

In Brief

Mountain radar project in Nagaland

Kohima: The Chakhesang Public Organisation (CPO), representing the Chakhesang community in Nagaland’s Phek district, opposes the proposed installation of an advanced mountain radar system at Pfutsero due to concerns over health, environmental, and land impacts. They allege a lack of transparency, insufficient public consultation, and absence of safety studies regarding exposure to electromagnetic radiation. The CPO emphasizes that the ecologically sensitive Pfutsero area relies on agriculture and warns that the project could harm biodiversity, water sources, and land stability. They criticize the state government for proceeding without adequate local engagement and demand the radar system’s relocation to less sensitive areas, threatening resistance if the project continues.

Storms lash Tripura

Agartala: At least two individuals, including a five-year-old child, died and four others were injured in storm-related incidents in Tripura over 48 hours, as reported on May 1. The storms caused significant damage to homes, crops, and power infrastructure. A child died when their mud-walled house collapsed, and another man from Longtarai Valley was killed by lightning. Nearly 4,000 houses were damaged, with 180 completely destroyed, prompting the state government to allocate Rs 79.59 lakh in relief to affected families.

Advisory for tourists visiting East Khasi Hills

Shillong: Meghalaya authorities have issued a safety advisory for East Khasi Hills district, highlighting mandatory precautions for visitors due to increased foot traffic and seasonal risks. The directive from the Deputy Commissioner’s Office emphasizes essential safety infrastructure, including marked entry and exit points, maps, and trained personnel at tourist sites. Regular inspections of equipment and structures are crucial, especially for water-based tourism, where safety measures like limiting boat capacity and mandatory life jacket use have been enforced. Neglect in safety checks could pose significant risks to visitors.

Tensions in Dhubri increase and a road is blocked

Dhubri, May 03: On May 1, a violent altercation between a local community representative and an accused drug network resulted in significant public protests, road blockades, and numerous injuries, prompting a heavy security deployment throughout Assam’s Dhubri district. Local sources claim that when a Ward Member from the Jhagrapar Gaon Panchayat region allegedly went to the home of a suspected drug dealer to demand a halt to alleged illicit drug activities in the area, emotions increased. The Ward Member allegedly suffered severe injuries after being struck by a sharp object during the altercation. He was transferred right away to Dhubri Medical College and Hospi-

tal, where he is presently receiving medical care. News of the assault quickly spread through the area, prompting angry residents to gather at the scene.

The protest soon turned chaotic, with clashes reported between locals and members of the accused family. Police personnel rushed to the spot and took the family of Ashrafal Haque into custody in an attempt to bring the situation under control. However, public anger continued to intensify, with protesters demanding strict action against those involved in the attack and a complete crackdown on the alleged drug network operating in the region.

The agitation brought normal movement to a standstill as demonstrators

blocked the main regional road and surrounded police vehicles, restricting law enforcement movement in the area. Mizanur Rahman, a representative of the local Gaon Panchayat, said the unrest reflected growing frustration among residents over the impact of drugs on local youth. “The youth are fed up with the influence of these cartels. The demand is clear — the real drug mafia must be punished to save future generations,” he said. Senior police officials remained at the scene late into the evening, holding talks with community leaders to restore normalcy and reopen the road. Authorities said further legal action is being processed while efforts continue to de-escalate tensions.

Mizoram Class 12 results were released, with an 87.67 pass rate

Aizawl, May 03: Mizoram achieved an overall pass percentage of 87.67 in the Class 12 board examinations, results released on April 29 indicate. The Mizoram Board of School Education reported a marginal difference in performance between genders, with boys achieving a pass rate of 87.7% compared to girls at 87.66%. Out of 12,243 candidates who sat for the exams from February to March, 10,734 passed, 1,394 failed, and 115 were placed in the compartmental category. When breaking down the results by streams, the Commerce stream had the highest pass rate at 90.51%, with 759 candidates. The Science stream followed closely with an 89.24% pass rate



from 2,770 candidates, while the Arts stream, the largest in terms of participation with 8,714 candidates, recorded a pass percentage of 86.93%. Institutional performance shows that deficit schools—

those receiving regular government grants—led with an average pass rate of 93.80%. Private institutions also performed strongly, with a pass rate of 91.55%, whereas government-run schools lagged behind at 83.13%. Officials noted that these results exemplify a consistent academic performance across all streams, contributing to a commendable overall success rate in the state for this year.

Opposition has habit of obstructing women’s progress Tripura CM Manik Saha

Agartala, May 03: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha criticized opposition parties for habitually opposing significant initiatives introduced by the BJP-led NDA government, particularly those aimed at women’s empowerment.

Speaking at a special session of the Tripura Legislative Assembly titled “Nari Shakti Bandhan,” he emphasized that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is dedicated to fostering the development and protection of women across various sectors. Saha highlighted the importance of the Women’s Reservation Bill, which reserves 33 percent of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, calling it a crucial milestone towards gender equality and genuine empowerment.

He noted that this legislation, referred to as the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, was successfully passed during a special parliamentary session



in 2023 after many years of at-tempts. The Chief Minister as-

serted that while the government strives for the genuine empowerment of women, the opposition consistently seeks to obstruct such initiatives.

He claimed that opposition parties often sow confusion among the public whenever important legislation is proposed, mentioning contentious issues like the abrogation of Article 370, the Citizenship Amendment Act, the legislation on triple talaq, and the construction of the Ram Temple. Furthermore, Saha addressed concerns regarding the delimitation related to women’s reservation, clarifying that it would be determined by population rather than geographical considerations, thus alleviating fears of reduced representation for the Northeast and southern states. He expressed gratitude to all members present for their contributions during the assembly session and conveyed hope for wider support for women’s reservation initiatives among legislators.

Confident of victory, the AJP chairman brands the exit polls “bogus.”

Guwahati, May 03: Assam Jatiya Parishad president Lurinjoyoti Gogoi has dismissed recent exit poll projections as “totally bogus,” expressing confidence in his party’s victory in the upcoming assembly elections. He accused the polls of being designed to create psychological pressure on party workers and officials, claiming they reflect a “clear agenda” to mislead. Gogoi also criticized the NDA government’s policies over rising fuel prices, emphasizing that they have failed to fulfill promises to lower prices after taking office. He described the on-



going price hikes as a significant concern for the public.

Protests held across Arunachal Pradesh demanding repeal of anti-conversion law

Itanagar, May 03: Large-scale protests were held across different parts of Arunachal Pradesh as members of the Arunachal Christian Forum and other community groups demanded the repeal of the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (APFRA), 1978. Rallies, dharmas, and protest gatherings were organised in several districts including Lower Dibang Valley, West Siang, East Kameng, Kamle, and other areas of the state. Protesters gathered in both urban centres and rural regions carrying banners and placards while raising slogans against the law. In Itanagar, a large number of people assembled to express opposition to the decades-old legislation, which many protesters claimed restricts religious freedom and targets the Christian community. Addressing protesters during a rally in the state capital, ACF president James Techhi Tara said the demand for repeal of the Act had continued for decades without resolution. He said members of the Christian community believed that the law violated constitutional rights related to freedom of religion and freedom of belief in a democratic country. According to him, several rounds of discussions had already taken place between representatives of the organisation and the state government, but no concrete outcome had emerged so far. Protesters at different demonstration sites said the movement would continue peacefully until the government took steps to repeal the legislation.

Participants described the protests as democratic and peaceful demonstrations aimed at drawing attention to what they called a long-pending issue affecting religious freedom in the state. Many speakers at the gatherings said concerns had increased in recent years following discussions surrounding the framing and implementation of rules under the Act. The Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act was

passed in 1978 with the stated aim of preventing religious conversions through force, inducement, or coercion. However, the law has remained controversial for many years, especially among Christian organisations and religious groups that argue the legislation is outdated and vulnerable to misuse. Although the Act was passed decades ago, rules for its implementation were reportedly not framed for a long period, which kept the law largely inactive for years. In recent times, renewed discussions regarding possible implementation of the Act brought the issue back into public debate and triggered fresh protests from Christian groups and civil society organisations. Many organisations opposing the law have argued that such legislation goes against constitutional guarantees related to individual freedom and secular values. At the same time, supporters of the law in the past have maintained that it was designed to prevent forced or manipulated religious conversions and protect indigenous communities. The issue has remained politically and socially sensitive in Arunachal Pradesh because of the state’s diverse tribal and religious composition. The state government has held consultations with different religious bodies, community organisations, and stakeholders regarding the matter, but no final consensus has been reached. In East Siang district, the East Siang Christian Forum organised a peaceful dharna at Pasighat where hundreds of people reportedly gathered to protest against the framing of rules under the Act. During the programme, speakers discussed the history of the legislation and expressed concern over attempts to revive provisions of a law enacted nearly five decades ago. Religious leaders and community representatives who addressed the gathering said they believed the implementation of the law could affect constitutional freedoms and religious rights.

Arunachal Pradesh, three NSCN-K (Niki Sumi) cadres were detained



Itanagar, May 03: Three suspected militants connected to the NSCN-K (Niki Sumi) group were captured in a joint operation by the Assam Rifles and Arunachal Pradesh Police in the Tirap area of Arunachal Pradesh, officials reported on Friday, May 1. Following a quick search and interception operation, the security forces apprehended the three cadres after launching a coordinated operation in the Wancho Colony area of Khonsa in response to particular intelligence inputs. The three people that were taken into custody were Wingan Agan (33), Jhonny Riba (21), and

Rajapeyu Khechan Khete (30). The three were allegedly connected to the NSCN-K (Niki Sumi) group, according to officials. During the operation, the security forces recovered two 7.65 mm pistols along with magazines, nine rounds of live ammunition, three mobile phones, three SIM cards, documents related to the GPRN, and suspected brown sugar estimated to be worth around Rs 500. Officials stated that the arrested individuals, along with the seized items, were handed over to Arunachal Pradesh Police in Khonsa for further legal action and investigation. Security agencies have intensified counter-insurgency operations in Tirap and adjoining districts in recent months as part of efforts to curb militant activities and strengthen security in the region.

Tripura Congress MLA criticizes the Center over the women’s reservation decision look outside of government jobs

Agartala, May 03: On April 30, a new political controversy broke out in Tripura after MLA and senior Congress leader Sudip Roy Barman sharply criticized the Center for implementing the Women’s Reservation law, claiming that it was being used as a political ploy rather than a real step toward women’s empowerment. Roy Barman questioned the goals of the BJP-led central government during the one-day meeting of the Tripura Legislative Assembly, which was called to discuss renewed efforts for constitutional amendments related to the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, also known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. The former minister expressed his displeasure at the Congress’s political marginalization as the BJP claimed credit for the legislation, despite the Congress having started the initiative for a 33 percent reservation for women.

“I am deeply hurt that Congress

started all of these initiatives. Congress also made this 33% reserve. However, BJP officials like Arun Jaitley, Yogi Adityanath, and Sushma Swaraj opposed the Women’s Reservation Bill, protested it, and made comments against it when the Congress proposed this law. During the argument, Roy Barman declared, “I can prove it on the House floor.” He pointed out that while the Women’s Reservation Bill was passed by both treasury and opposition benches in Parliament in September 2023, the official notification was issued only on April 16, 2026. According to the Congress MLA, the delay in notifying the law raised questions over the sincerity of the BJP government and indicated that the move was timed for electoral advantage. They have come here for politics and, by using women and hiding behind them, just for political gains they have brought this delimitation Act,” he alleged. Roy Barman expressed constitutional con-



cerns over the proposed delimitation related to women’s reservation, questioning how it could proceed without repealing Articles 81 and 82 of the Constitution, which govern the allocation and readjustment of parliamentary seats. He warned that smaller northeastern states like Tripura might suffer if delimitation occurs without proper

safeguards, highlighting that no seats were increased in Tripura during the 2011 Census. His statements sparked political reactions, raising concerns about representation and the implementation of the Women’s Reservation law, which aims to reserve one-third of seats for women, contingent on future delimitation after the next Census.

MJ Akbar draws attention to changing global power dynamics

Gauhati University colloquium



Guwahati, May 03: On Thursday, April 30, former Minister of State for External Affairs M. J. Akbar stated that the world order is changing significantly and that it is becoming more difficult for established international organizations to maintain their influence in a world that is becoming more multipolar. At a national conference hosted by Gauhati University on "West Asia in a Fragmented Global Order: Security Dynamics and Economic Implications," Akbar was giving the keynote speech. Vice Chancellor Nani Gopal Mahanta, academi-

cians, policy experts, and other dignitaries attended the ceremony. Akbar noted that old systems of power are starting to erode in the face of shifting geopolitical realities, citing recent developments in the global oil and finance sectors. "The UAE's decision to leave OPEC represents a departure from one of the most important tools of Western influence over the world's oil markets. We have also seen challenges to the dollar's hegemony in recent months.

According to him, "these developments indicate a clear shift, where national in-

terests are beginning to override long-standing, external-driven alignments." Akbar said that organizations that have historically been crucial to upholding international order, like the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, are finding it more and more difficult to impose authority in the face of swift geopolitical changes.

"The world order is again in flux," he remarked, pointing to the return of strategic contestation across regions. Vice Chancellor Mahanta, speaking at the symposium, highlighted what he de-

scribed as mounting pressure on the traditional foundations of American global leadership. He observed that both strategic dominance and ideological influence of the United States are increasingly being questioned in several parts of the world. Referring to developments in West Asia, Mahanta said the United States, long viewed as a principal security provider in the Gulf region, is now facing scrutiny over its role and reliability. He also pointed to emerging differences within Western alliances, suggesting that weakening transatlantic cohesion

could reshape future geopolitical alignments and create space for new power centres.

The symposium also featured a panel discussion on "West Asia in Transition: Power Shifts, Global Rivalries, and India's Strategic Calculus." The discussion brought together experts from academia, security and strategic affairs, including former Assam Director General of Police Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, academicians Subhrajit Konwer and Obja Bora Hazarika from Gauhati University, and strategic affairs expert Abhijan Das. Panelists deliberated on the evolving geopolitical dynamics in West Asia, including intensifying regional rivalries, shifting power structures and their implications for India's foreign policy and economic interests. Speakers underlined the need for a calibrated and pragmatic approach as India engages with a region increasingly shaped by uncertainty, strategic competition and emerging alignments. The symposium concluded with discussions emphasising the role of academic institutions in promoting informed discourse on complex geopolitical and economic developments, particularly in strategically important regions such as West Asia.

