opponents with no interest in making room for a resurgent Air India. Progress has been real but uneven.

New aircraft are coming in. Networks are expanding. Technology systems are being modernised. But operational reliability — delays, cancellations, aircraft sitting on the ground due to supply chain disruptions and parts shortages — continues to frustrate passengers and dent the brand. This isn’t entirely unique to Air India; global aviation has been dealing with aerospace supply chain headaches for years. But for an airline trying to rebuild trust, every disruption costs more than it otherwise would.Cultural Harmonization

The integration challenge alone would keep most management teams fully occupied.

Merging four airlines isn’t a paperwork exercise. Each entity came with its own culture, workforce practices, operating procedures and technology platforms. Harmonising all of that — while keeping planes in the air and passengers reasonably happy — demands sustained focus and considerable spending on systems, retraining and restructuring. The bills are real and ongoing.

India’s \$11 Billion Semiconductor Plan Summer Gadget Tips + MacBook Neo Review

Mumbai: The global semiconductor race is shifting, and India is officially stepping onto the main stage. In this episode of Tech Today, Cyrus takes a deep look at India’s massive hardware ambitions, vital summer tech survival tips, and Apple’s brand-new entry-level laptop.Big Tech Story: India’s Biggest Tech Bet Computer chips have become the most critical strategic resource on Earth, and India is no longer content watching from the sidelines. Tata Electronics has partnered with Dutch chip-equipment giant ASML to build the nation’s first commercial front-end semiconductor fabrication plant in Dholera, Gujarat. This 11 billion dollar megaproject aims to produce 50,000 wafers per month, targeting automotive, AI, mobile, and industrial electronics. We explore the history of India’s early chip efforts, the 15-nanometer technology gap compared to global giants like TSMC, and the serious infrastructure and talent challenges India must overcome to manufacture the digital future.Tech and You: Protecting Gadgets From Extreme Heat If your smartphone feels like it is melting, the harsh Indian summer is the real culprit. Extreme temperatures place immense thermal stress on lithium-ion batteries, accelerating chemical aging, triggering thermal throttling, and dropping performance. We highlight the most destructive summer habits, including leaving devices on sunny car dashboards for navigation or gaming while using ultra-fast chargers. Learn the vital warning signs of overheating and simple protective measures to safeguard your tech without making the critical mis-



take of putting your phone in the fridge.

Tech Review: Apple MacBook Neo ReviewApple has finally launched a budget-friendly laptop with the new MacBook Neo, starting at around 69,900 rupees in India. However, there is a major twist: this machine swaps out M-series chips for the iPhone 16 Pro’s A18 Pro processor running a full macOS experience. We review its recycled aluminum build, the 13-inch Liquid Retina display,

and it’s surprising ability to handle casual 4K video editing. We also dive straight into its undeniable compromises, including the lack of a backlit keyboard, a basic 60Hz refresh rate, limited ports, and a capped 8GB of RAM

What do you think about India’s semiconductor partnership with ASML? Can phone-class processors truly handle your daily laptop workflows? Let us know your thoughts in the comments.

Canada is failing the Jewish community and Jews are being targeted, Carney says

Gaza: Canada is failing Jewish Canadians and the community is being brutally targeted by hate, Prime Minister Mark Carney said Monday.

Carney said across Canada, antisemitism has surged to levels not seen in the post-World War II era. He noted that last year over two-thirds of all religion-motivated hate crimes were directed at Jewish Canadians. Jews make up only 1% of the population. “The horror and shame are global. Our actions must be local. They start with clearly admitting that Canada’s civic compact is failing Jewish Canadians,” Carney said at Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto. Carney said antisemites in Canada have fired bullets at Jewish schools and thrown firebombs at synagogues and attacked community centers. He said



they have targeted Jewish-owned businesses and drove Jewish students from common spaces on university campuses. Carney said antisemitism plagues Europe, Australia and the United States. But he said the crisis of antisemitism in Canada is “specific, severe and demands a targeted response.” There has been a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents globally since the Israel-Hamas war began on Oct. 7, 2023. “Something important happened: Canada finally said the quiet part out loud,” Harley Finkelstein, a prominent Jewish Canadian and president of the e-commerce company Shopify, posted on social media. Noah Shack, the CEO of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, said before the speech that the Canadian government must do more to strengt,

University of Manchester to investigate sexual harassment

Gaza: The University of Manchester has launched an investigation after about 20 female medical students complained of receiving anonymous phone calls in the middle of the night from male callers who intimidated and sexually harassed them. The calls have been going on for at least three years, according to Charlotte Buttercase, a final-year medical student and one of those targeted. Woken in the dead of night, female students have been told they are being watched, or have been asked to perform sexual favours; while in other cases callers have screamed gender-based slurs at them. Buttercase, 24, described her own experience: “On 16 April 16 I was phoned at 2am from an anonymous, no-caller ID and in a two-minute interaction I was subjected to sexually harassing comments. “Given I was alone in a dark room at 2am – it was one man speaking and three men laughing – I felt incredibly intimidated, demeaned and belittled by this event.” Speaking to fellow medical students later, Buttercase discovered come forward with stories of sexual harassment, in person and via phone calls.

Mandelson received sensitive Foreign Office briefings

London: Mandelson received sensitive Foreign Office briefings before vetting finished. Documents also reveal internal Labour criticism of Keir Starmer in embarrassing detail. Prefer the Guardian on Google



Peter Mandelson was receiving sensitive security briefings about the Foreign Office’s work, and was in discussions with the head of MI6, before he had completed the developed vetting process, newly released documents reveal. Declassified emails show the ambassador designate and Richard Moore, the former chief of MI6 – a role known as “C” – had agreed to meet in early January 2025 before Mandelson went to Washington. Before taking up the UK’s most high-profile diplomatic posting, Mandelson also believed he could see secret documents without vetting, because he held the position of privy councillor as a former cabinet minister, the files say. Officials eventually decided clearance was needed. The documents published on Monday shed new light on the appointment of Mandelson as the UK’s ambassador to Washington. But despite running to about 1,500 pages, some crucial documents were withheld, and MPs said many questions still remained unanswered. The documents also revealed in embarrassing detail the internal Labour criticism of Keir Starmer, including by Mandelson himself, who said the prime minister tended to buckle under pressure and lacked verve. Starmer’s decision to appoint him as the UK’s top diplomat has proven to be one of the most consequential decisions taken by the prime minister, unsettling his already restive MPs and raising questions about his political judgment. An initial tranche of documents, disclosed by the Cabinet Office in March, had revealed Mandelson was offered a highly classified briefing from the Foreign Office (FCDO), as well as access to sensitive IT systems, before he was officially appointed to his role at the end of January 2025. A month later the Guardian revealed the FCDO had overruled a decision to deny Mandelson security vetting clearance. The latest documents provide some new details about the vetting process. Mandelson, the documents show, was advised by the FCDO to submit a “handful” of names of his overseas contacts, including close ones, to “reassure” the security team he had been comprehensive – “even if it’s all quite artificial”. The 1,500-page release, which was triggered by the humble address process, did not include information “prejudicial to UK national security or international relations”, after a redaction process carried out by the intelligence and security committee (ISC)

There were no details about the measures taken to mitigate serious security concerns that were raised about his appointment. The Guardian revealed last week these concerns included his associations with senior figures in China, Russia and Israel and a £1m loan

Also missing from this tranche of documents was any evidence to back up the claim from Olly Robbins, the senior government official sacked for his role in appointing Mandelson anyway, that the vetting body had considered him to be “a borderline case”. A nine-page summary document compiled by UK Security Vetting (UKSV) was not released after Scotland Yard confirmed it had requested that some documents not be made public, as they may use them in a future prosecution. The Metropolitan police had already asked that emails between Morgan McSweeney and Mandelson over his links to convicted child sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, be held back and – the Guardian understands – messages to Starmer’s former chief of staff on the day of the cabinet reshuffle.

Another key omission is Mandelson’s declarations of interest form, a template of

which was published in the first tranche, but the completed version has been withheld by the police. This document should detail any steps taken to mitigate commercial conflicts of interest.

The files reveal Mandelson “declined to comply” with a request to hand over his personal phone and allow the government to publish WhatsApp messages and other information related to his appointment. But it is the revelations on Mandelson’s access to sensitive security briefings before he formally took up the role what will again turn the spotlight on Starmer’s political judgment in appointing him in the first place, a decision the prime minister has since said he bitterly regrets. While he was still going through the developed vetting process, a meeting was agreed with C at MI6’s headquarters, apparently on 15 January 2025. Mandelson was not granted clearance until two weeks later. Well as plans to meet C, emails note Mandelson had already met in early January with “Q”: the head of MI6’s technology branch, Blaise Metreweli, who has since taken over as the head of the agency. Intelligence officials told counterparts in the FCDO that, in addition to meeting with C, they wanted to use Mandelson’s presence as a chance to “arrange wider briefings” on topics including Russia’s and Ukraine, China, counter-terrorism, cybersecurity and the Middle East. At the same time, Mandelson was in the process of declaring to vetting officials his ties to top figures in Russia, China and Israel including Oleg Deripaska, who had been sanctioned by the FCDO. An aide of Mandelson told MI6 they should be aware he had not yet received DV clearance but had been given access to “higher classification material on a case-by-case basis”. The official said it was for C and other senior MI6 officials to judge what was appropriate. It is not clear from the documents whether Mandelson’s meeting with C and the security briefings went ahead. The documents also reveal the difficulties faced by vetting officials seeking to gather information on Mandelson given the breadth of his contacts. Mandelson asked them whether they wanted to know about “literally every foreign national I have ever met?” He was told to provide details of people he had “personal friendships with” or has “personal business connections to”. Officials discussed potentially delaying a vetting interview due to a lack of detail about some of Mandelson’s contacts, leading one senior official to note: “This is crazy. He knows EVERYONE!! They need to go ahead with the interview.” Darren Jones, the prime minister’s chief secretary, told MPs that some messages between Mandelson and ministers were not available due to disappearing messages, or device changes. He also told the Commons there would be a debate on the documents this Wednesday.

The documents were released after the Tories forced the disclosures about the appointment of Mandelson, who was sacked in September last year after documents published in the US laid bare the depth of his friendship with Epstein. Since then, questions over the appointment have led to the departure of Starmer’s chief of staff, Morgan McSweeney, and the top official at the Foreign Office, Olly Robbins.

Reform UK support could plateau as it relies on socially conservative views

Gaza: Reform UK is becoming increasingly reliant on socially conservative views for political support, and therefore could struggle to push its poll ratings much higher, a large-scale research project led by the leading psephologist John Curtice has found. A study of Nigel Farage’s party carried out as part of the British Social Attitudes report found that while Reform supporters were disproportionately more likely to be unhappy with politicians and public services, recent recruits had seemingly more robust attitudes in areas such as diversity and welfare. Given such views were only held by a minority of voters, Curtice said, it was possible support for Reform might plateau close to its current percentage range in the mid- to high-20s. “Something like 30% looks like not an absolute ceiling, but they are unlikely to rise much above that given the character of the campaign issues that they are emphasising,” said Curtice, who is a fellow of the National Centre for Social Research, which has organised the annual British Social Attitudes project since 1983. “I suspect that given its current political strategy, that is probably a ceiling,” he added, while saying that given the current fragmentation of party political support, this might still be enough to win a general election under the current first-past-the-post system. This importance of social and cultural issues also meant that while Keir Starmer had argued the importance of improving services, such as the NHS, in countering populism, that alone would be unlikely to stop Reform’s rise, Curtice argued. He said: “Given the



very sharp ideological distinctiveness, while improving the state of country will help, it may not be enough.”

This year’s survey, which put questions to more than 4,600 people across the UK, examined the unifying characteristics of people who say they support Reform. Reform supporters are more likely to have voted for Brexit and be older, male and with fewer qualifications, it found, while just 9% of graduates back the party, against 40% of those with qualifications below A-level standard.

A striking threat for Reform supporters was mistrust in politicians and the ability of government to improve things, including higher levels of dissatisfaction with the NHS and a greater tendency to agree with statements such as:

“Politicians talk too much and take too little action.” They were also more likely to be worried about their own personal circumstances, particularly their finances. But more notable still were attitudes to social issues, with 67% of Reform supporters believing migrants are bad for the economy, and 75% thinking they undermine the UK’s culture, more than double the respective figures of 33% and 35% for the population at large. Similarly, 88% of Reform backers say equal opportunities for transgender people have “gone too far”, against 48% of the general public. Of Reform supporters, 52% expressed the same view about lesbian, gay and bisexual people and 51% about black and Asian people. National- ly, the figures for these were 27% and 17%. People who were both

authoritarian and dissatisfied were particularly likely to back Reform, with support for the party among this “interaction group” rising to 46%.

But when Curtice and his team compared the attitudes of Reform supporters gathered in 2024 with the cohort interviewed for this study, they found that the rise in new recruits was substantially driven by ideology, and not by discontent with public services and the economy. The report said: “Although unhappiness with the health service and people’s financial circumstances is more common among Reform supporters, it has seemingly been the party’s ability to appeal to those with a distinctive ideological outlook that has been more important reason for the increase its support since 2024.”

Third of people no longer believe degree is worth the time or money, UK poll shows

London: There was a time when going to university seemed a no-brainer. Better qualifications opened doors to better jobs with greater earning potential. But with the graduate premium shrinking, mounting anger about spiralling student debt and growing fears about AI eating into the graduate jobs market, it is not surprising that attitudes are shifting. Public confidence in the value of a university education has plummeted after decades of unfettered expansion across the sector. The latest British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey found the proportion of people who believe a degree is not worth the time and money has jumped from 14% in 2005 to 34% in 2025. Correspondingly, the proportion who believe those who go to university will end up a lot better off financially than those who do not has nosedived, down from 50% to 36%. Higher education in the UK has undergone a huge transformation since the first BSA survey in 1983. At that time, only a tiny proportion of school leavers – about 6% – went to university. By 2025, that had ballooned to 36%, and more than 2 million domestic students are enrolled. This means more graduates are hunting for jobs. They are also paying more for

their education. When tuition fees were introduced in 1998, they were set at £1,000 a year. Now, English students pay up to £9,535 a year, as well as living costs. Younger graduates, with experience of the fee system, are – understandably – more disillusioned than those who did not pay fees, according to the survey. Meanwhile, student loan repayment thresholds – the salary level above which graduates start paying back their loans – have been frozen many times, rather than uprated in line with inflation as promised. The thresholds will be frozen for three years from 2027 onwards. Growing disquiet about the above-inflation interest rates charged on these loans has also prompted questions about whether the burden on graduates is too great

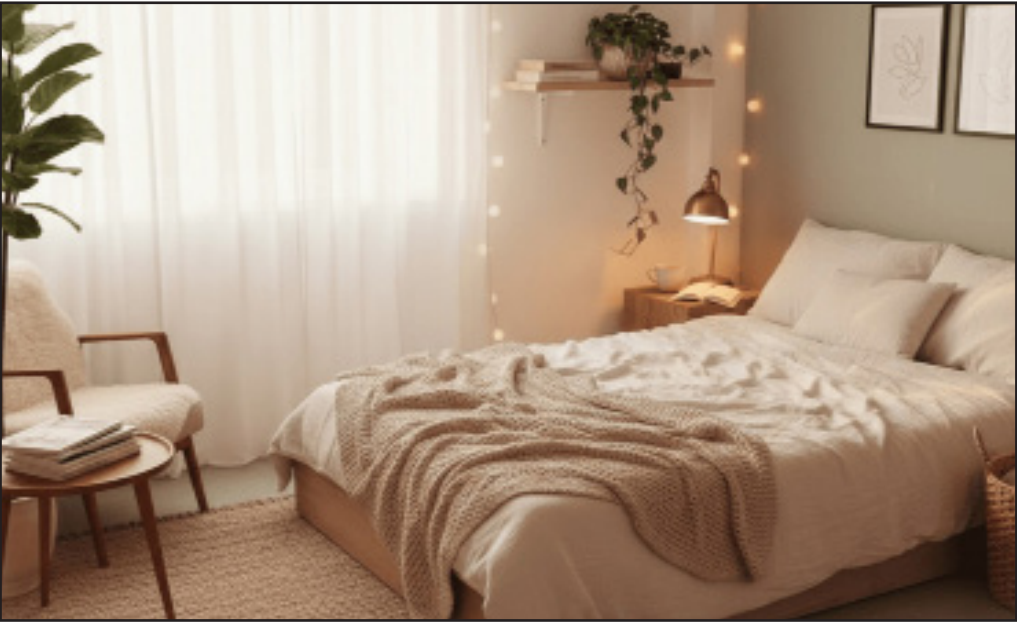
“There’s no getting away from the fact that it’s a challenging labour market out there for everyone seeking work, not just graduates, which is a reflection of the current economy,” said Vivienne Stern, the chief executive of Universities UK. “But the data consistently shows that those with a degree are more likely to have a job, earn more and have better health. And a university education doesn’t just benefit the individual. If we want

our country to grow, we need more graduates entering the labour market.” Nick Hillman, the director of the Higher Education Policy Institute, agrees. “While university still benefits most graduates most of the time, the lack of substantial economic growth means the rewards are not always as great as people hope beforehand,” he said. “However, despite years of negative rhetoric, it is still only one in three people who think university is not worth it.” Despite his growing loan debt, Alex Stanley, the vice-president for higher education at the National Union of Students, is glad he went to university. “I wouldn’t be in this role without it,” he said. “And it is the experiences I gained, beyond the piece of paper, that make it valuable.” But the funding system did not work for me. I had to do three jobs alongside my studies and my grades suffered as a result. And despite not being able to live on the loans I received, I still have over £50,000 of debt which is growing each month despite my repayments. The funding system is broken, and that is decaying trust in the university model. “We want a university system where young people can go, spend three years expanding their horizons, deepening their knowledge and challeng-



ing their thinking, and then leave with a qualification that sets them up for the workplace. But right now, that is not the case. This should serve as a wake-up call for universities and for the government.” Alex Scholes, a co-author of the BSA report, said universities were not just about education, but were also engines of social mobility and economic growth. He added: “They are also under immense financial pressure, and it appears recent debates about the fairness of student loan repayment systems and the role of AI on the job market have filtered through to people’s views about the value of a degree.”

5 stylish enhancements that will immediately transform your bedroom into a Pinterest-inspired mood board



Please raise your hand if you have dedicated an excessive amount of time to browsing Pinterest, collecting enchanting bedroom ideas, only to eventually glance around and recognize that your own room exudes none of that ambience.