BRO hosts a Chief Engineers' Works Conference in Guwahati



Guwahati, May 03: On April 28 and 29, the Border Roads Organization successfully held a two-day Chief Engineers' Works Conference in Guwahati for its projects in the Eastern Region. All seven Chief Engineers in charge of BRO projects in the area, as well as the Commandant of the Engineer Base Workshop, attended the conference, which was presided over by Jitendra Prasad, Additional Director General Border Roads (East). Developing ways to effectively accomplish project milestones and outlining the current fiscal year's plan were the conference's main goals. There were in-

depth talks about enhancing operational effectiveness, maximizing resource use, and guaranteeing the timely completion of vital infrastructure projects. Special emphasis was placed on adopting best practices to enhance execution timelines and overall project delivery. Addressing the participants, the Additional DGBR (East) highlighted the importance of accelerating work progress while maintaining high-quality standards across all projects. He noted that quality infrastructure is essential not only for operational effectiveness but also for maintaining public trust and organisational credibility.

AIUDF leader backs independent vote counting

Guwahati, May 03: Senior AIUDF leader Rafiqul Islam addressed the controversy over the Election Commission of India's appointment of counting supervisors in West Bengal. He stated that opposition parties, including the Trinamool Congress (TMC), have raised concerns, leading the TMC to approach the Supreme Court, though they received no special relief. Islam criticized the Election Commission for adopting procedures in West Bengal that were inconsistent with those in other states, creating mistrust among opposition parties regarding the electoral process. He urged the Commission to ensure independent and transparent counting on May 4. Regarding Assam's political landscape, Islam reasserted AIUDF's intention to support a non-BJP government and expressed confidence in winning 10 to 12 seats, indicating the party's willingness to engage constructively in post-election developments.



Arunachal Pradesh's Papum Pare administration is stepping up its campaign against unauthorized land encroachment



Itanagar, May 03: In order to protect government land and stop illegal encroachment throughout the district, the Papum Pare District Administration in Arunachal Pradesh has stepped up its efforts. Administrative officers and representatives from the Land Department attended a critical review

meeting on Tuesday in Yupia, which was presided over by Deputy Commissioner Lobsang Tsering. The Deputy Commissioner gave officers instructions at the meeting to take prompt, severe action against encroachers, including issuing new notices and enforcing the law. He emphasized

the significance of taking aggressive steps to stop new encroachments on government land, rigorous adherence to necessary timelines, and thorough diligence when issuing notices.

The DC further stated that in areas lacking proper demarcation, authorities would adopt an "as-is-where-is"

approach using available records for verification and enforcement purposes.

Officials highlighted several challenges, including the absence of proper demarcation and lack of base land records in some areas. SDO Domukh Kipa Raja stressed the need for re-verification of land belonging to Rajiv Gandhi University and also raised concerns regarding Land Possession Certificate (LPC) related issues in certain locations. ADC Balijan Takar Rava, ADC Kimin Ocean Gao, I/C ADC Sagalee Aying Perme, and DLRSO Tenzin Tashi also shared concerns from their respective jurisdictions.

Estate Officer Tame Yajum informed the meeting that pending funds have stalled further demarcation work and sought intervention for early resolution to continue the exercise.

In Manipur, the United Naga Council delegation meets with the Assam Rifles

Assam Rifles held a meeting with a delegation of the United Naga Council (UNC) at its Jawalamukhi Garrison in Senapati district of Manipur on Tuesday, focusing on the prevailing security situation in the region.

Shillong, Apr 26: On Tuesday, the Assam Rifles conducted a meeting with a delegation from the United Naga Council (UNC) at the Jawalamukhi Garrison, located in the Senapati district of Manipur.

The meeting was led by UNC president NG Lorho and primarily focused on the current security situation in the region, particularly the escalating ten-



sions in the Ukhrul area. Both parties engaged in discussions regarding issues of peace, stability, and the welfare of local communities, sharing their perspectives on the challenges encountered locally.

The Assam Rifles emphasized its commitment to maintaining law and order, ensuring the safety of all communities, and

fostering an environment conducive to dialogue and harmony.

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing a mutual intention to enhance understanding, avert further escalation of tensions, and collaboratively strive towards restoring normalcy in the region, as highlighted in a press release following the event.

Kekhriesilie Rio of Nagaland wins the French Grand Prix

Kohima, May 03: Kekhriesilie Rio, an equestrian athlete from Nagaland, made history in Indian equestrian sport by winning the Haras de Livardy Grand Prix in France while riding Presley OL.

The triumph in the esteemed international showjumping competition is regarded as a key turning point for Indian equestrian sports, and Abu Metha, a prominent Vice-President of the Athletics Federation of India, called the accomplishment "a remarkable moment for Indian showjumping."

Rio's triumph showed how young athletes may achieve the highest levels of greatness when given the correct opportunities, according to Metha, who shared images from the competition. He thanked the cyclist and urged him to keep aiming higher while making Nagaland proud. Rio's rise in equestrian sport has



been marked by consistent performances over the years. In 2014-15, he secured third place in the Individual category at the Junior National Equestrian Championship (Endurance) held in Dibrugarh. He later emerged as the Junior National Equestrian Championship (Show Jumping) winner in Kolkata in 2018, earning the national title. His international breakthrough came in 2019 when he finished second at the Asian Equestrian Federa-

tion Junior/Young Jumping Challenge. In 2020, Rio delivered another major performance at the FEI World Show Jumping Challenge in Bengaluru, where he was ranked No. 2 globally and No. 1 in Asia in Category A. In 2021, he added another podium finish at the National Equestrian Championship (Senior) in New Delhi in the Puissance jumping event, reinforcing his reputation as one of India's leading equestrian talents.

No closure of schools and colleges in Tripura despite bad weather, says CM Manik Saha

Agartala, May 03: Amid ongoing adverse weather conditions in Tripura, Chief Minister Manik Saha on April 29 announced that schools, colleges and Anganwadi centres across the state will remain open for now, saying the situation is currently under control. The Chief Minister made the announcement after reviewing the weather situation and its impact during a meeting held around 4:30 pm.

According to officials, the government has been closely monitoring developments in different parts of the state following reports of heavy rainfall and weather-related disruptions. Dr Saha said that although the weather situation remains challenging in some areas, there is no immediate need to suspend academic activities at present. He, however, assured that the government is keeping a close watch on the situation and is prepared to take further steps if conditions worsen.

The Chief Minister directed all concerned departments to stay alert and ensure public safety in vulnerable areas. He instructed officials to take immediate measures to reduce the impact of the adverse weather and ensure that relief support reaches affected people without delay. Officials have also been asked to



maintain coordination among departments and respond quickly wherever emergency intervention is required. Dr Saha said the state government is committed to effective disaster management and timely assistance for people affected by the bad weather. He stated that district administrations, the Tripura State Disaster Management Authority and the

police department are actively working to manage the situation and prevent further damage. The Chief Minister also reviewed preparedness measures being taken in districts that are vulnerable to flooding, landslides and storm-related incidents. During the review, the government confirmed that one person had lost his life in the Longtharai Valley area

due to the adverse weather situation. Expressing concern over the incident, Dr Saha directed the administration to provide compensation and necessary assistance to the affected family at the earliest. He also instructed officials to ensure that every affected person receives proper support and relief assistance without unnecessary delays.

Bunkers Destroyed and Arms Recovered in Manipur



Imphal, May 03: Security forces have destroyed 23 illegally constructed bunkers and recovered a cache of arms and explosives during separate operations in Manipur’s Ukhrul district and Tengnoupal district, police said on Saturday, May 2. According to police, the bunkers were demolished on Thursday during coordinated operations in the hill villages of Mongkot Chepu, Shongphel, Mulum, Sirarakhong, and Ringue under Litan police station limits in Ukhrul district. During the operation, security personnel seized a 12-bore pump-action gun, 17 cartridges of different calibres, and 111 empty fired bullet cases from the area. Ukhrul district has witnessed recurring violence since February following clashes between the Tangkhul Naga and Kuki

communities. At least seven people have been killed in separate firing incidents, and more than 30 houses have reportedly been burned during the unrest. In another operation on Wednesday, security forces recovered arms and explosives from T Bongmol village under the Moreh police station area in Tengnoupal district. The recovered items included two single-barrel rifles, four 9mm pistols with magazines, and 18 improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The explosives were safely destroyed on-site following standard procedures. Security forces have intensified search and area domination operations across vulnerable and fringe areas of Manipur amid ongoing ethnic tensions and concerns over illegal arms and fortified positions in conflict-affected regions.

PM Modi will unveil projects worth Rs 8,000 crore in Telangana On May 10



New Delhi, May 03: On May 10, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Telangana for the first time since taking office for a third term in order to dedicate and inaugurate development projects totaling Rs 8,000 crore. According to sources who spoke to NDTV, the visit is anticipated to combine an infrastructural drive with a significant political

outreach, with a sizable public gathering called the “Janagraha Sabha” scheduled for Secunderabad’s Parade Ground. New facilities at AIIMS Bibinagar, the development of MMTS Phase 2, and the construction of national highways and railroads are some of the major projects in the works.

After arriving at Begumpet Air-

port, the prime minister will participate in official events where a number of initiatives will be introduced or dedicated to the country. For the public gathering, the BJP has created a comprehensive mobilization strategy with the goal of drawing almost two lakh attendees. It is the responsibility of party leaders at all levels to guarantee voter turnout in

their constituencies, with a particular emphasis on the Greater Hyderabad area. The visit comes at a crucial time for the party in Telangana, with civic elections on the horizon.

The BJP is looking to build on its previous performance in the GHMC polls, where it secured 48 seats and narrowly missed out on the mayor’s post. With discussions around administrative restructuring into multiple corporations, the next round of elections is expected to be closely contested.

The rally is likely to serve as a platform to highlight development projects backed by the Centre in Telangana, while also sharpening the party’s political messaging. The Prime Minister is expected to speak on governance, welfare initiatives and infrastructure growth, while also taking aim at the ruling Congress over its poll promises and governance record, and revisiting issues linked to the previous BRS government. With a focus on both development and political consolidation, the BJP is treating the visit as a key moment to energise its cadre and expand its base in Hyderabad ahead of high-stakes local body elections.

ISRO Acquires Russian 3D Printer

New Delhi, May 03: Russia, India’s all-weather ally, won a worldwide competitive competition and provided a sophisticated 3D printer that can print everything but banknotes. India intends to utilize the printer to produce high-quality components for its next lunar and human space missions. Critical parts manufactured using cutting-edge Russian 3D printing technology could soon be used in India’s ambitious human space-flight and lunar exploration programs.A heavy-duty industrial 3D printer has been successfully supplied and put into service in India by the Russian state-owned nuclear and technology giant Rosatom. According to ISRO, this machine will greatly improve its capacity to quickly produce large and complex metal components for missions like Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan, and the proposed Bharatiya Antariksh Space Station. The Rus-Beam 2800 is a piece of equipment provided by Rosatom’s Fuel Division, which oversees the company’s additive manufacturing division.

The printer will be used to produce metal parts for India’s aerospace industry using Electron Beam Additive Manufacturing (EBAM) technology. An international competitive tender was used to award the contract, highlighting Rosatom’s rise to prominence in industrial-scale additive manufacturing worldwide. In 2025 a similar large-scale electron beam 3D printer during a visit to Russia last year, where Rosatom showcased how such systems could produce massive aerospace-grade components as single-piece structures, reducing the need for welding and assembly. The deployment of comparable technology in India now



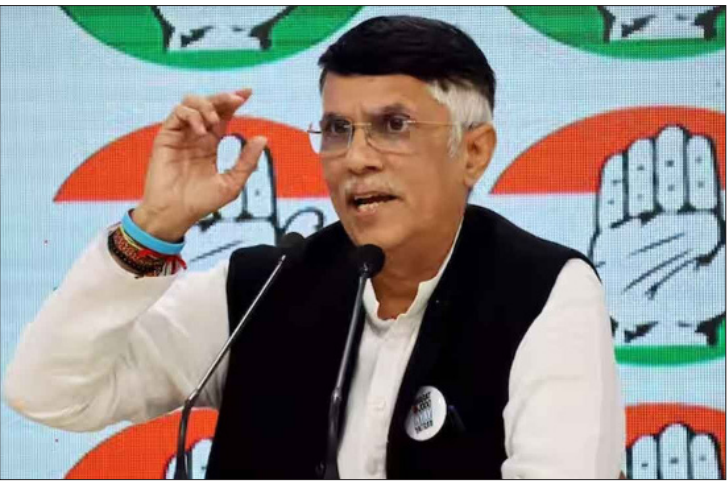
signals a major step toward bringing that capability directly into ISRO’s production ecosystem.“These 3D printing units are so advanced that they can print anything except currency notes, which only the federal bank does,” said Ilya Vladimirovich Kavelashvili, director, Additive Manufacturing Business Unit, at Rosatom State Corporation in Moscow. 3D printing isn’t science fiction any longer. For ISRO, the acquisition represents not just another machine, but a strategic capability upgrade at a time when India is preparing for long-duration human spaceflight and more ambitious deep-space missions. According to the Indian space agency, the EBAM system opens the door to producing large aerospace components faster, lighter, and with far greater material efficiency.India’s IIT Madras-incubated start-up Agnikul Cosmos Pvt. Limited has already deployed a 3D printer, which it uses to make small rocket engines, including cryogenic engine components.“The high deposition rate and vacuum-controlled environment of the

EBAM machine from Rosatom represent a significant leap in ISRO’s capability to fabricate large-scale, near-net-shape components from advanced titanium alloys, super alloys, and refractory alloys,” said Dr. Vessangi Anilkumar, Deputy General Manager at the ISRO’s Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, and head of its Additive Manufacturing Research and Development Center.By drastically reducing lead times for complex aerospace structures, the technology could transform how mission-critical hardware is produced. “By integrating this critical technology, we can drastically reduce lead times for aerospace structures while ensuring the material integrity required for the extreme conditions of space,” Dr. Anilkumar said. He added that the system would be “a cornerstone in achieving the rapid prototyping and production goals essential for our future orbital infrastructure and deep-space missions like Gaganyaan, Bharatiya Antariksh Space Station, and Chandrayaan missions.