But here’s a reality check. A Pinterest-worthy bedroom is rarely about expensive furniture, custom interiors, or a designer swooping in to transform your

space overnight. Most of the magic comes from a handful of thoughtful choices. The kind that quietly changes how a room feels the moment you walk in. From lighting and colour palettes to the way you style your bed and bedside table, small details create a much bigger impact than most people realise. You do not need a perfectly curated aesthetic built into your home. You just need to understand what

works for your style and make a few smart edits. Maybe you love clean, minimalist spaces that feel calm and uncluttered. Maybe you’re drawn to rooms that look lived in, layered, and full of personality. Once you’ve figured out your vibe, getting that Pinterest-approved finish becomes surprisingly simple.

These five easy upgrades can take your bedroom from basic to beautifully put together,

without demanding a full renovation or a frightening credit card bill.

Master the cloud bed formula
If there is one thing Pinterest gets right every single time, it is the bed. Those dreamy bedrooms that make you immediately save a photo are rarely about fancy furniture. They are about layers. A well-styled bed adds softness, texture and depth to a room. It creates that inviting feeling that makes you want to cancel plans and spend the entire weekend with a book and a cup of coffee. The best part is that creating this look is surprisingly simple. Swap matching bedding sets for layered pieces in complementary shades. Choose relaxed linen or cotton bedding instead of stiff fabrics. Add an oversized throw blanket across the foot of the bed. Mix cushion sizes using Euro pillows, standard pillows and accent cushions. Stick to a colour palette of two or three tones such as cream, oatmeal and sage. Use different textures to create depth and visual interest. Turn off the big light

Nothing says “student hostel energy” quite like a single

bright ceiling light illuminating every corner of the room. Pinterest bedrooms feel cosy because they rely on layers of warm lighting instead of one harsh source. Good lighting changes the mood of a space instantly. It can make a room feel softer, calmer and far more expensive than it actually is. Before buying new furniture, start by changing how your room is lit. Use bedside lamps instead of relying solely on overhead lighting. Add a floor lamp to an empty corner for extra warmth. Choose bulbs with a warm glow around 2700K. Place light sources at different heights around the room. Consider LED strip lighting behind a headboard or shelf. Turn on multiple smaller lights in the evening instead of one bright fixture. Your bedside table should not be a dumping ground for random bits and bobs collected throughout the week. Think of it as a small styling opportunity. Pinterest-worthy bedrooms often have thoughtfully arranged bedside tables that look curated but never overdone. A few carefully chosen pieces can make the entire room feel more

polished and intentional. It is a small detail, but one that makes a surprisingly big difference.

Follow the ‘Rule of Three’ when styling the surface. Add one taller item, such as a lamp or vase. Include a decorative object like a candle, tray or ceramic dish. Stack two or three books to create visual balance. Keep clutter to a minimum and store loose items elsewhere. Hide charging cables using organisers or wireless charging solutions. Go bigger with wall art

When it comes to wall décor, bigger is often better. Small frames scattered across a wall can make a room feel busy and disconnected. Pinterest-inspired spaces usually favour larger pieces that create a focal point and instantly pull the room together. Oversized artwork has a calm, confident quality that gives the impression of a thoughtfully styled home. It is one of the quickest ways to make a bedroom feel complete. Choose one large statement piece over multiple tiny frames. Look for abstract art, line drawings or soft landscape prints. Keep artwork within your

room’s colour palette. Use slim frames for a clean, modern finish. Print digital artwork locally to save money. Position artwork above the bed or dresser for maximum impact. Bring a little life into the room

Every beautiful bedroom needs something natural. Plants, dried stems and greenery add colour, texture and a sense of freshness that furniture alone cannot provide. They soften hard surfaces and make a room feel lived in without appearing cluttered. Even the most minimalist bedroom benefits from a touch of nature. It is often the finishing detail that takes a room from looking nice to looking thoughtfully styled.

How to achieve it in your room

Add a tall statement plant to an empty corner. Place smaller plants on shelves, dressers or bedside tables. Use earthy planters in terracotta, stone or textured finishes. Try low-maintenance options such as snake plants or pothos. Use dried eucalyptus or pampas grass if live plants are not your thing. Keep greenery simple and avoid overcrowding the room.

These cotton kurta sets in plus sizes demonstrate that can also be stylish



Locating a quality kurta set is straightforward. However, discovering a suitable plus-size cotton kurta set that is breathable, flattering, does not cling inappropriately, includes a dupatta, and is priced under ₹2,000? That is where the challenge lies.

For years, plus-size shoppers have had to choose between comfort and style. Either the fabric feels stiff, the fit feels boxy, or the prints look like an afterthought. Thankfully, that’s changing. Brands are finally paying attention to what women actually want: soft cotton fabrics, comfortable silhouettes, thoughtful tailoring, and styles that feel fashionable rather than simply functional.

With summer temperatures soaring and festive season never too far away, cotton kurta sets are becoming wardrobe essentials. They’re easy to wear, easy to style, and versatile enough for work, family gatherings, festive lunches, travel, and everyday dressing. If you’re looking for

plus-size Indian wear that feels comfortable without compromising on style, these cotton kurta sets deserve a spot on your radar.

1. MEERA FAB Women’s Pure Cotton Bandhani Printed Kurta with Palazzo & Dupatta: Bandhani prints never really go out of style, and this set captures that timeless appeal beautifully. The pure cotton fabric feels breathable and lightweight, making it ideal for warmer weather, while the palazzo pants add comfort and movement. The coordinated dupatta completes the look without making it feel overly dressed up. It’s one of those outfits that works equally well for family lunches and festive gatherings.

Style tip: Pair with silver jhumkas and kolhapuris for a classic ethnic look.

2. Swasti Plus Size Floral Print Pure Cotton Straight Kurta, Dupatta & Pant Set: If you’re someone who prefers straight-cut kurtas over flared silhouettes, this set is worth considering. The floral

print keeps it feminine and fresh, while the pure cotton construction ensures comfort during long wear hours. The straight silhouette creates a clean, streamlined look that many women find especially flattering.

Style tip: Add a structured tote bag and minimal jewellery for an office-ready outfit.

3. MEERA FAB Women’s Cotton Printed Anarkali Kurta with Palazzo & Dupatta Set: Anarkali silhouettes continue to be a favourite because they offer ease, elegance, and comfort all at once. This printed cotton version feels airy and relaxed without losing its festive appeal. The flare adds beautiful movement, while the cotton fabric prevents the outfit from feeling heavy.

Style tip: Pair with chandbais and embroidered flats for festive occasions.

4. Miravan Women’s Plus Size Black Pure Cotton Floral Embroidered High-Low Kurta Set: Black ethnicwear has a way of look-

ing instantly polished, and this embroidered high-low kurta set proves exactly why. The floral embroidery adds detail without overwhelming the design, while the high-low hemline gives the outfit a slightly more contemporary feel. It is one of the most versatile options on this list.

Style tip: Style with oxidised jewellery and block heels for a chic evening look.

5. MEERA FAB Women Floral Printed Pure Cotton Straight V-Neck Kurta with Trousers & Dupatta: V-neck kurtas are often preferred because they visually elongate the neckline and create a balanced silhouette.

Combined with floral prints and pure cotton fabric, this set feels fresh, comfortable, and easy to wear. It’s the kind of outfit you’ll reach for repeatedly.

Style tip: Pair with nude flats and a simple sling bag for everyday elegance.

6. MIRCHI FASHION Pure Cotton Women’s Straight Fit Kurta Set with

Dupatta & Trouser: Minimalists will appreciate this set. The straight-fit silhouette keeps things simple and versatile, while the cotton fabric ensures all-day comfort. This is a practical wardrobe staple that can easily transition from workdays to casual outings.

Style tip: Layer with a lightweight cotton dupatta and silver accessories.

7. MEERA FAB Women’s Cotton Printed Straight Kurta with Palazzo & Dupatta Set: Printed cotton sets like this remain best-sellers for a reason. They feel easy, effortless, and practical while still looking put together. The palazzo pants add extra comfort, especially during summer, while the coordinated design makes getting dressed much easier.

Style tip: Add embroidered juttis and statement earrings for a polished finish.

8. MEERA FAB Women Floral Printed Pure Cotton Straight V-Neck Kurta with Trousers & Dupatta: Another strong option from MEERA FAB, this set combines floral prints, breathable cotton, and a flattering straight-cut silhouette. It’s an excellent choice for women who prefer versatile ethnicwear they can wear across multiple occasions. Comfortable, practical, and easy to style; exactly what everyday ethnicwear should be. Style tip: Pair with metallic flats and delicate jewellery for an elevated daytime look.

Why cotton kurta sets are a plus-size wardrobe essential

The best thing about cotton kurta sets is that they don’t force you to choose between comfort and style. They allow airflow, drape comfortably, and work across seasons while remaining easy to maintain.

When combined with thoughtful silhouettes like straight cuts, Anarkalis, palazzos, and V-necks, they become some of the most wearable pieces in any ethnic wardrobe. And when they’re available under ₹2,000? That’s even better.



Inspired the iconic Miss Dior perfume

Catherine Dior was a woman, a resistance fighter, a survivor of concentration camps, and a cultivator of rose gardens. She was the remarkable individual who inspired the legendary Miss Dior perfume.