Pawan Khera is granted pre-arrest bail

Remarks Against Himanta Sarma’s Wife

New Delhi, May 03: Congressman Pawan Khera was granted anticipatory bail by the Supreme Court in connection with allegedly derogatory remarks made against Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, the wife of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Khera was ordered by the court to assist with the investigation, show up when called, and not tamper with or influence the evidence.Khera was also informed that he needs a court’s approval to leave the nation. Additionally, the Supreme Court instructed the trial court to ignore any documents or facts mentioned during the bail hearing and reserved the right to amend these terms if necessary. Following a hearing in which both parties made forceful statements, the court postponed its decision until Thursday. Speaking on behalf of Khera, senior attorney Abhishek Manu Singhvi referred to the Chief Minister as the “boss of the boss of the boss of the prosecutor” and described this as a “unprecedented case”. The allusion was to remarks made by Sarma that Singhvi refused to quote in court, referring to them as “unprintable” and settling for informing the judge that his client had received a life sentence threat. “Dr Ambedkar would turn in his grave if he imagined that a constitutional office-holder would speak like a cowboy or Rambo,” Singhvi said. Singhvi also pointed out the bulk of charges against his client



were defamation and reputational damage, and neither called for arrest or custodial interrogation, as had been sought.

“Let me assume I am convicted ultimately...” he said, “But where is the necessity of arrest? What is there in the case which cannot be done without an arrest? In response, Mehta insisted custodial interrogation of Khera is needed to establish the source of photographs and documents the Congress leader offered to back up his statements about the Chief Minister’s wife.

The Solicitor General referred darkly to “foreign elements interfering with our elections (Assam voted April 9)” and also claimed Khera had been “absconding”. Khera approached the top court after the

Gauhati High Court denied his plea last week, ruling the senior Congress leader is a ‘flight risk’ and faces serious charges, including cheating and forgery. It also reasoned the alleged comments were directed at a private individual - the Chief Minister’s wife - and not Sarma himself, which could have been labelled ‘political rhetoric’. Accordingly, the Gauhati High Court ruled that custodial interrogation of Khera is required to establish the source and authenticity of documents he cited to make his allegations. The case follows an April 4 press conference in which Pawan Khera alleged Chief Minister Himanta Sarma’s wife held passports from three countries. He also accused Riniki Sarma of involvement in illegal activities.

Bangladesh summons the acting Indian envoy due to comments made by the Assam chief minister

Bangladesh called the acting Indian envoy after Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma’s remarks sparked concern. Both nations stressed dialogue to maintain friendly ties.

Guwahati, May 03: In order to publicly protest recent comments purportedly made by Himanta Biswa Sarma about the return of alleged illegal immigrants from Assam, the Bangladeshi government has called in acting Indian High Commissioner Pawan Badhe. On the afternoon of April 30, the acting Indian envoy was reportedly summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka, where Bangladeshi officials expressed their disapproval



of the remarks and emphasized the necessity of avoiding remarks that might harm bilateral relations between the

two nations. The diplomatic move comes after the Chief Minister of Assam declared on

April 26 that 20 foreigners had been arrested in Assam and “pushed back to Bangladesh.” In a post on social media platform X, Sarma had said, “Rude people don’t understand soft language,” while referring to action against alleged infiltrators.

Bangladesh reportedly described such public remarks as “counterproductive” and cautioned that statements on sensitive bilateral matters should be handled with restraint to preserve the cooperative relationship shared by the neighbouring countries.The latest development comes amid evolving diplomatic dynamics between India and Bangladesh following recent political changes in Dhaka, even as both countries continue engagement on trade, connectivity, and regional cooperation.

Lower Siang Police steps up their war on drugs



Itanagar, May 03: Following the recent appointment of a new Superintendent of Police and Deputy Superintendent of Police to the district, Lower Siang Police in Arunachal Pradesh has stepped up enforcement efforts at the Likabali Check Gate.

According to police, four cases under the NDPS Act were registered as a result of a number of targeted operations carried out in April 2026. In the latest operation carried out on April 29 at around 3:30 pm, police intercepted one individual identified as Semmar Basar, a res-

ident of Nyigam Village in Leparada district, on suspicion at the Likabali Check Gate.

A search was conducted following legal procedures in the presence of an Executive Magistrate and independent witnesses, during which suspected heroin and cannabis were recovered from his possession.Following the seizure, Likabali Police registered Likabali PS Case No. 14/2026 under Sections 21(a) and 20(b) (ii)(A) of the NDPS Act, and further investigation is underway. Police informed that over the past one month, five persons

have been arrested in separate anti-drug operations, with seizures amounting to 12.64 grams of suspected heroin and 106 grams of cannabis.In addition to narcotics enforcement, authorities also intensified Inner Line Permit (ILP) verification drives. As part of the ILP checking campaign, 15 non-FIR cases were registered under Section 3 of the BEFR Act at Likabali and Nari Police Stations.Police stated that Lower Siang Police remains committed to combating drug trafficking and ensuring strict compliance with lawful entry regulations in the district.

Governor interacts with IAS probationers of Assam-Meghalaya cadre

Guwahati, May 03: Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya interacted with five IAS probationers of the Assam–Meghalaya cadre who paid a courtesy visit to Lok Bhavan in Guwahati as part of their orientation programme on Thursday. While interacting with the Probationary Officers, the Governor congratulated them on joining the prestigious civil service. Highlighting the importance of citizen-centric governance, the Governor urged the young officers to ensure effective implementation of government schemes, particularly for the welfare of the most vulnerable sections of society.

The Governor stressed the need to uphold the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability in public service. Underscoring the relevance of the principle “Reform, Perform, Transform,” he encouraged the officers to bring innovation and efficiency in governance. He also highlighted the ever-evolving role of technology, including digital governance and emerging tools, in making administration more responsive, transparent and effective. The Commissioner and Secretary to the Governor, S.S Meenakshi Sundaram, OSD to the Governor Prof. Bechan Lal, Joint Director of Training, AASC,



Dimple Baruah, and officials of Lok Bhavan were present.

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Editorial

Dy. Chairman

In a notable development within India’s parliamentary system, Harivansh Narayan Singh has been re-elected unopposed as the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha for a third consecutive term, reflecting a consensus across political parties. His election, moved by Leader of the House J. P. Nadda, was adopted without contest, highlighting the trust placed in his leadership. As a seasoned parliamentarian with a background in journalism, Harivansh’s role has become increasingly vital amid the complexities of legislative agendas and political exchanges. Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended Harivansh’s experience and commitment, noting that his re-election is a testament to the respect he garners across party lines. Modi underscored the Rajya Sabha’s improved effectiveness under Harivansh’s stewardship, fostering productive debates while maintaining decorum. He encouraged collective responsibility among Members of Parliament to enhance the quality of legislative processes, elevating public trust in the institution. Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge congratulated Harivansh and acknowledged the importance of his unique position as the first nominated Deputy Chairman. He raised concerns regarding the long-standing vacancy of the Deputy Speaker’s role in the Lok Sabha, emphasizing the need for balance in presiding officers’ functions. Kharge urged Harivansh to ensure opposition voices are heard adequately, crucial for maintaining the foundation of parliamentary democracy. The unopposed election is viewed as recognition of Harivansh’s impartiality and procedural adherence, as he has been instrumental in navigating sensitive issues throughout his previous tenures.

Putin in Delhi: India’s role in a shattered global system

When Vladimir Putin arrives in New Delhi in December 2025, his visit will signify more than just a continuation of a long-standing partnership; it will occur amid three intertwining crises. These crises include the protracted war in Ukraine edging towards negotiations, deteriorating India-U.S. relations due to tariffs and Russian oil, and a fracturing global order characterized by emerging power centers. Observers are questioning whether India is enhancing its ties with Moscow as the West seeks a dignified exit from the Ukraine conflict, or if it is asserting independence against U.S. tariff pressures, or positioning itself strategically for a post-war world. Analysts like Michael Kugelman describe this scenario as a “Putin conundrum” for India; any step towards deepening relations with Russia risks straining ties with Washington, while yielding to U.S. demands could undermine India’s strategic interests. Former Indian Defence Attaché Maj Gen Deepak Mehra posits that Putin’s visit represents a pivotal Russian shift from a focus on Europe towards a broader Eurasian strategy, with India as a crucial component.

This visit follows several significant developments:

1. Russia has regained battlefield initiative and is negotiating from a position of strength, rather than weakness.
2. The United States, under Trump, has imposed tariffs of up to 50% on Indian goods, aimed partly at penalizing India for purchasing Russian oil, leading to a severe crisis in bilateral relations.
3. A peace framework for Ukraine, backed by Trump, is being discussed, which appears less about justice and more about stabilizing the conflict in a manner acceptable to Russia and viable for the West.

Putin will be perceived not as an isolated pariah, but rather as a leader aware of favorable shifting geopolitical dynamics. For India, maintaining a balance between relations with both Russia and the West is complicated by the Ukraine war, placing New Delhi under dual pressures. The availability of discounted Russian oil has significantly helped control inflation and support economic growth, making Russia a vital supplier. However, such trade has drawn intense criticism from the U.S. and Europe, resulting in significant tariffs and

potential for secondary sanctions, framed by Washington as Indian support for Russia’s war. Conversely, Moscow regards India as essential to its Eurasian strategy. India’s market size and strategic location prevent Russia from becoming overly reliant on China, with organizations like BRICS, SCO, and the Eurasian Economic Union reinforcing a Russia oriented towards the east and south, in which India plays a unique role. The upcoming summit symbolizes the clash of these conflicting interests publicly. Putin’s agenda during his visit extends beyond mere reassurances to a traditional ally and is focused on hard security, aiming to solidify long-term defense cooperation through initiatives like co-developing military platforms and stabilizing energy flows amidst sanctions. On the economic front, Russia is likely to propose collaboration in areas like critical minerals and rare earths—resources that align with India’s industrial objectives—and possibly facilitate labor mobility to alleviate Russia’s demographic challenges using skilled Indian workers. Politically, the summit can be perceived as Russia’s attempt to demonstrate to the West that it retains significant partnerships and to indicate to China that Moscow has alternatives beyond its alliance with Beijing. In the context of the 2025 US-India trade and diplomatic crisis, characterized by American concerns over India’s financial support for Russia during the Ukraine war, Trump’s tariffs have been employed as a strategic tool tied to India’s oil imports from Russia.

Despite this tension, the US acknowledges that India’s energy policies have helped stabilize global oil prices and sees India as vital for an effective Indo-Pacific strategy against China, as well as preferring a stable Russia during peace negotiations in Europe. India’s geopolitical positioning is under scrutiny during its engagement in the US-India trade and diplomatic crisis, particularly in light of accusations that it has funded Russia’s war in Ukraine. The US, particularly under Trump’s administration, has leveraged tariffs as a means to exert pressure on India regarding its Russian oil imports. Despite these tensions, there are three critical realities recognized by the US: India’s influence on stabilizing global oil prices at a time when Western economies faced potential shocks, its cen-

trality in the Indo-Pacific strategy aimed at counterbalancing China, and the necessity for a stable Russia during sensitive peace negotiations in Europe. This complex dynamic may lead to a cautious US approach, where public disdain is tempered by strategic restraint, as punishing India could further alienate New Delhi. In the context of the ongoing Ukraine conflict, there are unspoken expectations for India to assume a stabilizing role as the conflict approaches a potential negotiation. India, viewed by Russia as a sympathetic interlocutor, might resonate with Moscow on matters such as NATO expansion and sanctions, driven by its historical understanding of power dynamics. Meanwhile, from the Western perspective, India’s unique position of being able to engage with both Russia and Ukraine provides opportunities for diplomatic communication. Western diplomats may hope for India to advocate for respecting ceasefire agreements, de-escalation of nuclear rhetoric, and urging Russia to lessen its dependency on China in any post-war scenario.

Notably, Prime Minister Modi has previously engaged with Putin to emphasize the message of peace. Reactions from China and Pakistan underscore the international context of India’s position. China is likely to monitor India’s relationship with Russia, as the latter’s isolation has increased Beijing’s leverage. Nevertheless, China’s reaction will balance its interest in Russia’s economic outreach to India against the backdrop of maintaining a solid partnership with Russia. Conversely, Pakistan finds itself marginally observing India’s growing role in international discussions, recognizing a shift in regional dynamics that has relegated its own significance. For India, the challenge lies in leveraging the upcoming visit of Putin to enhance its strategic position without exacerbating vulnerabilities. Steps to achieve this include fortifying energy and defense ties with Russia, while assuring the US that these relationships will not undermine Western interests. Furthermore, India must utilize its access to both Russian and Western leaders to advocate for a realistic peace process in Ukraine—one that respects Russia’s concerns without endorsing its aggressive endeavors and that seeks to restore stability in Europe, allowing a redirection of global focus towards the Indo-Pacific.

Britain’s fragile systems: when global shocks hit your shopping bill

The Bank of England’s warning this week that food inflation might hit 7% by the end of the year demonstrated how little separates Britain from a domestic crisis and a geopolitical shock. A shock wave in the Gulf contributes to declining earnings, sluggish growth, and job losses through the prices of petroleum, fertilizer, and groceries. It reveals a system that cannot withstand disruption in addition to inflation. The Bank is correct that interest rates have little effect on the price of energy globally. Raising them won’t make the shock go away. In order to prevent greater costs from becoming institutionalized, rate hikes instead redistribute the impact by compressing wages and discouraging investment. In actuality, what looks like inflation is the cost of being dependent on the Hormuz Strait. It is obvious that the stability of the UK depends on the security that the nation has not yet included into its infrastructure. Although it is vulnerable, Britain is not weak. Its main industries—finance, energy, data, and food—are closely related and have narrow profit margins. Why didn’t the UK have any reserves if fertilizer is so important? Because buffer stockpiles are viewed as wasteful and efficiency has been deemed more significant than resilience. In the past, Europe spent to strengthen its food system’s resilience. It might have to do it once more. The more connected modern life becomes, the more vulnerable it is. Last year, security researchers showed how a “poisoned” calendar invite could hijack Google’s Gemini AI chatbot to control lights, shutters and boilers in a home. In the hands of a hostile state, such exploits could bring Britain to a halt. National security depends on the integrity of civilian digital infrastructure. This was part

of the message in a speech by Fiona Hill, one of the co-authors of the UK’s 2025 strategic defence review. Her warning to Britain was that the public is already exposed to forms of war; it’s just that people don’t recognise them as such. The systems that sustain daily life – including communications and healthcare – are vulnerable to disruption from hacking, subversion and economic coercion. Ms Hill argued that citizens should be primed for privation or participation, but not for trench warfare. She wanted to refocus on the threats today. The UK, she warned, has “already experienced sabotage and cyber-attacks by Russia”. She said the UK homeland is “back on the pitch” as the rules-based order is dismantled by Donald Trump and the US retreats from guaranteeing European security. The task is to face rising instability and change the public mindset without turning society into a security project. Instinctively, the world feels better when butter is preferred over guns. But such a choice perhaps belongs to an earlier age. In a world of hybrid warfare, the distinction between civilian welfare and national defence is rapidly eroding. The question is no longer whether to prioritise butter or guns, but how to defend the systems that make both possible. Ms Hill’s approach needs a political narrative that Britain lacks: one that links security to the economy and everyday life. Ed Miliband, the energy secretary, has come closest to developing one. UK politics is largely focused on the cost of living, NHS waiting lists and immigration, not resilience or systemic risks. Without a shift, the policies that Ms Hill advocates risk appearing abstract or alarmist. That would make it harder to build public



consent for the structural changes that her speech implies.