In 1947, right after the Second World War ended, when France desperately craved joy, Christian Dior asked perfumer Paul Vacher, “Make me a perfume that smells like love.” Soon, the perfume was made; however, Christian Dior couldn’t come up with a name for it. But a chance encounter led him to name the perfume after his sister. Here’s how:

How did Christian Dior come up with the name, Miss Dior, for his perfume?

According to a 2021 Forbes report, Christian Dior was still searching for a name for his fragrance when, during a meeting with his muse, Mitzah Bricard, his sister, Catherine Dior, walked in and Mitzah exclaimed, “Well, here comes Miss Dior.”

And that is how Christian Dior gave his beloved sister’s nickname to the iconic fragrance that has stood the test of time. What is more incredible is that the

story of that heroic woman who suffered terribly has been forgotten by history. Most people know Miss Dior as a luxury perfume. However, very few know it was inspired by a woman who survived Nazi torture and concentration camps during World War II. Who was Catherine Dior?

Catherine Dior is the younger sister of fashion designer Christian Dior. They were born into a wealthy family. Catherine was a remarkable botanist. According to the Anthology Magazine, after her family’s downfall, they moved to a dilapidated farmhouse in Provence. Her life changed in 1941, when, wanting to hear Charles de Gaulle’s speeches in London, she met Hervé des Charbonnières, a passionate member of the French Resistance. He was married, with children, but they fell in love, and she joined the Resistance F2 network. She lived in Paris with Hervé and Christian. Per Justine Picardie’s book ‘Miss Dior: A Story of Courage and Couture’, in 1944, when her brother was selling luxury in Paris, she was secretly working with the French Resistance

against Nazi Germany. Catherine was part of the F2 Resistance network, carrying intelligence about German troop movements across occupied France. She was being hunted by the Nazis. However, in July 1944, the Gestapo arrested her in Paris. During interrogations, she was brutally beaten, tortured in freezing water, and nearly drowned multiple times while Nazis demanded the names of other Resistance members. Catherine refused to betray anyone and reportedly never gave up a single name. After the torture, she was deported to Nazi concentration camps. Somehow, she survived the starvation, disease, forced labour, and constant violence until liberation in 1945.

When Catherine returned to France after the war, she stayed away from fame and worked quietly with flowers and gardening, especially roses and jasmine. Those flowers later influenced the scent of Miss Dior. The perfume, which is now sold as a luxury product, was once named after a woman the Nazis could never break and who fought oppression and fascism.

ENTERTAINMENT

Shilpa Shinde retracts false allegations

Mumbai: Actress Shilpa Shinde, who became a household name after playing the gullible character of Angoori Bhabhi, has made a startling revelation about her dispute during her exit from the popular show ‘Bhabiji Ghar Par Hain!’.

She said that the sexual harassment allegations she had levelled against the show’s producer were false, as she said “woh jhoot tha” during a conversation in Bharti Singh and Harsh Limbachiyaa’s podcast. Speaking candidly about the controversy in the podcast, Shilpa said that she had resorted to filing the complaint because she felt she had no other option at the time and was seeking a way out of the situation. “Nobody knows this, I am not scared of saying the truth, and I will still say that what I am saying is a big thing mainai apne producer ke upar sexual harassment ka case kardiya tha kiyunki mere pass koi rassa nahi tha aur tab main uss main se nikli hun settle hoke,” she said. “(Nobody knows this. I’m not afraid of telling the truth now, and I’ll still say it because it’s a big revelation. I had filed a sexual harassment case against my producer because I had no other option. Eventually, I came out of that situation after reaching a settlement. At that time, no producer supported him, and I filed the case on that basis).” “Tab kisi producer ne unka saath nahi diya aur mainai case usi basis pe kiya ... police toh seedha FIR karne ke liye yeh bolti hai aapko ganda likhna padega and I am from law background,” she added. (The police directly tell you that if you want an FIR registered, you have to write serious allegations.

‘Had Just ₹84’: actor Gaurav Gera recalls struggles after moving to Mumbai



Mumbai: Actor Gaurav Gera has been receiving appreciation for his performance as Mohammad Aalam, also known as Aalam Bhai, in Dhurandhar, directed by Aditya Dhar. In the film, he portrays an undercover intelligence operative working in Karachi, who disguises himself as a juice vendor in Lyari to maintain his cover. While he has found massive success with his performance in this film, his journey hasn’t always been easy. In a recent conversation with Jist, the actor recalled the challenges he faced, revealing he had merely Rs 84 in his bank account after he moved to Mumbai.

Coming from a non-film background, he shared that no one in his family had any connection with cinema, and his interest in performing arts developed during his school days through stage activities and creative competitions. He recalled that while he was academically average, he consistently excelled in art-related subjects, which made him feel more drawn toward creative expression. The actor also spoke about the early financial difficulties he

faced after moving to Mumbai. He described a phase where he had extremely limited resources but still continued to pursue work in the industry, often relying on persistence and optimism to keep going. He credited his father for supporting him within his means during those early years, noting that even small amounts sent from home carried significant meaning for him at the time. “Mere account mein Rs 84 the. Main HDFC Bank ke saamne se guzarta tha aur bank ko dekh kar kehta tha, ‘Mera khayal rakhna.’ Main aate-jaate bank ko mattha tek ke jaa-ta tha. (I had just Rs 84 in my account. I would pass by a bank and jokingly ask it to take care of me),” he recalled. Recalling how his father supported him back then, Gaurav said, “Papa sa-

laried person the. Unke letters abhi bhi mere paas hain jahan likha hota tha, ‘Rs 2,000 bhej raha hoon, isse zyada nahi hai.’ (My father was a salaried employee. I still have his letters where he would write that he was sending Rs 2,000, and that was all he could afford).”

Gaurav shared how those financial struggles did not deter him but instead strengthened his resolve. He spoke about walking long distances when he could not afford transport. “Us waqt lagta tha takleef nahi hai. Paise nahi hain auto ke, toh paidal aa jayenge. Main thoda khuddar type tha. Main dene wala banna chahta tha, lene wala nahi. .” he said. In March, Gaurav took to his Instagram to share a few handwritten letters he wrote to his parents over two decades ago. The letters from

1998 reveal his early struggles in Mumbai, after he moved from Delhi to pursue his acting dreams. Excerpts from the letters reveal Gaurav Gera’s early struggles and ambitions. “Dear Mumma and Papa, How are you guys? I’m really well over here. Nothing has materialized on the money front for me but I hope to do well soon. There’s a lot of work here compared to Delhi,” he wrote in one letter. He further added, “In the mornings, I meet various people for work and evenings have my rehearsals. The play is a musical ‘Man Of La Mancha.’ It’s a very well-known musical and it’s a prestigious group to be associated with.” “The place I stay in is a small cottage and will be easy on the pocket also. Thousand rupees if me and Rajesh share we can give 11 months’ rent in a go also. Other expenses include telephone, electricity, gas and water bills and food. Mumma and Papa, the future is bright but I still have a lot to learn. It does take time to know the right people, so please understand. I’ll be heavy on your pocket, but trust me, not for long,” he wrote.

Diljit Dosanjh unveils ‘main vaapas aaunga’ trailer before packed Toronto stadium

Mumbai: The excitement surrounding Imtiaz Ali’s upcoming film Main Vaapas Aaunga continues to grow, making waves not just in India but across the globe. Recently, the makers unveiled the soul-stirring trailer, which has already been receiving immense love and appreciation from audiences. The romantic drama stars Naseeruddin Shah, Diljit Dosanjh, Sharvati and Vedang Raina, among others.

In a memorable moment during Diljit’s ongoing AURA Tour 2026, global music icon and actor surprised his fans by showcasing the trailer of this film at his packed Toronto concert. The trailer lit up the stadium screens and was met with thunderous cheers from the audience. Bringing together music, cinema, and emotion on one grand stage, this moment created an unforgettable experience for fans. Fans have shared videos from the concert on social media. One user wrote, “From a story of belonging to a

stadium full of emotions. #MainVaapasAaunga trailer lights up a packed Toronto crowd at Diljit Dosanjh’s concert. What a moment. What a beginning.”The makers have also announced the opening of advance bookings in North America (USA and Canada), a week ahead of India, owing to the strong demand from fans. The move reflects the growing excitement and anticipation around the film among international audiences. Set against the haunting backdrop of Partition, the film tells a story of love, longing and a promise that survives decades. The trailer paints a heart-wrenching picture of lives torn apart by Partition, reminding us of an era where countless stories remained unfinished, families were separated and memories frozen in time. Produced by Birla Studios and Applause Entertainment, and Mohit Choudhary and Shibaish Sarkar of Window Seat Films, the film releases in cinemas on June 12 2026.



Blake lively seeks legal fees and damages from Justin Baldoni

New York: Attorneys for US actress Blake Lively were back in front of a New York judge on Monday to demand legal fees and damages from “It Ends with Us” co-star Justin Baldoni, after a settlement was reached last month in their years-long legal battle.

The 38-year-old actress’s legal team argued that the defamation lawsuit brought

against her by Baldoni and his production company, Wayfarer Studios, was a retaliatory move prohibited by California law. Lawyers for Baldoni rejected the claim. AFP was not immediately able to obtain details regarding the sum being sought by Lively. Lively filed her first complaint against Baldoni in December 2024 alleging the actor -- who also



directed the film -- had spoken inappropriately about his sex life and sought to alter the film to include sex scenes that were not in the script.