IndiaAI Mission

In a significant effort to assert India’s leadership in artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies, the IndiaAI Mission has unveiled the ten start-ups selected for the second cohort of its IndiaAI Start-ups Global Acceleration Programme. This initiative aims to foster high-potential ventures by providing them with structured mentorship, global exposure, and access to premier innovation ecosystems, per the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. The selected startups showcase a rich diversity across sectors like Health-Tech, ClimateTech, Ed-Tech, Satellite Intelligence, and Cognitive AI, reflecting India’s potential in utilizing AI to tackle complex issues and generate economic growth. The selection process involved a rigorous, multi-stage evaluation to identify startups with strong technological bases and scalable business models capable of making a global impact. This selection underscores the government’s dedication to cultivating a robust pipeline of AI-driven enterprises that can vie with global leaders. The programme is structured into an immersive journey that starts with a three-week online preparation phase,

wherein participants receive guidance on global market dynamics, investor readiness, and effective business strategies. This is followed by a three-month residency in Paris, where startups immerse themselves in one of Europe’s prominent startup ecosystems, benefiting from mentorship, hands-on experience, and networking opportunities with investors and partners. The residency is hosted in collaboration with Station F, the largest startup campus globally, and HEC Paris, a top business education institution, which provide critical resources and expertise to enhance the initiative. This programme aligns with India’s National AI Strategy, emphasizing cross-border collaboration, knowledge exchange, and integration with global markets as pivotal for enhancing innovation and competitiveness. It seeks to position India not only as a consumer but also as a major producer and exporter of advanced AI solutions aimed at resolving global challenges in healthcare, climate change, and sustainable development. Furthermore, this initiative is vital in bridging domestic innovation with global market access, as many startups struggle with regulatory, customer,

Demands for a humanitarian corridor across the Strait of Hormuz as the Iran War affects essential aid

The most vulnerable people are suffering as a result of the volatility of oil prices brought on by the US and Israel’s assault on Iran, which slows or prevents the delivery of food and medical assistance to them. Aid groups are now demanding the opening of a “humanitarian corridor” across the Hormuz Strait due to the skyrocketing cost of transportation. The International Rescue Committee’s (IRC) vice president for emergencies, Bob Kitchen, urged “serious and immediate conversations about humanitarian corridors through the strait of Hormuz so, at the very least, we can get supplies that are currently stuck in humanitarian hubs through the strait to resupply.” Essential medications are not leaving important hubs. The IRC was unable to obtain \$130,000 (£96,000) worth of goods that are needed by 20,000 people in Sudan because of shipping delays. Government oil rations in Ethiopia and Nigeria forced the humanitarian aid organization to restrict the use of generators in its medical facilities. “If this continues, we’ll have to shut off the electricity in some parts of hospitals to keep more important things running,” Kitchen stated. He claimed that relief organizations were rapidly depleting their finances. “Buying fuel to run our operations, moving commodities, and moving personnel around many of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa is more expensive,” he stated. Cecile Terraz, director at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said: “The reality here is that it’s 100% sure that the increase of oil

price is affecting the lives of people and also our operations.” Since the conflict began in February, oil prices have fluctuated, peaking at almost \$120 a barrel, up from \$60 at the start of the year, as the US and Iran took turns at closing and blockading the strait of Hormuz shipping channel. Limiting the number of cargo ships passing through the 5km-wide passage has had an extraordinary global impact, reducing the global supply of oil, food, fertiliser and medicine, and driven up the price of what is available. The current cost of oil, a primary source of fuel, is nearly \$111 a barrel. Big aid agencies, still reeling from US and European funding cuts, have been badly caught out, because many export humanitarian products including food and medicines from hubs in India and Dubai to communities in need, many of which are in Africa. Estimates by Save the Children found every \$5 increase per barrel of oil cost the charity an additional \$340,000 a month in shipping costs, fuel, food and medical supplies over what was budgeted for at the start of the year. That was equivalent to a month of aid for nearly 40,000 children, said the agency’s director of global supply, Willem Zuidema. If oil prices remained at about \$100 for the rest of 2026, it would cost the charity an extra \$27m this year, he said. The disruption meant 45 million more people could go hungry, according to the World Food Programme (WFP), in addition to the 318 million people already considered food insecure before February’s attacks. “We are being squeezed from both ends. While

world leaders are cutting aid budgets, conflict is driving up the cost of every shipment, every sachet of food, every medical kit we send,” said Zuidema. The US cut its foreign assistance by 57% in 2025, while UK aid last year was at its lowest since 2008. Norway, Germany and France have all slashed their aid budgets. In Yemen, where, after more than a decade of war, nearly half the population is in need of aid, the cost of shipping in goods has risen by up to 20%, because of fuel costs, according to Save the Children’s estimates. Food prices there have risen by 30%. In Somalia, Robyn Savage, Care’s humanitarian director, said the cost of importing key medications for acute malnutrition in children had tripled since the conflict began. “This means there is less medication available for those children, and that will result in fewer children being able to be treated,” she said. The country, which is experiencing severe drought, has also seen the prices of basic foods rise by 20% as fuel prices drive up transportation costs, according to the World Food Programme (WFP). In Myanmar, a basket of goods was up by 19%. And the cost of getting food into landlocked Afghanistan had tripled, said John Aylieff, the WFP’s Afghanistan country director. The WFP’s supply of fortified biscuits was having to be transported by road through seven countries from Dubai to Afghanistan to avoid the usual route via the strait of Hormuz, said Aylieff, taking three weeks longer than usual. “Afghan children today are going hungry as a result,” Aylieff said, adding that many

could die. Another spokesperson at the WFP, the world’s largest humanitarian organisation, told the Guardian that the organisation had estimated the oil price increase meant it would not be able to reach approximately 1.5 million people around the world in the coming months. The UN agency is working to re-route about 93,000 tonnes of food, such as fortified biscuits and nutrition supplements, destined for communities with urgent needs, including refugees from the war in Sudan – the world’s largest humanitarian emergency – a significant cost and delay. It is not only ships routed through the strait of Hormuz being held up, they explained, but all shipping throughout the region was feeling the impact of the resulting widespread congestion at sea. For example, supplies from manufacturing hubs in India typically sail from a port near Mumbai to Oman to Jeddah through the strait of Bab el-Mandeb and on to Port Sudan. Now due to risk and congestion, they sail around the Cape of Good Hope through the Mediterranean to the Suez canal and then on to Jeddah, adding 9,000km and several weeks on the journey. In Bangladesh, the world’s largest development NGO, Brac, said its staff were spending five hours a week queueing for rationed fuel, reducing the amount of time they could spend working in refugee communities. Even if a ceasefire held, Savage warned of ramifications for months to come. “We haven’t even seen the tip of the damage that’s already been incurred.”

In FY26, like-for-like GST growth drops to a five-year low of 5.57%



Mumbai: Gross revenues from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in Fiscal Year 2025-26 (FY26) grew at a five-year low of 5.57% to Rs 23.32 trillion, compared to Rs 22.09 trillion in FY25. This marks the lowest growth since a contraction in 2020-21, indicating a significant deceleration after periods of strong double-digit growth. Import revenues surged by 12.8%, revealing a widening gap between domestic revenue growth of 3.27% and external sources. The Finance Ministry separated cess receipts from overall GST tallies in November 2025, affecting growth rate comparisons. Officially, gross collections increased by 8.3% to Rs 22.27 trillion (excluding cess), while net GST revenue rose by 4% to Rs 2.03 trillion, after accounting for Rs 2.98 trillion in refunds. Excluding cess, net collections grew by 7.1% to Rs 19.35 trillion, with refunds up by 17.8%. Import-driven collections primarily fueled growth, as Integrated Goods and Ser-

vices Tax (IGST) from imports rose 14.1% to Rs 5.95 trillion, with overall IGST growth at 9.4%. Domestic gross revenue grew modestly by 6.4% to Rs 16.32 trillion, driven by Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) increasing by 7.3% and State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) rising by 6.6%. Refunds to taxpayers substantially increased, particularly on domestic transactions, leading to a total refund amount of Rs 2.92 trillion, a 17.8% rise. Haryana was notable for its strong SGST growth, while states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha experienced declines in SGST collections. The overall landscape highlighted significant disparities across both sources and states. Experts suggest that while GST collections have remained stable, future policy changes should analyze the discrepancies in monthly revenue collections across states to enhance decision-making and improve financial results in FY27.

Flipkart adds senior hires as it prepares for potential IPO next year

New Delhi: As it gets ready for its next stage of expansion and a possible IPO as early as next year, Flipkart is still bolstering its leadership bench. The e-commerce company has named Varun Gupta as vice president of corporate development and Sharayu Jadhav as vice president of legal. As Flipkart moves into its next stage of expansion within India's digital ecosystem, these appointments highlight the company's ongoing focus on developing institutional depth, bolstering governance frameworks, and improving strategic competencies to produce long-term value. "A key component of our scaling strategy is developing institutional depth. According to Seema Nair, chief human resources officer at Flipkart, "Sharayu and Varun's combined expertise, from managing strict legal frameworks to navigating complex acquisitions, will significantly contribute to this journey of growth." Jadhav returned to Flipkart following senior leadership roles at Acko and Razorpay, where she oversaw legal governance and cross-border transactions. During her earlier stint with Flipkart, she handled legal responsibilities across Wholesale and Myntra. As vice president, legal, Jadhav will lead the legal framework for marketplace, supply chain, data privacy, technology law, and labour and employment. Her role is focused on strengthening legal strategy and

enabling business execution within a robust governance structure. Sharayu Jadhav, vice president, legal, Flipkart Group, said, "Flipkart operates at the intersection of scale, innovation, and an evolving regulatory landscape. I am excited to be back with the company and look forward to strengthening the legal frameworks that support large-scale digital operations. The objective is to enable seamless business execution while ensuring strong compliance and legal rigour across all business charters." In his role as vice president, corporate development, Varun Gupta will lead strategic investments, acquisitions, and ecosystem partnerships, as well as Flipkart Ventures, the early-stage investment arm of Flipkart. With a career spanning nearly two decades in corporate development and investment banking, Gupta joins Flipkart from Reliance, where he led strategic corporate development and equity capital initiatives. He brings deep expertise in strategic acquisitions, capital raises, and business incubation across multiple sectors, including retail, telecom, media, and technology. Varun Gupta, vice president, corporate development, Flipkart, said, "Joining Flipkart at this stage of its growth presents a significant opportunity to drive value through targeted partnerships and investments that create long-term impact. I look forward to support-



ing the company's strategic growth priorities as it expands its ecosystem and builds future capabilities." As Flipkart grows at scale, the company said these appointments reflect its continued focus on building the leadership and capabilities required to support agility, strong governance, and long-term strategic growth. Flipkart recently promoted a cohort of senior executives. The Walmart-owned e-commerce company elevated Kunal Gupta to senior vice president, highlighting his track record of driving turnarounds and building sustainable, high-growth operations across categories. In a separate set of vice president promotions, Flipkart elevated Anurag Nair, Gaurav Patwari, Nishitkumar Mehra, and Tafeem Uddin Siddiqui, reflecting its push to deepen leadership across categories, travel, enterprise systems, and policy.

Adani Group announces restructure to expedite decision-making and spur expansion



Chennai: As it strives for faster expansion across all divisions, billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate announced intentions to restructure its operating style in an attempt to reduce decision-making time. Adani stated in an internal message to staff on Labor Day that the Adani Group would implement a three-layer organizational structure with fewer decision-makers and a greater focus on liquidity and access to capital, but it did not provide any details. According to him, the sim-

plified hierarchy will drive executives closer to project locations, reduce the time it takes to make decisions from days to hours, and improve responsibility among business units.

The action coincides with a rise in investment activity in India, the fastest-growing major economy in the world. As a result, conglomerates are competing in the infrastructure, energy, and consumer-facing sectors to be more agile and produce faster. This is Adani's second significant transfor-

mation since it separated its power and ports companies into independently listed companies in 2015. By eliminating the holding-company discount and streamlining the group's structure, that series of changes freed shareholder value and provided holders of Adani Enterprises Ltd., the flagship business, with direct access to the underlying operational firms.

The group operates more than 700 locations in 24 states and is home to the biggest private sector port

and airport operators in India. Almost 400,000 workers, partners, and contractors are involved. The conglomerate is diversifying funding, and raised \$2 billion from the local market last year and has plans to scale up to \$10 billion over three years, Chief Financial Officer Jugeshinder Singh had said previously. Adani Group said it has kicked off the process of building accommodation for 50,000 workers across its major sites. It is spending around ₹5,000 crore (\$527 million) to build a township across more than 175 acres in Mundra in Gujarat state for its workers.

The conglomerate has also doubled the pace of its capital spending plan and now intends to outlay \$100 billion in five to six years instead of spreading it out over a decade as announced before. Adani Enterprises on Thursday approved raising as much as ₹15,000 crore by selling shares. The company reported slipping into a loss last quarter, a per-

formance that may complicate capital spending plans, crucial for long-term expansion. The company also has several other issues hanging over it. The group's \$1.2 billion copper plant has hit a string of technical setbacks since it was commissioned 10 months ago, raising concerns about the future of an operation vital to adding supply outside China.

The Kutch plant has yet to produce meaningful volumes of copper as a result of the engineering trouble, and closed for repair work in late March, Bloomberg News reported earlier this week. The group also needs to get a US fraud case against its founder dismissed, before fully reviving overseas fundraising. The case has dragged on for almost 18 months since the US Securities and Exchange Commission alleged that the Adanis violated US securities laws. Lawyers for Adani last month sought to have the case dismissed, saying the SEC lacked necessary jurisdiction.



New Delhi: Since it was put into service ten months ago, billionaire Gautam Adani's \$1.2 billion copper plant has seen a number of technical difficulties, raising questions about the operation's survival as it is essential to expanding supply outside of China. According to persons acquainted with the situation who want to remain anonymous owing to the delicate nature of the case, Adani Enterprise Ltd.'s Kutch plant has not yet produced significant amounts of copper due to the engineering issues and was shut down for repairs in late March. Whether the operation had since resumed was unclear. The 500,000 tonne-per-year factory produced 94,000 tons of refined copper between April of last year and February of this year, according to data from India's Ministry of Mines.

A spokesperson for Adani denied Kutch Copper Limited had encountered engineering challenges, and said execution and plant stabilization had been swift. "KCL has made steady progress in plant ramp up and stabilization towards achieving the full capacity," the spokesperson said in an email response to Bloomberg. "Within a very short period, KCL's premium quality products serve hundreds of satisfied customers across product and segment category with long-term contracts in place." Earth-i — a company that monitors activity at smelters globally, using satellite data on smoke, stockpiles, vehicle movements and more — said it had seen no clear or significant signs of sustained smelting at the Gujarat site since last June. The agency has detected such markers at other new smelters in Asia and Africa over the last year. The satellite data did point to other activity, including copper concentrate shipments arriving on site and smoke. Copper concentrate, a form of semi-processed ore, is used to

feed the smelter. Four people with direct knowledge of the matter said high levels of impurities in the feedstock — including antimony, arsenic and uranium — had caused operational difficulties. The presence of other metals can make the primary smelting process unstable, affecting the purity of copper and sulfuric acid produced. Adani's procurement team is now actively looking for June and July shipments of cleaner copper concentrates, the people said. To run at full capacity, Adani's plant needs around 1.6 million tonnes a year of copper concentrate. Kutch Copper Ltd.'s import records show they bought just over a quarter of the feedstock required between February 2024 and February 2026. Adani's spokesperson said KCL had long-term concentrate tie-ups with global suppliers for the required "quantity and quality of concentrates, fully meeting operational requirement." The facility has an integrated design, where a primary smelter feeds semi-refined copper to the refinery. Even so, the company has imported over 26,400 metric tons of copper anodes, that semi-processed form, in the past two years, according to Bloomberg analysis of trade data. China currently smelts almost half of the world's copper, thanks to inexpensive power and technical expertise. An expansion of that capacity, along with mine disruptions and competition from traders, has caused a global raw material squeeze that has already prompted several operations outside China to shut down or turn to government support over the last year. Trouble at Kutch could also prompt a reassessment of the world's copper supply. Consultancies CRU, Wood Mackenzie and Benchmark Mineral Intelligence currently expect the Adani plant to be a meaningful contributor, producing between 175,000 tons and 385,000 tons of copper this year.

RBI establishes a structured exit route and exempts smaller NBFCs

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued final guidelines exempting certain non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) from mandatory registration. Specifically, NBFCs with assets less than ₹1,000 crore that do not engage with public funds or have customer interfaces will be classified as "Un-registered Type I NBFCs." To qualify for this exemption, entities must maintain a long-term business model devoid of public funding and customer interface, validated by the approval of their boards and confirmation from statutory auditors regarding compliance. Moreover, existing NBFCs that satisfy these conditions are provided a one-time opportunity to apply

for deregistration by December 31, 2026, effectively establishing an organized exit pathway from regulatory oversight.

The applications for deregistration should be submitted via the RBI's PRAVAAH portal, and the regulations are set to take effect on July 1. However, the option for deregistration carries conditions. Applicants are required to present audited financial statements for the last three years, an auditor's certificate affirming compliance with the absence of public funds and customer interactions, and a board resolution undertaking to uphold these conditions indefinitely. The RBI retains the authority to deny deregistration if it determines that

the business model does not genuinely conform to the Type I classification. Additionally, NBFCs with assets exceeding ₹1,000 crore must secure registration as Type I NBFCs, while others will be categorized under Type II classifications. The central bank has mandated aggregation of assets across group entities. If the combined assets of multiple such NBFCs within a group exceed ₹1,000 crore, all will be required to register and comply with applicable norms. The RBI has also tightened definitions to prevent regulatory arbitrage, clarifying that indirect access to public funds — such as through group entities — will be treated as public funding.

144 patent applications were submitted by Tata Motors in FY26

New Delhi: Tata Motors Ltd., a significant player in the commercial vehicle industry, announced on Wednesday that it submitted 144 patent applications in FY26, the most in a single year. According to a statement from Tata Motors Ltd. (TML), these filings are in line with the company's strategic targets, which include increased vehicle safety, greater dependability, optimized total cost of ownership, and superior occupant comfort. Our engineering teams' en-

thusiasm, inventiveness, and technical prowess are demonstrated by the record number of patent applications submitted in FY26. Aniruddha Kulkarni, vice president and head of engineering at TML, stated, "As we look ahead, we remain committed to harnessing our innovation capabilities to serve the long-term interests of our customers, communities, and the nation." The strong filing performance also reflects the company's focus on future-ready and sustainable mobil-



ity solutions, spanning emerging technologies such as electric vehicles and hydrogen-based internal combustion engines, TML said. During

the year, the company strengthened its intellectual property portfolio by filing 21 design applications and 35 copyright applications, in addition

to its patent filings, it added. TML said it also secured 15 patent grants, increasing the cumulative number of granted patents to over 650.

Mahindra & Mahindra's overall car sales increased by 14% to 94,627 units

New Delhi: Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. announced on Friday that overall vehicle sales in April increased by 14% year over year to 94,627 units. According to a regulatory statement from Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M), domestic passenger vehicle sales this month were 56,331 units, up 8% from 52,330 units in April 2025. It also stated that 23,427 commercial vehicles were sold in the domestic market last month. Nalinikanth Gollagunta, CEO of M&M's Automotive Division, stated that the company began the new fiscal year 2026-2027 "on a positive note in April". Additionally, the company reported that its overall tractor sales increased by 21% to 48,411 units last month from 40,054 units in April 2025. Domestic tractor sales in April 2026 were at 46,404 units,



as against 38,516 units in the same month last year, a growth of 20 per cent. "This strong performance was delivered despite the absence of Chaitra Navratri in April this year, unlike last year when April included seven

Navratri days," M&M President, Farm Equipment Business, Veejay Nakra said. Exports of tractors for the month stood at 2,007 units, as compared to 1,538 units in April 2025, a growth of 30 per cent, M&M said.

The most recent example of zombie politics is Starmer’s dying premiership



Washington: At last, an honest portrayal of Keir Starmer has been permitted to emerge. The journey has been incredible. When he eventually showed up, he was first revered as the labor savior. Pleas that he was essentially a nice sort, new to politics, and in need of patience replaced that. There’s a growing perception that he’s actually a pretty nasty egg. In a harsh recent summary, a Labour insider told Politico: “Many believe Keir Starmer is a good man who is out of his depth.” Incorrect. He is incompetent and a jerk. Now, the accusations are flooding in quickly and in large numbers. He is incapable of leading teams. He ignores others in order to protect himself. Now, the accusations are flooding in quickly and in large numbers. He is incapable of leading teams. To protect himself, he puts others under the bus. He is unable to complete the task. There is at least one bright spot in the entire Peter Mandelson scandal, the most recent of which being the disclosure that Mandelson failed his security screening and that Starmer says he was unaware of this. Even devoted supporters are unable to continue their tiresome, mistaken conjecture that he might be restarted and come good when his own ministers distance themselves from him and give up the ghost on live television. The general view is that Starmer’s fate is inevitable and that he is no longer capable of rehabilitation. What now? The explanation is drift: the condition of a government plagued by scandals and lacking direction. This had been developing under a diminished Starmer for a while, and it has now been exacerbated by an ongoing scandal, solidified by his

reluctance to go, and locked in by the lack of desire for a leadership contest or agreement on a replacement. We now reach the zombie period, which we should all be familiar with by now. Over the last ten years, there have been four, some shorter than others. As her Brexit agreement came to a standstill, Theresa May persisted. Between the Partygate discoveries and his departure, Boris Johnson was a dead man walking for seven months. More over half of Liz Truss’s premiership—27 days—went by between the disastrous mini-budget and her resignation. From the beginning, Rishi Sunak served as an interim prime minister and was entrusted with the almost impossible task of keeping the Tories from going extinct.It is now more common for a prime minister to stay in office due to inertia and a lack of alternatives than for a capable leader guiding the nation. These premierships produce an aimless, destructive form of governing rather than simply trundling along in a stable holding pattern till settlement. One in which there is a gradual decline in living conditions and, more generally, the loss of a feeling of shared destiny under a watchful and accountable captain rather than a sudden collapse in the economy or public services. The public’s dissatisfaction and disengagement, as well as a wider political stagnation, are exacerbated by this pattern’s recurrence under several administrations. A zombie administration lacks ambition, creativity, ambition, and focus.There is a huge disparity between No. 10’s concerns and the difficulties in the real world. Not only is the prime minister’s career in jeopardy as La-

bour decides what to do with itself, but the nation’s destiny and course are as well. Inflation and fuel prices have increased as a result of the Iran War. The International Monetary Fund has warned that Britain faces the biggest hit to growth from the Iran war of all G20 economies, and the joint highest inflation rate in the G7. The UK’s exposure to energy shocks is exacerbated by the pre-existing cost of living crisis and high food prices. To date, the prime minister does not seem to have a plan to get ahead of, or even provide reassurances about, what promises to be a prolonged crisis. And then there are the grave challenges to social cohesion posed by the toxic Reform party that Labour has roundly failed to tackle. The cultural and political climate has been poisoned by anti-migrant hostility, and Labour has only fed into that with harsh measures and Enoch Powell-aping rhetoric, while damaging Reform not one bit. As Labour was pummelled in the Gorton and Denton byelection, Starmer had nothing but outrageously unbecoming statements about “sectarian politics”. Labour is on track for its worst ever local election performance next month, with big gains for Reform on the cards. Where is the big scramble to get ahead of this? From Starmer himself, crickets.Zombie prime ministers take two routes when it comes to governance. The first is to try to force their relevance by announcing attention-grabbing red meat policies: take Sunak’s U-turning on net zero, and Johnson’s launch of the first version of the Rwanda deportation plan. The sec-

ond is to do nothing at all, distracted by firefighting and fending off internal challenge. It was a route of this sort that Johnson took, which culminated in mass mutiny among MPs and ministers when he refused to resign. Whichever route Starmer takes, the result is a public entirely uninvested in and contemptuous of an absent government embroiled in remote scandal or bizarre, irrelevant policymaking. Here is the sort of dysfunctional feudalism that Alexis de Tocqueville describes in his book on the French aristocracy, The Old Regime and the Revolution. He argues that the French nobility clung to their privileges long after they’d abdicated the duties that conferred their legitimacy – and it was that abdication that triggered revolution.

Starmer is a figure who represents that political nobility; he is an embodiment of something far bigger than himself. But long before his own premiership began, we had entered an age of zombie politics, one compounded by those drift eras that came before, defined by political leaders who felt entitled to power and yet failed to leverage politics for real, material ends.He is also the culmination of a progressive politics that has failed to refashion its role in a changing Britain, where its traditional industrial and working-class heartlands have been eroded by a decades-long privileging of capital over labour. And it has not tackled the various ways in which the economy has become hardwired to benefit a diminishing number of the highly paid or generously endowed.

Nor has it forged a solid sense of meaning and values in a world where increasingly savage and cynical forces, from the US to the Middle East, create a vacuum of moral leadership. Starmer’s non-descriptness made it easy for fans to project all sorts of fantasies on to him. But his vacantness was always his essential trait, qualifying him to head this empty version of progressive politics – a leader who is a vessel rather than an agent of change. The only hope for the upcoming zombie months or years is that Starmer’s tenure will not end in another false start. What or whoever comes next must understand that Labour needs to deliver something more than simply managing the broken legacy of its predecessors. Unless challenges to the political and economic status quo are boldly embraced, then the drift will come for them too.

Oil giants earn \$3,000 every second while American families struggle to make ends meet

Washington: Reading this line takes one second. The largest oil firms in the world only made close to \$3,000 over that period. Six of the biggest fossil fuel companies in the world are expected to make \$2,967 every second in 2026, according to a study by Oxfam International. Prior to the international conference on moving away from fossil fuels in Santa Marta, Colombia, the study was released. This year, their combined fossil fuel earnings are anticipated to reach \$94 billion. not earnings. Make money. They made \$37 million more every day than they did in 2025. Families in the US are struggling to pay their energy bills while oil companies’ profits soar. Households in the



US and a number of other countries are dealing with: Ironically, the persistent geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East are the cause of both the rising burden on households and the profits of oil multinationals. Oil prices have surpassed \$100 per barrel as a result of the prolonged conflict in Iran and the ensuing constraints around the

Strait of Hormuz, a crucial oil chokepoint. Oil earnings increase more quickly as prices rise. It’s a striking contrast. In contrast, the Oxfam analysis notes that the \$94 billion these six companies would generate in 2026 alone is sufficient to supply solar energy to around 50 million people in Africa. Oxfam argues that the money being

earned is not going into clean energy transition. Instead, much of it flows to the wealthiest investors, largely in the Global North. The industry calls this a cyclical phase that requires sustained investment. Oxfam calls it the “polutocrat era”. This is not the first time when oil companies have made huge profits during geopolitical tensions.