The actress, who came to fame on the television series “Gossip Girl,” said Baldoni orchestrated a PR and social media campaign to ruin Lively’s reputation. Baldoni and his studio Wayfarer had

countersued Lively and her husband Ryan Reynolds with claims of extortion and defamation -- but a judge dismissed those claims last year. Wayfarer previously insisted that neither the studio, its executives, nor its PR team did anything to retaliate against Lively. The federal judge handling the case, Lewis Liman, also dismissed some of Lively’s

claims, but upheld her allegations of retaliation.

The full terms of the out-of-court settlement reached between the two parties have not been publicly disclosed. Based on a best-selling novel by the US writer Colleen Hoover, “It Ends with Us” made more than \$350 million at the box office in 2024, making it one of the biggest hits of the year.

Ranveer Singh gains legal backing as producer TP Aggarwal challenges FWICE directive

Mumbai: The controversy revolving around the Federation of Western India Cine Employees’ (FWICE) non-cooperation directive against actor Ranveer Singh over his sudden exit from director Farhan Akhtar’s Don 3 has now taken a legal turn.

Veteran film producer TP Aggarwal, former president of the Indian Motion Picture Producers’ Association (IMPPA), has challenged FWICE’s move by filing a petition before the Bombay Civil Court in Dindoshi. According to a Times of India report, his plea has been filed against FWICE and IMPPA, arguing that no person, organisation or trade body has the legal authority to impose a ban or instruct others not to work with an individual. The court has issued notices to both organisations.

TP Aggarwal, who served as IMPPA



president for 17 years and also headed the Film Federation of India four times, said such actions can have serious consequences for people’s work and creative rights. He pointed out that attempts to discourage people from collaborating with someone should not be treated casually. “Such actions can have far-reaching consequences for livelihoods and creative freedom,” he said, adding that matters of this nature

must be handled legally.

After FWICE’s directive triggered a major debate, the federation’s chief advisor, Ashoke Pandit, clarified that it was not a ban. Speaking to ETimes, he said, “The entire conversation has become wrong. It’s not a ban. We are not a court; we can’t ban people. Hence, we have issued a non-cooperation.” Meanwhile, Ranveer Singh has received support from the Cine and TV Artists’ Association. CINTAA vice-president and veteran actor Padmini Kolhapure said the association stands by the actor. Speaking to IANS, she said, “CINTAA is proud to have Ranveer Singh as our member. We stand by him and for him whenever he needs us. This is already out in the public domain, so I do not want to comment more about it. We are here for him, with him. If he ever needs us, we are for Ranveer Singh.”

Anushka Sharma celebrates Virat Kohli’s IPL triumph with a kiss

Mumbai: Anushka Sharma shared the sweetest post for Virat Kohli after the Royal Challengers Bengaluru lifted the IPL trophy for the second time in a row. They defeated the Gujarat Titans by five wickets.

To celebrate the occasion and her husband, the Pari actress shared a heartwarming photo in which Virat can be seen with the championship trophy while she kisses him on the forehead. Anushka kept it casual in a shirt paired with jeans, while Virat was dressed in his team jersey after the big win. The post quickly went viral on social media, with several celebrities reacting to it. Stars such as Sidharth Malhotra, Varun Dhawan,



Sharvati, Bhumi Pednekar, Nayanthara, Dia Mirza, Manish Malhotra, Vaani Kapoor, and Sonakshi Sinha, among others, liked the post and joined in celebrating the win. Last night, following

the big win, Anushka shared another special moment from the celebrations on Instagram’s story section. In the photo, her cricketer-husband was seen wearing a T-shirt that read, “One felt nice,

we did it twice,” written on it. He was posing beside a cricketer and RCB’s batting coach, Dinesh Karthik, who was all smiles after the victory. Several photos and videos from the celebrations have also gone viral on social media. In some of them, Virat was seen holding Anushka close as the couple celebrated the memorable win together.

As always, Anushka Sharma stood firmly by Virat’s side throughout the tournament and was frequently seen cheering for him from the stands during his matches. On the work front, the actress was last seen in the 2018 film Zero. She also had a cameo role in the 2022 film Qala.

Varun Dhawan’s Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai opens advance bookings ahead of release



Mumbai: Advance bookings are now open for Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai, releasing in theaters

this Friday! Bringing back the charm of classic Bollywood entertainers, Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona

Hai, promises A full-fledged original Bollywood family entertainer packed with comedy, confusion,

chaos, and heart. Directed by David Dhawan, the film marks the return of the filmmaker’s trademark style of larger-than-life comedy and family entertainment. Blending romance, humor, chaos, and heart, the film promises a complete paisa-vasool experience for audiences of all ages.

With its blend of comedy, emotions, and family-friendly storytelling, the film aims to revive the joy of shared theatrical experiences that bring audiences together. The music is positioned as one of the film’s biggest commer-

cial strengths, along with tracks like “Vyah Karwado Ji,” “WOW,” and the iconic song “Chunnari Chunnari – Let’s Go”. Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai seems to be a complete masala entertainer, blending nostalgia, comedy, music, and exaggerated family fun to bring back the feel of classic Bollywood comedy to the big screen. Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai features a fresh and interesting trio of Varun Dhawan, Mrunal Thakur, and Pooja Hegde. Joining them is a strong ensemble cast including Jimmy Shegill, Chunky Panday, Mouni Roy, Ali Asgar, Rajesh Kumar, Rakesh Bedi, and Kubbra Sait. A Tips Films production, directed by David Dhawan, Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai releases in theaters this Friday, June 5, 2026.

Raveena Tandon’s mother’s jewellery worth ₹25 lakh stolen; caregiver held

Mumbai: Mumbai’s Juhu Police have arrested 47-year-old Rashi Chhabria for allegedly stealing jewellery and luxury watches worth around Rs 25 lakh after gaining the trust of actress Raveena Tandon’s family.

According to police, the accused had been associated with the Tandon family since 2020 and regularly visited their residence to care for Raveena Tandon’s 86-year-old mother, Veena Tandon. Investigators said Chhabria was considered close to the family and had access to parts of the house usually restricted to family members. She is accused of breaking open a locker kept inside the family’s Juhu residence and stealing gold and diamond jewellery belonging to Veena Tandon, along with two expensive watches owned by Raveena’s brother, film producer Rajiv Tandon.

As per the police complaint filed by Rajiv Tandon, the alleged theft came to light on



October 2, 2025, when the family checked the jewellery ahead of the Dussehra festival and discovered that the locker had been broken into. The missing valuables reportedly included gold bangles, necklaces, rings, earrings, a diamond-studded mangalsutra and other diamond jewellery worth around Rs 25 lakh. When the family discovered that the jewellery was missing, they questioned Chhabria, but she initially denied the allegations. Police said that after the matter was reported, she was arrested.

Some of the stolen watches have since been recovered, while efforts are ongoing to trace the remaining jewellery.

According to investigators, Chhabria allegedly told the family that the jewellery had been handed over to another person and would be returned. However, the valuables were allegedly never recovered, prompting Rajiv Tandon to approach the police.

Juhu Police are continuing their investigation into the case and are working to recover the remaining stolen jewellery.

14 young SIs were made SHO, and 31 officers were shifted

Patna: In a major re-shuffle, Patna SSP Kar-tikey K Sharma on Mon-day transferred 31 police officers, with 14 young sub-inspectors given charge of police stations across the district.

As per the new postings, Dinesh Kumar Singh was made SHO of Buddha Colony, while Rajiv Kumar was posted as circle inspector in Hathidah.

Manish Kumar Anand has been shifted to Po-lice Lines, and Santosh Kumar Sharma will take over as SHO of Ram-krishna Nagar.

Bambam Kumar, earlier additional SHO at Kot-wali, has been appointed SHO of Shahjahanpur, while Suman Kumar will head Gaurichak police station.

Several officers from Dial 100 were also moved to field postings. Tanesh Payla was made SHO of Sigori, Abhishek Kumar posted as SHO of Hathi-dah, Khushboo Khatoon will head Daniyawan po-lice station, and Shravan Kumar was appointed SHO of Rani Talab.

Police sources said the move to hand over police station charge to 14 young sub-inspectors aims to strengthen grassroots po-licing and improve law and order response.

HC upholds direction for entrusting census duties to employees of LIC

Prayagraj: Upholding the directions issued by the authorities concerned for entrusting census duties to the employees of LIC, the Allahabad High Court dis-missed a writ petition filed by North Central Zone In-surance Employees, saying that the authority/zonal officer did not commit any error or illegality. The peti-tioner had sought quashing of the decision to engage employees of LIC for census work.

Dismissing the writ peti-tion, Justice Dinesh Pathak said, “This court is of the considered opinion that the authorised authority/zonal officer has not committed any error or illegality in is-suing orders in exercise of delegated power directing the employees of the LIC to discharge duties as enu-merators/supervisors to fa-cilitate the work of census operations.

“Further, the writ peti-tion contains only a vague prayer seeking quashing of the decision to engage em-ployees of the LIC for cen-sus work and no specific challenge has been made to any particular order.”

During the course of hearing, the counsel for the petitioner submitted that under section 4-A of the census Act, 1948, only em-ployees of local authorities can be requisitioned for performing census duties



as enumerators/supervi-sors. He further submitted that the employees of LIC do not fall within the defi-nition of “local authorities” as defined under section 3 of the General Clauses Act, 1897. Therefore, entrust-ment of census duties to them is “wholly unsustain-able” in the eyes of law.