Pirates Take Over a Cargo Ship Close to the Somali Coast



Tokyo: Suspected pirates have hijacked a St. Kitts and Nevis-flagged general cargo vessel named Sward off the waters of Somalia and are reportedly heading towards the Somali coastline, as indicated by British maritime security firms Vanguard and Ambrey. The incident has raised alarm due to the resurgence of pirate activities in the region, which had significantly declined between 2008 and 2018, but began in-

creasing again at the end of 2023. According to reports from Vanguard, armed pirates took control of the Sward near Godobjiran, located approximately six nautical miles northeast of Garacad. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) corroborated this claim, officially categorizing the situation as a hijacking. The vessel is carrying a crew of 15 members, consisting of two In-

dian nationals and 13 Syrians.Vanguard provided further details stating that the ship is now under pirate control and moving towards the Somali coast, and the Puntland Maritime Police Force has been informed of the incident. Ambrey noted that at the time of the boarding, the ship was en route from Suez, Egypt, to Mombasa, Kenya. Most of the crew were reported to be on the bridge, with

only two mechanics absent during the boarding. Further implications of piracy in the area were highlighted by referencing a previous attack on a commercial tanker off Mogadishu in November 2025, marking a significant incident as the first since 2024. The situation remains critical, with Puntland security officials and the assistant information minister currently unreachable for comment.

Israel and Ukraine are at odds over “stolen” grains



Kyiv: Ukraine and Israel are currently in a diplomatic dispute over accusations from Kyiv that Israel is importing grains allegedly stolen by Russia from occupied Ukrainian territory. Ukraine, a significant grain producer, has accused Russia of illegally exporting agricultural products since its invasion in February 2022. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy publicly condemned the situation, asserting that multiple vessels carrying such grain are arriving at Israeli ports and questioning the legitimacy of this trade. He emphasized the importance of mutual respect in international relations, particularly between allies, and expressed disappointment in Israel’s actions that he believes undermine their bilateral ties.In response, Is-

rael has rejected Ukraine’s claims, stating that no evidence has been provided to substantiate them. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar pointed out that the Ukrainian government has not sought legal assistance nor has it submitted documentation to verify the claimed cargoes. Saar criticized Ukraine’s use of social media to handle the issue, referencing the lack of formal channels in Ukraine’s approach. Meanwhile, the Kremlin has declined to intervene, suggesting that the matter should be resolved directly between Israel and Ukraine. The allegations follow claims from Ukraine that over two million tonnes of grain have been pilfered from its occupied territories by Russia,

with suggestions that these shipments are reaching markets in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Meanwhile, the Kremlin has declined to intervene, suggesting that the matter should be resolved directly between Israel and Ukraine. This diplomatic tension arises within a larger global context marked by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which has had significant effects on food prices worldwide. Following a deal brokered by the United Nations and Turkey for Ukraine’s grain exports through the Black Sea in late 2022, Russia’s subsequent abandonment of the agreement has led to further complications in the grain supply chain, particularly affecting Ukrainian ports located in annexed regions.

The Saudi-Pakistan Aspect of the UAE’s OPEC Exit

Dubai: The United Arab Emirates’ decision to leave the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) after nearly 60 years is as much a political as a commercial move, and it has the potential to seriously harm both Pakistan, Riyadh’s defense ally, and the oil cartel and its de facto leader, Saudi Arabia. Since the beginning of the US-Israeli assault on Iran, tensions between Abu Dhabi and Riyadh have been boiling, but they were somewhat concealed by their mutual resentment of Tehran for its attacks on the Gulf states.

The director of Middle East at Eurasia Group, Firas Maksad, told The Financial Times, “The Emirates were not happy to have to constrain themselves, particularly when they wanted to pump more, and the Saudis wanted to pump less.” The UAE has also been irritated with Pakistan, in part because of its growing connections with Saudi Arabia, but also because of what it sees as Islamabad’s passive role as a go-between for the US and Iran and its failure to hold Tehran responsible for attacks on the Gulf during the conflict. Pakistan’s role as mediator annoyed the UAE, as it “sees things in kind of black and white at the moment”, Neil Quilliam, an associate fellow at Chatham House, told the UK-based financial daily.

“There’s no neutrality in this [from the UAE perspective], there’s no middle ground, and if you’re mediating, then you are in the middle ground,” he added. The UAE, OPEC’s third-largest producer, joined the oil-producing cartel in 1967. But the cartel’s production quotas have long been controlled by its de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, preventing it from exporting greater quantities of oil. In the short term, the exit will give Abu Dhabi the freedom to respond quickly to a long-term prospect of constrained supplies and to maximise profit.The defection also comes as a blow to Saudi Arabia’s prestige, as it weakens Riyadh’s ability to manage the oil prices. It also helps the UAE position itself closer to US President Donald Trump, a long-term critic of OPEC. The UAE made the big announcement without any prior consultation



while the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) met for an emergency session in Jeddah, the first since the Iran attacks.

The UAE, the Gulf state politically closest to Israel and most hostile to Tehran, was Iran’s biggest target in the region, fending off more than 2,200 drones and missiles, in part a function of its geographical proximity. According to a report by The Guardian, Abu Dhabi has been privately pushing Saudi Arabia and Qatar to launch joint counterattacks against Iran. But despite reports claiming that Riyadh was urging the US to defeat Iran, “no public GCC consensus was formed to take a step that could be seen as highly risky, since it could be interpreted not only as self-defence but also as siding with Israel”, the report said. Unable to receive any political solidarity for its cause, the UAE has abandoned the economic solidarity and decided to go it alone. According to the UAE’s state-run firm Adnoc, Abu Dhabi’s exit from OPEC is likely to boost crude production from 3.4 million barrels a day before the start of the Iran war to 5 million barrels by 2027. Notably, since Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, the country’s crude production slumped by 44

per cent to 1.9 million in March, and its capacity to increase production is contested. Overall, the war has wiped out 7.88 million barrels a day of OPEC’s production in March, resulting in a 27 per cent fall to 20.79 million barrels a day that month – the biggest supply collapse for the cartel in recent decades.Dr Ebtesam Al-Ketbi, the president of the Dubai-based Emirates Policy Centre, told The Guardian that the move was cast as an act of self-interest. “In effect, the UAE is redefining its role from a producer within a bloc to a balancing producer that contributes to market stability through its ability to act,” she said. “While this move may gradually weaken Opec’s cohesion, it simultaneously strengthens the UAE’s position as an actor capable of directly influencing global supply dynamics.”Moreover, the decision to quit OPEC may also make it Trump’s diplomatic favourite, a status that could have investment benefits for the Emirates. Trump has been a vocal critic of OPEC. A rift has been simmering between the Gulf’s powerhouses for years, but it burst into the open in December and January over disputes in the civil war in Yemen, where they back rival factions.

Why does Changi continue to be the best airport in the world?

Red-eyed and yawning, you’ve just landed after an eighteen-hour flight. Get ready for the typical airport humiliations, such as the long wait for your suitcase, the dead-eyed line, and the walk to immigration. Rather, immigration proceeds at a speed that briefly raises suspicions while smiling AI-powered automated cleaners wipe the immaculate floors. You’ll be curbside in the tropical heat in less than fifteen minutes, wondering why this is still so difficult in the rest of the world. A few days later, following a smooth check-in for your journey home, you wait for your aircraft in the airport’s transit halls, which feature the highest indoor waterfall in the world, a free movie theater open around-the-clock, and a butterfly garden. You can even stroll over to an indoor glass fishpond that has a digital roof show that replicates the outdoors weather. Sometimes you forget you’re in an airport rather than a small, futuristic, incredibly well-managed city. This might sound like the fever dream of a regular traveler. Actually, it’s Changi Airport in Singapore, which recently earned the Skytrax Award for World’s Best Airport for the second consecutive year and 14 times in total. Where other major airport terminals struggle with rodent infestations, crew strikes and collapsing ceilings, Changi’s futuristic peacefulness feels a world apart. The gulf between an average and world-class airport has never felt larger. So, what does it take to make modern air travel run this smoothly – and how does Singapore keep getting it right when its rivals struggle? Efficiency first, spectacle second

For Max Hirsh, managing director of Airport City Academy, a research centre focused on airport planning and development, Changi’s success is not just about quality, but nailing the everyday fundamentals, from speed to safety to connectivity. It’s also about having the flexibility to adapt when things don’t go as planned. “In the world of aviation, that happens a lot,” Hirsh says. “The challenge isn’t achieving that balance just once – it’s maintaining it for decades in the face of changing demands, technologies and disruptions. Changi succeeds because it treats that balance as an ongoing project, not a one-off design feat.” If you’ve ever flown through Singapore, you’ll



likely have noticed the sense of calm that pervades the airport. What you likely don’t realise is how carefully manufactured that tranquility is. Behind the scenes sits a huge and tightly choreographed operation in which automation,

ahead of you” The same logic extends to the less glamorous details. Back-end groundwork like intuitive wayfinding, clear signage and crowd management means jet-lagged passengers aren’t burning their cognitive load just trying



biometrics and predictive analytics are used to remove bottlenecks before they become visible, while 60,000 staff keep baggage, cleaning, energy use and passenger flow ticking along in sync. As Hirsh puts it, Changi often feels “one step

in ratings and a janitorial crew swoops down in minutes. “The hierarchy is simple,” says Hirsh. “Efficiency first, atmosphere second, spectacle third.”Changi has so many offerings that it can take several visits to appreciate their breadth.

The best-known example is the Jewel Rain Vortex, the indoor waterfall in Changi’s adjoining retail complex, which has become one of Singapore’s most recognisable travel images. Elsewhere, travellers can watch Toni, Changi’s robotic bartender, mix a range of cocktails in Terminals 2 and 3. The butterfly garden imports pupae every two to three weeks so it never runs dry of winged delights. If flying insects aren’t your thing, there’s also a cactus garden and a rooftop sunflower garden. A new Fit and Fun Zone, which opened in early 2025, is filled with activities to suit any mood, from punching bags to mini trampolines. And for those with a long enough layover (and no visa requirements), the airport even offers free guided tours of the city. But the continually updated attractions do more than lighten the load of a long trip. They also serve a more practical purpose: by encouraging people to explore, they draw foot traffic to different corners of the terminal and help avoid the sense of crowdedness that plagues other airports. Some of this efficiency is born of pragmatism as much as ambition. It is Singapore’s labour constraints that have pushed the airport towards automation, from immigration clearance to cleaning and other passenger services. “Immigration services need a lot of manpower, and not all Singaporeans are willing to do such work,” explained Ivan Tan, Changi Airport Group’s senior vice president for corporate and marketing com-

munications. “So in part, we’re driven by need.”In 2024, Changi became the first airport to fully implement passport-less immigration clearance, using biometric facial and iris recognition to shave time off one of the most frustrating parts of any international journey. Singapore residents can use it on arrival and departure, while foreign travellers can use passport-free clearance when leaving Singapore. That practical mindset also helps explain why Changi has never really been allowed to sit still. Airports are miniature cities driven by tight schedules and complex logistics, and are highly vulnerable to volatility. It’s one reason Changi recently set up Terminal X, an innovation lab tasked with tackling weather volatility, manpower issues, capacity pressure and ever-evolving customer expectations. “For us the innovation hub is a must,” says Kris Mok, the lab’s communications manager, adding that the ever-shifting matrix of challenges means that “in a few years we’ll have to work twice as hard”. The team is encouraged to test left-field ideas even if they fail – an unusual approach in Singapore’s often cautious work culture. Among the lab’s projects are a fleet of drones that hover in storms to deter ground lightning strikes that could shut down runways in one of the world’s most lightning-prone countries. Changi’s obsession with efficiency is not new. It dates to the 1970s, when Singapore’s founding father and first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, decided that to grow, the small, trade-reliant nation needed a welcoming symbol of efficiency. It was a costly gamble, but it worked. Lee would eventually call Changi “the best \$S1.5bn investment we ever made.” Half a century on, the investment is still paying off. “[Changi] is like Singapore in a nutshell: efficient, clean, organised, and you can trust everything works as expected,” says Alisha Rodrigo, who lives in Singapore and flies out frequently from the airport. Speaking shortly after a shutdown left American airports with four-hour wait-times at security and check-in, she adds that “sometimes predictable is a good thing”. And that, in the end, is why Changi keeps winning. While the waterfall might be what travellers remember, the real achievement is that they reach it without getting lost or breaking stride..

Andaman to Manali, check out top 7 summer destinations in India to beat the heat



Many people consider April to be the month with the most flowers, and several Indian locations are blessed with breathtaking landscapes that are worth seeing. These seven gorgeous locations are recommended by content creator Suraj on his Instagram page (explore with suraj) in a post dated April 9, 2026, if you are organizing a trip in April with your loved ones. These locations provide the finest of nature, adventure, and springtime emotions. The list of places you can visit is provided here.

1. Ladakh
If you are someone who loves snowy landscapes, road trips, and surreal views, Ladakh is the place to be. From stunning high-altitude landscapes to iconic spots like Pangong Lake, Nubra Valley, and the Zaskar Valley, Ladakh never fails to delight travellers with its wonders. You can also visit Leh Palace, Shanti Stupa, and ancient monasteries such as Hemis and Thiksey. For adventure seekers, Khardung La Pass.

Magnetic Hill, and Tso Moriri are the perfect places to explore.

2. Kashmir
Kashmir, ‘Heaven on Earth,’ is another perfect destination to visit in the month of April. April blesses Kashmir with colourful tulip blooms that will make you feel like an otherworldly place. From the Tulip garden in Srinagar to Gulmarg Gondola rides, lush valleys of Pahalgam to shikara rides on Dal lake, Kashmir is all about surreal beauty.

3. Kerala
Kerala, ‘The god’s Own Country,’ offers a pleasant escape into hill stations and vibrant wildlife. From tea-garden in Munnar to the tranquil Wayanad, pine forests in Vagamon, to the scenic wildlife region of Thekkady, and backwater experiences in Alleppey and Kumarakom, Kerala never fails to mesmerise with its beauty.

4. Manali
Manali offers a perfect blend of spring flowers and pleasant weather in April. You can visit Solang Valley, Atal Tunnel and Sissu, Hadimba Temple, Jogini

Waterfall, and the Mall Road to make your trip memorable and adventurous.

5. Andaman and Nicobar Islands
For all the water babies, Andaman and Nicobar is your heaven. You can enjoy pleasant weather while soaking in the views at Radhanagar Beach on Havelock Island. Cellular jail in Port Blair, snorkelling and scuba diving in crystal clear water are some of the once-in-a-lifetime experiences that you can savour in Andaman.

6. Kaziranga National Park
If wildlife exploration is on your bucket list, then you should explore Kaziranga National Park in Assam. You can enjoy jeep safaris in the central and western zones while spotting one-horned rhinos, tigers, and wild buffalo.

7. Rishikesh
The last destination on this list is Rishikesh, the yoga capital of India. From river rafting in the holy Ganga to enjoying the surreal Himalayan views, Rishikesh is a perfect spiritual escape you can plan in April.

What distinguishes a cancer diagnosis’s grade from its stage?

A cancer diagnosis comes with two different classifications: grade and stage. A report may state that an individual has Grade 2, Stage IIIA breast cancer. Both of the terms have distinct meanings, which often leave people confused. Taking to Instagram on April 26, Dr Jayesh Sharma, Raipur-based oncologist with over 25 years of experience, explained what they are and how they are detected.

What is the grade of cancer?
Dr Sharma explained the two terms, grade and stage of cancer, with the help of an allegory. “Imagine cancer to be a gang of criminals and the doctor to be the chief of police. To deal with the gang problem in the city (the body of the infected individual), the first thing that needs to be done is rounding up a few members and understanding the threat that they present,” shared the oncologist. “The range of the threat that is in between an average college student and a dangerous career criminal is the grade.” Thus, the grade of cancer shows how similar cancerous cells look to normal cells, and at what rate they are likely to grow. Higher grade means more abnormal cells and faster growth. The test that is done to find out where the infected cell of an individual lies within the range of a normal to a completely infected cell is known as a biopsy. The biopsy also reveals how aggressive the cancer is.

What is the stage of cancer?
“To deal with the gang of criminals, the second thing that needs to be done is finding out how deep they have penetrated within the city. To do this, the chief of police will likely need to go through CCTV footage or

send their own people out in the field to get the necessary information,” shared Dr Sharma. The same logic is followed when doctors order tests while diagnosing cancer patients. It could be anything in a wide range of tests, such as a CT scan, PET CT scan, MRI, or ultrasound. This tells the doctor how far the cancer has spread within the body, and is known as the stage of cancer. The oncologist further elaborated on the stages of cancer with the example of breast cancer. “In stage one of breast cancer, a small mass is seen in the

breast, which has not spread to the underarms. In the second stage, the mass slightly increases in size, and there is likely to be small masses forming in the underarms as well. In stage three, the mass has grow significantly bigger and is affecting the skin, and there a number of masses in the underarms. Stage four is when the cancer has spread beyond the breast and underarms to other organs such as the lungs, liver and brain.” Thus, grade means how aggressive the cancer is, and stage is how far it has spread.



ENTERTAINMENT

Priya Banerjee criticizes Bollywood’s lack of originality and claims it has lost its path

Mumbai: Actor Priya Banerjee has voiced similar worries, criticizing Bollywood for losing its creative spark, at a time when a number of filmmakers are challenging the industry’s growing fixation with formula-driven storytelling. She praises OTT platforms for taking chances and supporting novel, unorthodox ideas, even if she feels that mainstream Hindi cinema is trapped in a monotonous cycle. Priya discussed her journey and decisions in an exclusive conversation with Hindustan Times. She also discussed why she has always avoided traditional parts and preferred characters that thrill her, even if they are unconventional. She also voiced her worries about Bollywood and the industry that supports it. The most recent film in which Priya appeared was Candy and the Pizza Ggirl. Speaking on



her decision to play a daring, unorthodox role in the movie, she stated that she has never been calculating about the kinds of roles she takes on and that she enjoys characters that present challenges. “I am anything but conventional,” she declared. I didn’t come here to pursue a career in acting. I didn’t use calculations when making my moves. Over time, I’ve come to realize that all of my friends who are actors are. But once more, acting was

their love, and they had always aspired to work in Bollywood. They wish to avoid making a mistake. I was raised somewhere else, not in India. Bollywood was brand-new to me. She further added that she was simply having fun and choosing roles that excite her as an actor. She said, “I was getting all the attention, making money. I never chose characters that would make me feel like, no, I want to go back home, I am bored.

I have always picked unconventional characters which are fun. If I am spending 20 days on set, I might as well play a character that’s nothing like me. I have done certain things like Dil Jo Na Keh Saka, which was very much like a rom-com. But I never enjoyed doing those. Very soon I realised I can’t sit in front of the camera, look pretty and smile. I’m doing this work because I enjoy it, not because I want to become a star.” Priya

added that she is proud of never taking up roles purely for money. She said, “If you look at Hollywood or British cinema, you see actors taking up such interesting and challenging roles. They are not afraid of doing something. In the moment there is fear, I think currently Bollywood is in a very bad space. There are no innovative ideas or innovative films. There are no original ideas. Everybody is writing everything — jo chal gaya vohi banao.” She further criticised the lack of originality in Hindi cinema, adding that she doesn’t remember the last time she enjoyed a Bollywood film. She said, “And I don’t enjoy watching Hindi films. It’s not fun. The same thing over and over again. Yahan wahan on some Netflix or other channels you see some nice shows with not-so-known actors but very original ideas.

Tabu and Nagarjuna reunite after nearly thirty years

Mumbai: In Nagarjuna’s historic 100th film, currently dubbed King 100, Tabu and Nagarjuna Akkineni reunite. Film enthusiasts are very interested in the actor’s impending reunion with Tabu after nearly thirty years. In a social media post, Tabu acknowledged her participation in the project and announced her comeback to the screen with Nagarjuna for his historic movie. With his 100th film, tentatively titled King 100, veteran Telugu actor Nagarjuna Akkineni is getting ready to achieve a significant career milestone. Film-maker Naveen (Ra) Karthik, best known for directing Made in Korea, is in charge of the project. The film has now gained further attention with the addition of Tabu to its cast, with the actor having already begun shooting for the project. Tabu announced her participation through an Instagram post



from the sets of the film. Her update confirmed that filming has begun and highlighted her reunion with Nagarjuna after nearly three decades. The two were last seen together in the 1998 Telugu film Aavida Maa Aavide. Prior to that, they also shared screen space in the 1996 blockbuster Ninne Pelladata. On April 27, Tabu shared a photograph of

the film’s clapboard placed on a large black leather seat. Captioning the post, she wrote, “And we begin with the #King100 #Nagarjuna @annapurnastudios,” signalling the formal start of her shoot. While the film is currently being promoted under the working title King 100, reports suggest that it may be officially titled Asurudu. The makers

are also planning to release the film in multiple languages. Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Nagarjuna shed light on his long-standing association with Tabu. “We go back a very long way. I have known her from the time she started. When Tabu found out that I was doing my hundredth film, she wanted to be a part of it,” he said.

Sara Arjun refers to Deepika Padukone and Alia Bhatt as her inspiration

Mumbai: With Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar, actor Sara Arjun recently entered a new stage of her career as a leading lady in Bollywood. Her portrayal of Yalina resonated with viewers and won her significant acclaim, and the movie went on to become a huge hit. An earlier video of Sara has surfaced online, exposing her Bollywood inspiration as she continues to enjoy the popularity of her breakout performance. The video, which appears to have been taken by her mother when she was younger, shows a young Sara answering a question from a fan regarding her role model. “My role model, I adore Alia Bhatt’s appearance and behavior, and I truly adore Alia Bhatt and Deepika Padukone,” she declares. But they are not my role models, I just love them and yeah, they are my inspiration, but I wanna be Sara Arjun. If I am

honest. I never want to be next someone else.” It is this sense of individuality and clarity, expressed at such a young age, that has left fans deeply impressed. Many have taken to social media to praise her confidence and self-awareness. Couldn’t be more impressed,” while another commented, “what a sorted girl.” Others echoed similar sentiments, calling her “confident”, “focused”, and “incredibly talented”. Sara Arjun’s journey in the entertainment industry began long before her recent success. She started as a child artist, appearing in numerous television commercials, including a widely recognised advertisement for Clinic Plus. Her early performances quickly caught attention, leading to roles in films such as 404 (2011) and Deiva Thirumagal (2011), the latter earning her critical acclaim. Over the years, she built an impres-



sive filmography across both Hindi and South cinema, with projects like Ek Thi Daayan, Jazbaa, Jai Ho, Saiyam, Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga, and Mani Ratnam’s Ponniyin Selvan, where she played

Jaafar Jackson Responds To The Abundant Love For His Michael role

New work: For his portrayal of music legend Michael Jackson in his biopic Michael, Jaafar Jackson is receiving praise. Jaafar wrote a message on Instagram expressing gratitude to the fans for their support of his performance. Whoa, it was amazing to witness! Everyone is speaking up, and the world has spoken. I am really grateful! He said, “I am so grateful and happy,” as the post’s caption.

Actor Anupam

Kher responded to his tweet by saying, “You are outstanding.” Unbelievable. “I adored you so much. “You became Michael instead of just playing him,” choreographer Farah Khan commented. Snoop Dogg used emojis of fire and a crown in response to the post as well. Michael, which was written by John Logan and directed by Antoine Fuqua, chronicles the life of the late pop icon from his early years in Gary, Indiana, with

the Jackson 5 to his rise to international fame, including hits like Thriller and Off the Wall. On April 24, 2026, Michael was released in theaters and IMAX. Nia Long, Laura Harrier, Miles Teller, and Colman Domingo are also featured in the movie. Michael Jackson’s nephew is Jaafar. Despite the mixed reception, the biopic has reignited conversations around Michael Jackson’s legacy, with fans celebrating his artistic influence



while critics debate the more complex aspects of his life.

Bandar by Bobby Deol has been rescheduled for June



Mumbai: Bandar, starring Bobby Deol, will now be released in cinemas worldwide on June 5, 2026, moving from its original date of May 22 to avoid clashing with other films.

Directed by Anurag Kashyap and produced by Nikhil Dwivedi, the film features a notable ensemble cast including Sanya Malhotra and Raj B Shetty. It is backed by Zee Studios and highlights significant contributions from writers Sudip Sharma and Abhishek Banerjee, known for their work on acclaimed projects like Paatal Lok and Udta Punjab.

Nukkad Naatak : A heartfelt take on the power of performing arts

New Delhi: I feel like I’ve been immersed in the arts this past weekend. The lesser-known Nukkad Natak (falling on OTT) concentrated on the performing arts, whilst Michael, the biography, leaned toward music. The sheer fact that they make you care about what’s happening on screen is what unites the two. Despite having few screens, Nukkad Natak managed to secure a theatrical release earlier this year, which is why it has been quietly making news.

The film, which was produced on a tight budget by a tiny crew, centers on two members of their college theater society, Molshri (played by Molshri) and Shivang (Shivang Rajpal). The college director offers them a chance at re-admission after they were expelled for theft: they



can finish their course and assist five youngsters from a nearby slum in getting into school. Directed by Tanmaya Shekhar, this one hour forty five minute film gets an essential detail right.

Its protagonists feel authentic, with any trace of filmi exaggeration kept at bay. Casting unfamiliar faces, except Danish Husain, works in its favour, lending the story a rawness that feels earned. The first half benefits from this restraint and

remains engaging. Where the film falters is in its tendency to stretch itself thin. It attempts to weave in themes like identity struggles, which feel underdeveloped and largely disconnected from the central narrative. This makes parts of the film slightly adrift. The second half, however, finds firm footing as it zeroes in on the central challenge. The emotional, logistical struggles of the two leads are portrayed with sincerity.

Sidhant Gupta heading South, to make his debut in a big-budget film

Mumbai: With several popular web series in recent years, actor Sidhant Gupta has established himself in the over-the-top (OTT) market. He first starred as budding filmmaker Jay Khanna in the 2023 television series Jubilee. He then went on to play Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in Nikkhil Advani’s Freedom At Midnight and the infamous criminal Charles Sobhraj in Black Warrant. We now know that the actor intends to relocate to the South.

“Sidhant was planning to diversify his portfolio more when he got the call for a big-budget South film,” an insider tells

us. After investigating every Hindi medium, he considered the opportunity’s possibilities and decided to accept it. He has been confirmed for a pivotal role in the large-scale movie, which has not yet begun production. Sidhant Gupta is currently preparing for the premiere of his next web series, Teen Kauwe, but the specifics of this South project are still being kept under wraps. He is portrayed in the show as a spy who is being pursued by his own agency after being set up as a traitor. Bobby Deol, Fatima Sana Shaikh, and Pavail Gulati are among the other actors in Teen Kauwe.

Aamir Khan confirms a sequel to 3 Idiots

New Delhi: A sequel is currently formally in the works, more than ten years after 3 Idiots became a hit. Aamir Khan, an actor and producer, has stated that Rajkumar Hirani is working on 3 Idiots 2, which would return the beloved characters years later. Speaking about the idea, Aamir said he had heard the story and found it “wonderful,” adding that the script is still being worked on.

The lives of Rancho, Farhan, and Raju will resume in the sequel about ten years after the events of the first movie, according to Aamir. “Raju is working on 3 Idiots 2 right now,” Aamir stated in an interview with Amar Ujala. I’ve heard the tale, and it’s fantastic.” Aamir also expressed excitement about stepping back into the role of Phunsukh Wangdu. Calling it a “beautiful story” conceived by Hirani and writer Abhijat Joshi, he said he is looking forward to revisiting the character. Released in 2009, 3 Idiots starred Aamir alongside R Madhavan, Sharman Joshi and Kareena Kapoor Khan. The film struck a chord with audiences for its take on India’s education system, friendship and the idea of choosing passion over societal expectations. Its performances, memorable dialogues and music have helped it remain widely popular over the years, with speculation around a sequel frequently resurfacing.

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Aamir also shared that his planned reunion with Hirani for a biopic on Dadasaheb Phalke has been put on hold due to script-related issues. Separately, reports suggest that Aamir is in talks to portray BharatPe co-founder Ashneer Grover in a biopic, with Shradha Kapoor reportedly being considered as the female lead and Rahul Mody as director. An official announcement on the project is still awaited. At present, Aamir is promoting his son Junaid Khan’s upcoming film Ek Din, which also stars Sai Pallavi and is slated for release on May 1.