On the other hand, the counsel for the Union gov-ernment contended that section 4-A of the census Act, 1948 cannot be read in isolation and has to be construed conjointly with section 6 and 7 of the Act, 1948, which specifically contemplate engagement of employees of factories, firms and establishments for census work.

He emphasised that LIC comes within the ambit of a ‘commercial estab-lishment’ and, therefore, engagement of its staff for census operations is with-in the domain of the Act, 1948. It was further con-tended that rule 3 of the Census Rules, 1990, pre-scribes the categories of of-ficers who may be appoint-

Post-bypoll rift in Karnataka Congress in focus after audio ‘leak’

New Delhi: State housing minister Zameer Ahmed Khan and Congress leader Mohammed Siraj both is-sued denials after a purport-ed audio clip allegedly fea-turing them spurred a row on social media on Monday. The clip contains a purport-ed discussion between both leaders on voting during the April 9 by-election in Dava-nagere South constituency. Sadiq is heard discussing voting trends in the constitu-ency. “I visited many booths. The cooker is everywhere, the diamond is less. Some people from the Congress are distributing money. They are saying that people know how to vote by rejecting the money. I have given ₹1.5 lakh to Sadiq brother. I have instructed him to ensure that votes go to SDPI.”

The “cooker” apparently refers to the pressure cook-er election symbol allotted to Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) candidate Af-sar Kodlipete, while the “di-amond” refers to the symbol assigned to an independent candidate in the contest. Another section purportedly features Zameer discussing voter turnout. The minister is also allegedly heard saying, “this is a matter of prestige for me,” before asking for an assessment of polling. Siraj is then purportedly heard responding, “Cooker. Only cooker,” an apparent ref-erence to the pressure cooker symbol of the SDPI candi-

dateBoth leaders strongly disputed the recording. In a statement on Monday, Za-meer said: “The audio clip is completely fake. I have never made such statements. It has been fabricated using AI technology with the in-tention of creating confusion and damaging my political reputation.”

He added that a complaint over the matter would be lodged with the cybercrime wing of the police.Siraj also denied that the conversation took place. “Zameer Ahmed did not speak to me in such a manner. I have nothing to do with the audio circulating on social media. The audio was heavily edited and ma-nipulated using technology. This is far from the truth,” he said.

He added that the release of the clip appeared polit-ically timed. “There was a conspiracy against us during the by-elections too. There was an attempt to incrimi-nate Muslim leaders. This continued even after my expulsion from the party. This audio was deliberate-ly released against Zameer Ahmed ahead of the cabinet formation,” he said.

He also rejected sugges-tions of contact with BJP candidate Srinivas Dasakari-yappa during the byelection campaign. “On the polling day, after casting my vote, I came home and slept. I have not spoken to anyone. I need to know where the audio

came from. I will take legal advice and proceed further,” he said.The row came weeks after a by- election that ex-posed divisions within sec-tions of the Congress in Dava-nagere South. A group of Muslim leaders had sought a Muslim nominee for the constituency, arguing that the community formed a sig-nificant segment of the elec-torate. The party ultimately fielded Samarth Mallikarjun, grandson of former MLA Shamanur Shivashankarap-pa. The contest was closely watched after discontent surfaced within parts of the local party organisation. Fol-lowing the election, MLC Abdul Jabbar was suspend-ed over alleged anti party activities, while MLC Na-seer Ahmed was removed from his position as political secretary to then- chief min-ister Siddaramaiah. Specula-tion in political circles also linked Zameer’s name to possible disciplinary action.

Despite the turbulence, Samarth Mallikarjun won the by- election with 69,578 votes. BJP candidate Srinivas Dasakariyappa secured 63,870 votes and SDPI candidate Afsar Kodlipete received 18,975 votes, leav-ing the Congress with a vic-tory margin of 5,708 votes. Congress MLA Shamanur Samarth called on the party leadership to examine the authenticity of the recording before reaching any conclu-sions.

World champion Gukesh has the edge in experience over Sindarov: Norway Chess arbiter

Oslo: Anemone Kulczak, the chief ar-biter at Norway Chess, has been a con-stant presence since the tournament’s early days in 2013 quietly observing its evolution, its innovations, and the shifting fortunes that have marked ev-ery edition. A seasoned French arbiter with years of experience overseeing hundreds of elite clashes carries the authority that comes from long expo-sure to top-level chess events, and she is rarely quick to overstate conclusions. Even so, in her view, reigning world champion D Gukesh remains the clear favourite to defend his crown later this year.“Javokhir Sindarov also has expe-rience but as a world champion, you know, Gukesh has more experience, I would say. So, yes, for me he has more experience but the world championship games are really interesting to follow,” says Kulczak, a mother of a young daughter who works in a biology lab in Nice, speaking in a strong French ac-cent with a measured tone.

Gukesh will take on Kazakhstan’s Sindarov later this year to defend his title, with critics pointing to a dip in form since his 2024 world title triumph and suggesting he has not looked quite the same player. Meanwhile, Sindarov is being tipped as a potential dark horse in the championship showdown. Kul-czak, who has been part of Norway Chess through most of its modern his-

tory apart from a brief break when her four-year-old daughter was born, has witnessed its full evolution from the era of five-time world champion Viswana-than Anand to Magnus Carlsen’s rise as a seven-time Norway Chess win-ner, and the introduction of women’s chess, along with the challenges of the COVID pandemic.

She has also been the arbiter in mo-ments that went viral, including when Carlsen banged the table in Stavanger after a loss to Gukesh in a round-robin game last year.

When asked in a lighter vein if Carlsen or any other player had ever caused her problems over the years, she says, “It was me who was watching the Armageddon tie-break when he played against Gukesh... and when he knocked the table.” “It was the last game to finish that day so he was not disturbing any-one when he did it so as an arbiter I did not say anything but had some more games been ongoing on other boards I would have told him please do not do this again because you are disturbing other players,” says Kulczak.

On whether officiating a superstar like Carlsen brings added pressure, Kulczak is unequivocal. For an arbiter, she says, the rules matter more than reputations, especially under the glare of cameras and constant media scrutiny.

Arbiters, she explains, are constant-



ly multitasking monitoring the games, ensuring the live broadcast matches, the moves on the board, keeping the playing hall free of distractions and stepping in whenever players need clarification. The pressure only intensi-

fies in time trouble, when every second counts.

“When players have less than five minutes, they can stop writing the moves,” she says.“Then we have to make sure the opponent continues to

record them.”In a tournament where fortunes can swing on a single move, even the smallest detail can become an arbiter’s responsibility, she adds.

She still fondly remembers the in-augural edition of Norway Chess in

2013, when Anand was among the par-ticipants. Mentioning the Indian great brings a smile to her face as she says, “I guess I remember that I arbitrated him.”

Kulczak, who was also an arbiter at the 2014 Chess Olympiad in Norway, began officiating at just 18 and earned her International Arbiter title six years later, says the COVID pandemic was among the most challenging periods in the tournament’s history. “I was here during COVID and we all had to arrive before the tournament because of quar-antine rules,” she recalls.

“After every game, we had to clean and sanitise all the pieces. Every table had to be sprayed with disinfectant. It was meticulous, very meticulous.”

Kulczak is full of praise for the In-dian contingent, saying players such as Praggnanandhaa, Gukesh, Divya Deshmukh and Koneru Humpy are an arbiter’s delight because they consis-tently follow the rules.“Yes, it’s easier to arbitre them,” she says with a smile.

As for Carlsen’s longevity and wheth-er he can surpass Garry Kasparov’s re-cord of spending 20 years as the world No. 1 in classical chess, Kulczak be-lieves the answer lies largely with the Norwegian himself. “I think it depends more on his spirit. If he wants to, I’m sure he’s capable of doing what Garry Kasparov did,” she signs off.

Football’s oldest burden returns: Can England finally end six decades of World Cup heartbreak?

England: There is a num-ber that haunts English football till date. A number like no other. Not a jersey number, not a scoreline, just a year. 1966. The only and the last time England held the World Cup, at home, in a world that felt like it belonged to them. In years that followed, England came closest to the crown on two occasions. In 1990, Bobby Robson’s men made it to the semifinals for the first time at a World Cup since that win in 1966. But West Germany halted their run, before an error from goal-keeper Peter Shilton against Italy in the third-place playoff saw England finish fourth. 2018 witnessed a similar. “It’s coming home” echoed the streets of Russia as Harry Kane-led England marched into semis, only to be stunned by Croatia. They eventually finished fourth, again.

Sixty years since that historic win at Wembley, Thomas Tuchel’s Three Li-

ons board a plane to North America carrying the full weight of that half-century of heartbreak, armed with arguably their most gifted generation since — and yet, still, with questions that re-fuse to go away. That part was smooth sailing.

England became the first European side to qualify for the 2026 World Cup. Their dominance was underlined by the fact that qualification was secured with two games to spare, built on the back of an eight-match winning streak in which they did not concede a single goal. The glow of qualification, how-ever, quickly faded under closer scrutiny.

England’s route was hard-ly the most demanding, and when Tuchel’s side faced stronger opposition in recent friendlies, the results were sobering. Defeats to Senegal and Japan drew audible boos from English supporters ex-pecting considerably more. England’s World Cup squad announcement immediately



sparked controversy.

Cole Palmer, arguably the most inventive English foot-baller of the last two sea-sons, was shockingly omit-ted. So too was Phil Foden, despite both enduring under-whelming club campaigns. Real Madrid’s Trent Alexan-der-Arnold did not make the cut either, a less surprising omission given he had not featured for England since the previous summer. Nei-

ther did Harry Maguire, who later admitted on social me-dia that he was “shocked and gutted” by the decision.

In their place came se-lections that puzzled even the most patient observers. Ivan Toney, now playing for Al-Ahli in Saudi Arabia and having accumulated just seven minutes of inter-national football since Euro 2024, received a call-up. So did 35-year-old Jordan

Henderson, along with Tot-tenham’s Djed Spence and Bayer Leverkusen defender Jarell Quansah. Nine mem-bers of the travelling party have never appeared at a major international tourna-ment. Tuchel defended his decisions, though not entire-ly convincingly.

“From day one, we were clear that we are trying to select and build the best pos-sible team, which is not nec-

essarily to select and collect the 26 most talented players. Teams win championships. It’s as simple as that. Every-thing I know and hear about international football is that it is about the team and the chemistry.” The omissions of Palmer and Foden suggest Tuchel values tactical struc-ture over individual flair.

His England tenure has also been marked by tactical experimentation, a false nine here, twin No. 10s there, without any system consis-tently clicking.

Yet the German will ar-rive in North America de-termined to silence the cri-ticism and end England’s decades-long wait for World Cup glory. At 33, he has just completed arguably the fin-est goalscoring season of his career, scoring 61 goals in 51 appearances for Bayern Munich. England have not always managed to maxi-mise Kane’s influence de-spite his Golden Boot-win-ning exploits at the 2018 World Cup, but if he arrives

fresh and fit, the Three Lions will possess one of the most lethal finishers in world football. Jude Bellingham is perhaps England’s most intriguing subplot. The Real Madrid midfielder has the talent to alter the course of a tournament single-handedly, but an injury-disrupted sea-son means he may not auto-matically start games.

Aston Villa’s Morgan Rog-ers, in outstanding domestic form and clearly trusted by Tuchel, could begin ahead of him. The prospect of Bellingham being used as an impact substitute is ei-ther inspired management or a waste of England’s most gifted creative talent. Nico O’Reilly could finally of-fer a solution to England’s long-standing left-back problem. The 21-year-old Manchester City youngster heads to the World Cup after scoring seven league goals this season and adding two more in the League Cup fi-nal. Goalkeeping is depend-able, the defensive unit solid

when the back four settles, and the midfield remains organised and industrious, with Declan Rice and Elliot Anderson providing the en-gine room.

Without Palmer or Foden, however, creativity relies more on individuals than on a clearly defined system.The attack, when Kane is firing and Bukayo Saka and Mar-cus Rashford are on song, is formidable.

The biggest uncertainty remains the manager. For all of Tuchel’s pedigree, En-gland are still waiting to see whether his ideas can trans-late into genuine tournament success.

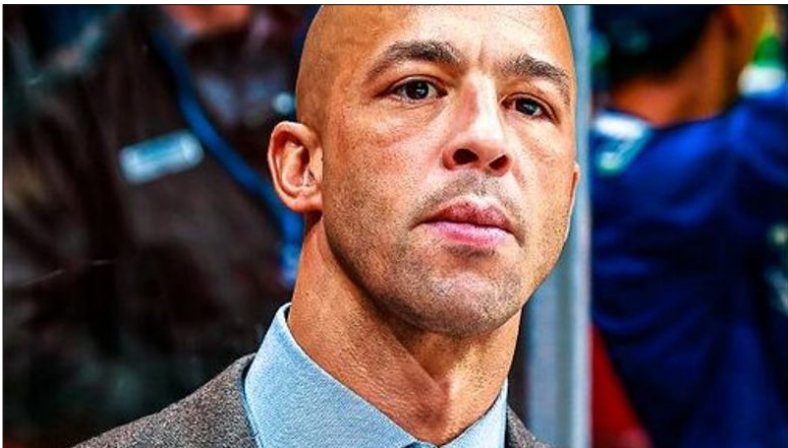
England possess the tools to challenge for the World Cup. They have a proven goalscorer in Kane, defen-sive stability and enough depth to trouble any oppo-nent.

The challenge, as always with England, is converting potential into performance when the margins become razor-thin.

Manny Malhotra Makes History With Punjabi Roots As Vancouver Canucks Head Coach

Chandigarh: Manny Malhotra, a former NHL player of Indian origin, has been named the new head coach of the NHL's Vancouver Canucks, becoming the 23rd bench boss in the franchise's history. Reports from North American media indicate that the Canucks have reached an agreement with Malhotra after weeks of speculation over the club's coaching search. The appointment marks a significant milestone for India-origin representation in professional ice hockey. Born in Mississauga, Ontario, Malhotra, 46, is the son of a Punjabi father who emigrated from India and a French-Canadian mother. His father, Shadi Malhotra, was born in India and later worked as a research chemist in Canada. A respected figure in Canadian hockey, Malhotra enjoyed an 18-year NHL playing career after being selected seventh overall by the New York Rangers in the 1998 NHL Draft. He went on to play for several franchises, including the Vancouver Canucks, Dallas Stars, Columbus Blue Jackets, San Jose Sharks, Carolina Hurricanes and Montreal Canadiens.

Malhotra transitioned into coaching after retirement and steadily climbed the ranks. He served as a development coach and assistant coach with Vancouver before spending four seasons as an assistant with the Toronto Maple Leafs. In 2024,



he was appointed head coach of the Abbotsford Canucks, Vancouver's American Hockey League affiliate. His coaching credentials received a major boost when he guided Abbotsford to the franchise's first Calder Cup championship in 2025, a success that made him the frontrunner for the NHL role. For Indian-origin sports fans worldwide, Malhotra's elevation to one of hockey's most prestigious coaching positions is a moment of pride and a reminder of the growing global footprint of the Indian diaspora in elite sport. Hockey India on Thursday announced the appointment of decorated Frenchman Frederic Soyeux as the Coach of the Indian Junior Men's Hockey Team, reinforcing

its long-term vision of building a sustainable high-performance ecosystem aligned with India's ambitions for the 2036 Olympic Games. According to a press release from Hockey India, Soyeux is one of the most accomplished coaches in European hockey and brings over three decades of elite hockey experience, including 15 years as an international player for France and over 15 years as a Head Coach at the highest level of world hockey. Soyeux, who enjoyed an illustrious playing career with France from 1995 to 2010, earning 196 international caps and scoring an impressive 195 goals for the team, coached the national men's hockey teams of both France and Spain.

Aquib Nabi And Prince Yadav Named India Net Bowlers For Afghanistan Test

New Delhi: Jammu and Kashmir pacer Aquib Nabi and Prince Yadav have been included in the pool of net bowlers who will help India in their preparations for the one-off Test against Afghanistan in New Chandigarh from June 6, reported ESPNCricinfo. The other bowlers include Gurjapneet Singh and spinners Shivang Kumar, Saransh Jain and Zeeshan Ansari. Prince is a part of the three-match ODI series squad, which will follow after the Test, while Nabi emerged as a strong contender after a sensational 60 wicket, title-winning campaign for J&K earlier this year, emerging as the leading wicket-taker at an average of 12.56 and taking home the 'Player of the Tournament'. However, he failed to make it to the test side as Team India picked three seam options in Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna and Gurnoor Brar. Aquib also represented Delhi Capitals (DC) in this year's



Indian Premier League (IPL), going wicketless in his five outings. Prince was one of the Lucknow Super Giants' (LSG) brightest stars in their disappointing campaign, with 16 wickets at an average of 28.68 and an economy rate of 8.82. Gurjapneet Singh represented Chennai Super Kings (CSK), taking four wickets in four matches at an average of 58.25. Shivang also featured for Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in 13 matches, taking nine wickets at an average

of 41.66. Speaking after the Afghanistan squad selection, chief selector Ajit Agarkar had said, "You do not necessarily pick a lot of seamers when you pick a Test team in India. And he was close. But at this point, we have gone with the three that we have picked." This is only the second Test taking place between India and Afghanistan, with India hosting Afghanistan for their debut Test in 2018 at Bengaluru, which India won by an innings and 262 runs.

When the team for the one-off Test against Afghanistan at home was announced on Tuesday, a massive omission was Aquib, who played a massive role in J-K's maiden Ranji triumph this year, emerging as the leading wicket-taker with 60 wickets at an average of 12.56, with best figures of 7/24, including two four-fers and seven five-wicket hauls. "Aquib Nabi should have gotten a chance. He played a key role in Jammu and Kashmir winning the Ranji Trophy for the first time," JioStar expert Raina said on JioHotstar. However, he said that Prasidh Krishna and Mohammed Siraj are bowling with good line and length and the uncapped pacer Gurnoor Brar, who is tall, is in the squad because his Gujarat Titans (GT) captain Shubman Gill, providing some inputs about the team he wanted, and the bowler offers a lot of difference with his "height and build."

French Open: Balaji-Demoliner Reach Quarters As Paparkar Advances In Boys

New Delhi: India's N. Sriram Balaji and Brazil's Marcelo Demoliner continued their impressive run at the French Open, upsetting sixth-seeded Germans Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz to reach the men's doubles quarterfinals on Monday. In the junior competition, Arnav Paparkar also enjoyed a successful day, advancing to the boys' singles round of 16 with a commanding 6-2, 6-4 victory over 15th seed Kuan-Shou Chen of Chinese Taipei. Paparkar will also compete in the boys' doubles event, where he and Thailand's Kunanan Pantaratorn will take on Great Britain's Mark Ceban and Russia's Kirill Filaretov. The Indo-Brazilian pair produced a composed display to secure a 7-5, 6-4 victory in one hour and 25 minutes on the clay courts of Roland Garros. The win marked their third successive triumph in the tournament and underlined their growing confidence as a team. Balaji and Demoliner will now face the formidable second-seeded pairing of Finland's Harri Heliövaara and Britain's Henry Patten for a place in the semifinals. The quarterfinal appearance



caps a strong week for Balaji and Demoliner, who had earlier registered a convincing second-round victory over Germany's Jakob Schnaitter and Mark Wallner. The pair needed just one hour and 27 minutes to seal a 7-5, 6-2 win and book their place in the last 16. While Balaji's campaign gathered momentum, it was the end of the road in men's doubles for Yuki Bhambri and New Zealand's Michael Venus. The Indo-New Zealand duo suffered a 3-6, 4-6 defeat against the experienced Italian combination of Simone Bolelli and An-

drea Vavassori in the second round. Bhambri and Venus had started their campaign strongly, defeating Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo and Mariano Kestelboim 7-5, 6-2 in the opening round. Bhambri, however, remains alive in the tournament after progressing in the mixed doubles alongside partner Alexandra Panova. Elsewhere, Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathi was scheduled to face eighth-seeded Russian Mariia Makarova in the second round of the girls' singles event as Indian interest at Roland Garros continued across multiple

draws. At the French Open, India's N. Sriram Balaji and Brazil's Marcelo Demoliner reached the men's doubles quarterfinals after upsetting sixth-seeded Germans Krawietz and Puetz. They will face second-seeds Heliövaara and Patten next. In juniors, Arnav Paparkar advanced to the boys' singles round of 16 and competes in boys' doubles. Meanwhile, Yuki Bhambri exited men's doubles but continues in mixed doubles. Indian players remain active across various draws, highlighting strong performances at Roland Garros.

U-18 Asia Cup 2026: India Register Dominant 4-1 Win Over South Korea

Kakamigahara: The Indian U-18 Men's Hockey Team produced a dominant 4-1 victory against Korea in their third U-18 Asia Cup 2026 Pool A match held in Kakamigahara, Japan. Captain Ketan Kushwaha (3', 36'), Varinder Singh (5') and Shahrulkh Ali (54') scored for India while Korean captain Yun Jaehyeok (21') scored his team's lone goal in the match. India started the first quarter strongly, securing an early two-goal lead. In the third minute, India earned the first penalty corner of the match and successfully converted it into the opening goal. Rahul Yadav played an incisive pass to captain Kushwaha (3'), and although his initial shot was saved by the Korean goalkeeper, the ball rebounded to him and he slotted it into the net. India built on the momentum and secured the second goal in the fifth minute. Gaze Khan showed great vision to find Varind-



er (5') unmarked next to the goal, and he delivered a calm finish to extend India's lead. Korea slowed the tempo for the remainder of the first quarter in an attempt to regroup. The second quarter saw end-to-end action from both sides, but neither team created meaningful chances inside the circle. In the 21st minute, Korea received a penalty corner that captain Jaehyeok (21') successfully converted to reduce the deficit in the first half. India

started the third quarter on the front foot, converting yet another penalty corner in the 36th minute. Although the Korean backline stopped the initial shot at goal, they failed to clear the ball in time and Kushwaha (36') pounced on the opportunity to score his second goal of the evening. Both teams secured penalty corners towards the end of the third quarter, but neither side converted. In the 53rd minute, Korea came

teasingly close to scoring when Kim Doyun deflected the ball toward the goal but Indian goalkeeper Ayush Rajak made a great save with his stick. The very next minute, India replied with a fourth goal courtesy of Shahrulkh (54'), who struck a powerful shot to sound the board and seal his team's victory. The win put India level on six points with Korea and Japan. The top two teams from each of the two pools will qualify for the semi-finals. India will next face Chinese Taipei on June 3 at 1:30 PM IST in their final Pool A match. "It was a very good season for us and I got a lot to learn from it. Of course, we wanted to win the title and become champions, but as a team I think we performed really well. Sometimes the final result is not in your control, but overall, I really liked the Hero HIL this time. We enjoyed it a lot and learned a lot together," Lalremsiami said.

Mischievous RCB Stars Drench Head Coach In Ice Water After IPL Victory

New Delhi: Royal Challengers Bengaluru players Tim David and Phil Salt went a little overboard with their celebrations after the team's second Indian Premier League title win on Sunday, May 31. While celebrating their victory, the mischievous duo decided to dump a bucket of ice-cold water on head coach Andy Flower. The video of the incident went viral the next day, with fans calling David and Salt the most unpredictable RCB players ever. Their childish prank on their head coach turned into one of the highlight moments of RCB's celebrations. The Rajat Patidar-led side absolutely dominated Shubman Gill's Gujarat Titans in the summit clash at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Sunday. First, RCB restricted GT to a modest total of 155, and then chased it down with ease, courtesy of a steady innings from Virat Kohli, who remained unbeaten on 75. The team broke into celebrations after Kohli hit the winning shot for six on the final ball of the 18th over. The RCB side celebrated in style on the ground and spoke with great admiration about the coaching staff, particularly Andy Flower. Flower joined RCB from Lucknow Super Giants in August 2023. He



and his management staff transformed the franchise and built one of the most well-rounded sides in the tournament. They trusted veteran Bhuvneshwar Kumar to partner Josh Hazlewood with the new ball and, instead of investing in an elite spinner, backed Krunal Pandya to develop into one of the most innovative spinners in the league. The result was that RCB dominated both the 2025 and 2026 league stages before carrying that momentum into the playoffs and securing the title. While he might have been in joyous mood after the conclusion of the match, the Australian finisher was

sanctioned for his in-game antics in the IPL final. This means that Tim David will miss Royal Challengers Bengaluru's opening match of IPL 2027, after being handed a one-game suspension for throwing an ice bag towards umpire Nitin Menon during the IPL 2026 final against Gujarat Titans. Royal Challengers Bengaluru won their second IPL title on May 31, dominating Gujarat Titans with Virat Kohli's unbeaten 75. Celebrations peaked when players Tim David and Phil Salt playfully doused coach Andy Flower with ice-cold water, a viral moment.

Messi Versus Ronaldo: Football's Biggest Debate Heading To One Last World Cup

New Delhi: "I don't know if that has ever happened in football, the same two guys on the stage at the same time." Cristiano Ronaldo said those words rather casually during the UEFA Awards ceremony in 2019. Seven years later, they feel a lot more unreal. Football has given us great rivalries before. Pele and Maradona inspired generations. Johan Cruyff and Franz Beckenbauer changed how the game was played. But when it comes to a rivalry becoming almost as famous as the sport itself, there is not much that comes close to Messi versus Ronaldo. Every football fan remembers picking a side. For the last two decades, football has somehow managed to split its massive global fanbase into two camps. Messi or Ronaldo. Maybe it started with an El Clasico. Maybe it was a Ballon d'Or debate that became far more serious than it had any right to be. Maybe it was simply seeing your friends argue about who was better and deciding you had to join one team. Whatever the reason, millions of football fans found their way into the sport through this rivalry.



And once you picked a side, there was usually no going back. The Messi fans stayed Messi fans. The Ronaldo supporters defended Ronaldo like a family member. Every goal became evidence. Every trophy became ammunition. Every Ballon d'Or ceremony felt like a season finale. The funny thing is that the rivalry followed them everywhere. From Manchester to Madrid, from Barcelona to Paris, from Turin to Saudi Arabia and eventually to Miami. The shirts changed. The stadiums changed. The leagues changed. And now, as the FIFA World Cup returns in 2026, football finds itself staring at something it has quietly tried to ignore for years. The possibility that

this could be the final World Cup featuring both Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. Twenty years after they first arrived at a World Cup as fresh-faced teenagers in Germany, Messi at 38 and Ronaldo at 41 are preparing to become the first players in history to appear at six different editions of football's biggest tournament. For a rivalry that helped raise an entire generation of football fans, it feels like football's favourite argument is getting one final chapter. The funny thing about Messi versus Ronaldo is that nobody ever seemed willing to let the debate die. Every time people thought one had finally pulled ahead, the other would do something ridic-

ulous. Messi finished with eight Ballon d'Ors. Ronaldo ended up with five. Messi scored 91 goals in a calendar year. Ronaldo became the first player to score in five different World Cups. Just when one side of the argument felt comfortable, the other side suddenly had fresh ammunition. That was pretty much the story of the last twenty years. When Messi and Ronaldo first faced each other in a Champions League semi-final in 2008, neither had won a Ballon d'Or. By the time they were done, they had turned football's biggest individual award into their own private competition. And that is probably why the rivalry survived for so long. Not because fans agreed. Because they never could. Across 36 official meetings, Messi won 16, Ronaldo won 11 and nine ended in draws. Messi scored 22 goals. Ronaldo scored 21. Nearly two decades of football and one goal separates them. Perhaps that is why Ronaldo always sounded more appreciative of the rivalry than frustrated by it. "I was curious because we shared this stage for 15 years, me and him.