Priya Banerjee criticizes Bollywood’s lack of originality and claims it has lost its path

Mumbai: Actor Priya Banerjee has voiced similar worries, criticizing Bollywood for losing its creative spark, at a time when a number of filmmakers are challenging the industry’s growing fixation with formula-driven storytelling. She praises OTT platforms for taking chances and supporting novel, unorthodox ideas, even if she feels that mainstream Hindi cinema is trapped in a monotonous cycle. Priya discussed her journey and decisions in an exclusive conversation with Hindustan Times. She also discussed why she has always avoided traditional parts and preferred characters that thrill her, even if they are unconventional. She also voiced her worries about Bollywood and the industry that supports it. The most recent

film in which Priya appeared was Candy and the Pizza Ggirl. Speaking on her decision to play a daring, unorthodox role in the movie, she stated that she has never been calculating about the kinds of roles she takes on and that she enjoys characters that present challenges. “I am anything but conventional,” she declared. I didn’t come here to pursue a career in acting. I didn’t use calculations when making my moves. Over time, I’ve come to realize that all of my friends who are actors are. But once more, acting was their love, and they had always aspired to work in Bollywood. They wish to avoid making a mistake. I was raised somewhere else, not in India. Bollywood was brand-new to me. She further added that she was simply

having fun and choosing roles that excite her as an actor. She said, “I was getting all the attention, making money. I never chose characters that would make me feel like, no, I want to go back home, I am bored. I have always picked unconventional characters which are fun. If I am spending 20 days on set, I might as well play a character that’s nothing like me. I have done certain things like Dil Jo Na Keh Saka, which was very much like a rom-com. But I never enjoyed doing those. Very soon I realised I can’t sit in front of the camera, look pretty and smile. I’m doing this work because I enjoy it, not because I want to become a star.” Priya added that she is proud of never taking up roles purely for money.

Paris maintains a narrow lead in an epic that breaks records



New Delhi: IParis Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich battled out a nine-goal masterpiece characterized by finesse rather than anarchy in a match that went beyond the typical freneticism of knockout football. In the highest-scoring

semi-final first leg in Champions League history, PSG prevailed 5-4 in an elite display of offensive choreography. The Parc des Princes witnessed an instant classic that puts the tie on a knife-edge on an evening when defending was considered

a mere suggestion. From the first whistle, the script was written in lightning. Harry Kane, who seems to view scoring goals as a routine administrative chore, started the game with a crisp penalty kick for his 54th goal of the year. However, Bayern had not taken into consideration the Georgian prodigy Khvicha Kvaratskhelia if they believed they could maintain a lead. After cutting inside with a “Kvaradona” flair to curl a delectable equalizer into the far corner, he had the Parisian supporters in awe within minutes. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia—the evening’s primary architect—levelled the scores by cutting inside to curl a finish of pre-ordained beauty into the far corner, before Joao Neves restored the lead with a header of impeccable timing. The first half remained a balanced dialogue between two

sides committed to technical excellence. Michael Olise’s equaliser was a gliding solo run through the heart of the Parisian midfield, answered only by Ousmane Dembele’s cool conversion from the spot in stoppage time after a VAR-monitored handball.

There was no panic from either side, only a relentless, orderly pursuit of the next opening. Following the interval, PSG briefly threatened to turn a masterpiece into a monologue. In a ten-minute window of sublime execution, they dismantled the Bayern rearguard with the efficiency of a Swiss watch. Kvaratskhelia doubled his tally with a strike of pure venom from an Achraf Hakimi cross, followed shortly by a second for Dembele, who exploited the Bayern high line with clinical fluidness. At 5-2, Par-

is were operating in a different dimension, their transitions seamless and their finishing flawless. Yet, Bayern Munich provided the perfect counterpoint, refusing to let the match lose its competitive symmetry. Dayot Upamecano’s towering header provided a display of physical authority, followed quickly by a Luis Diaz strike that was as elegant as it was vital. It brought the score to 5-4, a figure that might suggest a scramble, but in reality reflected two teams at the absolute peak of their creative powers. “We’re really happy, and I think we deserved to win, but we also deserved a draw, and we would have even deserved to lose, because this game was that incredible,” he said. “I’ve never seen a game with that rhythm before. You have to congratulate the opponents, the players. When you

hold a 5-2 lead like that, the opponents take so many risks – they’re a top-level side. It was difficult, and the second leg will be too.” Dembele, who was named Man of the Match for his double, said he expected nothing but another attacking classic in the second leg next week. “It was a match between two great teams who attack, who don’t hesitate.” “We’re happy with the result, even though at 5-2 we stopped playing a bit towards the end. We’re not going to change our philosophy. We’re going to attack, and they’re going to attack too. So I think it’s going to be a great second match,” he said. As the final whistle blew, PSG held the advantage, but the evening belonged to the sport itself. This was a match where every pass had purpose and every goal felt like a deliberate stroke of genius.

WFI is accused by Vinesh Phogat of “deliberately blocking” her return to mat

New Delhi: After suffering a devastating defeat at the 2024 Olympics in Paris, Vinesh Phogat has claimed that the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is actively attempting to prevent her from competing again. After the Games two years ago, the 31-year-old decided to end her professional career, but she changed her mind in December of last year. Vinesh had hoped to return in the National Open Ranking competition the following month, but he hasn’t been successful. It’s crucial to remember that WFI has made the contrary claim, stating that Vinesh has finished registering for the competition. The WFI portal closed registrations, therefore the wrestler was unable to sign up for the competition. The deadline for entries is April 30, according to an official announcement. The competition also gives individuals who were unable to compete in the 2025 National Championships and the 2026 Federation Cup a chance to advance to the Asian Games selection trials. “My goal is to return to the National Open Ranking Tournament. It was open for registration until April 30. Nevertheless, the portal indicates that it is now closed when I attempt to register. Vinesh told The Indian Express, “I have been attempting to get in touch with the federation’s administrative staff, but they haven’t answered my calls.” “I also planned to compete there, but I was unable to do so due to a last-minute



change in the team selection criteria. She continued, “I feel like this is an intentional attempt to prevent me from competing, especially since this is a crucial tournament to stay in contention for the Asian Games and World Championship selection trials.” It is important to note that only medal winners from the National Championships and the 2026 Federation Cup are qualified to participate in the senior selection trials, per WFI’s Asian Games selection policy. To further increase their chances of qualifying for the trials, the Open Ranking competition medallists will also receive a spot in the national camp.

The WFI fired back at Vinesh, denying all these allegations. WFI President Sanjay Singh said there has been no deliberate attempt to block Vinesh’s return, and that many other wrestlers faced the same registration issue on the website. “We received similar complaints from other wrestlers, too. They got in touch with our staff, and their issues were resolved. We are not going to stop anybody from competing, and the tournament remains open for everyone,” said Singh. The Asian Games 2026 are set to take place in September, and the World Championships will follow.

Sisodia abstains from Delhi liquor policy case court proceedings and joins the Kejriwal satyagraha

New Delhi, May 03: Manish Sisodia, an AAP politician and former deputy chief minister of Delhi, informed Delhi High Court judge Swarana Kanta Sharma in a letter on Tuesday that he will not appear for additional hearings in the liquor policy case as an act of “Satyagraha.” AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal wrote to Justice Sharma the day before Sisodia’s letter, stating that he will not participate in the proceedings on an appeal against the dismissal of

the case in which the former chief minister of Delhi and AAP officials were previously imprisoned. At midday, Sisodia and Kejriwal went to Rajghat with senior party associates. They wrote to Justice Sharma a week after she declined to recuse herself, after Kejriwal’s accusation that she had a conflict of interest due to her purported membership in an RSS-affiliated lawyers’ association and her children’s work as Center attorneys. Additionally, I want to be clear that I still have

total faith in the Constitution and the judiciary. However, only ceremonial participation is inappropriate if one has significant misgivings. Sisodia added in his letter, “I am therefore left with no choice but to follow the path of Satyagraha.” Both Kejriwal and Sisodia have said that they reserve the right to move the Supreme Court, and clarified that they will not participate in the proceedings only in this matter. Sisodia added: “One’s conscience is bound to be more

troubled when they actually realise that several Hon’ble Judges, over the past 75 years of our rich judicial history, have voluntarily recused themselves in similar situations, and that some, as pointed out in Arvind Kejriwal’s letter, have even sought transfer out of their state when their children began practising within the same jurisdiction. Such are the high standards of judicial ethics observed by several judges of our country.” In February, a Delhi court pulled up the CBI



and upheld the now-shelved liquor policy, giving a clean chit to the AAP government and noting that it had brought down prices and expanded retail footprint.

Students protest the alleged attack by guards at Jamia’s RSS 100th anniversary gala

New Delhi, May 03: On Tuesday, Jamia Millia Islamia University hosted an event to commemorate 100 years of the RSS, which led to protests by various student groups claiming discrimination in the university’s event policies. The event titled “Yuva Kumbh: Seva aur Samarpan ke 100 Barsh — Rashtra Nirman Mein Yuvaon ki Bhumika,” attended by Vice-Chancellor Mazhar Asif, sparked outrage among members of the Student Federation of India, All India Students Association, National Students Union of India, and the Fraternity Movement.



Protesters highlighted the university’s 2022 and 2025 directives requiring student groups to seek proctor approval for protests and events, contrasting it with the allowance of the RSS event. Students criticized the

university’s perceived alignment with the RSS, arguing that the organization has no historical ties to the freedom struggle or the founding of the institution, while they face restrictions in organizing discussions or protests on campus.

Sunderland is blitzed by Forest to get closer to Premier League survival

New Delhi: Nottingham Forest put additional pressure on struggling Tottenham by defeating Sunderland 5-0 on Friday, moving eight points clear of the Premier League relegation zone. With Wolves and Burnley obviously doomed, the thrilling outcome at the Stadium of Light essentially reduces the fight to avoid the final relegation slot to a two-horse race between Spurs and West Ham. Now unbeaten in six league games, Vitor Pereira’s Forest have discovered a rich vein of form at the perfect moment. In an exciting match in the northeast of England, Sunderland had the majority of the possession early on, but the visitors appeared constantly dangerous when they attacked. Forest broke the deadlock in the 17th minute when Trai Hume deflected Igor Jesus’ header into his own net, but that gave little indication of what was to follow in an extraordinary opening period. Chris Wood doubled the lead in the 31st minute, finishing smartly after Sunderland goalkeeper Robin Roefs gifted possession to the away side. Morgan Gibbs-White volleyed home to make it 3-0 and three minutes later it was 4-0 when Jesus hammered home at the back post, leaving mid-table Sunderland shell-shocked. The home side battled harder in



the second half. Dan Ballard nodded home on the hour mark but the goal was ruled out for a foul by Nordi Mukiele. But Forest largely remained in control and rubbed salt into Sunderland’s wounds when Elliot Anderson passed the ball into the net to make it five in stoppage time. The emphatic win takes Forest to 39 points and the brink of safety. The East Midlands club have had a turbulent season under four different permanent managers but could end the campaign on a real high with a Europa League semi-final against Aston Villa to come. Attention now turns to Saturday’s matches at the bottom of the table. Tottenham, under new manager Roberto De Zerbi, travel to bottom side Wolves at the same time as West Ham host Everton. Spurs, who were last relegated in 1977, are on 31 points two behind the Hammers. Both teams have five matches left.

Rahul Gandhi Visits Nicobarese in Great Nicobar, Raises Project Issues Supports Ecology and Tribal Rights

New Delhi, May 03: Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s recent visit to the Nicobarese tribal community in Campbell Bay, part of his three-day trip to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, aimed to address concerns regarding the ambitious ₹72,000 crore Great Nicobar Islands project. This project plans to establish significant infrastructure, including a transshipment port at Galathea Bay, a greenfield airport, and a township, intended to enhance India’s maritime capabilities near the Malacca Strait. However, local tribal leaders expressed apprehensions about potential threats to their ancestral lands, cultural identities, and ecosystems, highlighting issues like displacement, threats to biodiversity, and the impact on endangered marine species, including sea turtle nesting sites.

During the meetings, which followed prior discussions in Havelock Island, Gandhi emphasized his intention to listen to the community and understand their grievances firsthand. He assured the Nicobarese that development should not compromise



their rights or ecological sustainability. The project has faced previous scrutiny from a delegation of local representatives who questioned its ecological viability and its implications for indigenous tribes such as the Nicobarese and Shompens. In addition to social and environmental issues, financial aspects of the plan have been debated, with concerns raised about its commercial viability and funding framework. Gandhi’s engagement has been viewed as a

crucial attempt to align national policy with local perspectives, signaling an awareness of the complexities surrounding such large-scale development projects in ecologically sensitive areas. The dialogue has heightened visibility around the needs and rights of the Nicobarese community, positioning the Great Nicobar Islands project at the forefront of ongoing discussions about the balance between strategic development and environmental protection.

In the Sabarimala Review, the Supreme Court rejects a plea citing Kamakhya Temple customs

New Delhi, May 03: A petitioner protested to tantric activities at Assam’s renowned Ma Kamakhya Temple, and the Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday that the nine-judge Constitution bench is not making decisions on specific temple practices, such as animal sacrifice or occultism. Occult rituals and animal sacrifice at the Sabarimala Temple, according to an advocate requesting a review of the court’s decision, infringing fundamental rights protected by Article 21. The counsel emphasized that the temple operated independently of any particular denomination. It is revered and features a cleft rock shaped like a vagina. Menstruation is commemorated here (at the Assam temple) during the ‘Ambubachi’ festival, unlike Lord Ayappa Temple. Twenty-five lakh visit in that time and only women priests are allowed,” she said, but pointing out that women pilgrims were still not allowed. “... if (large-scale tantrism) is done for good purpose, it has good effect. But if it is done to indoctrinate one’s mind, it needs to be stopped, at least in a public place,” she submitted. At this point Chief Justice Surya Kant asked her which side she was arguing for. “... you must decide. Are you against the review of Sabarimala



verdict or for it?” The advocate said she was arguing for a review of the judgement - which allowed entry of menstruating-age women to the temple - and also said she stood against three practices at the Kamakhya temple, which includes occultism and animal sacrifice. “Who runs the (Kamakhya) temple? Are you representing the Trust?” the Chief Justice asked. At this point, the court was informed the temple is run by priest and there is no Trust. It was also informed about an impending legal dispute concerning the management of the temple. When the advocate persisted with her

arguments, the Chief Justice rebuked her for bringing in individual practices of temples into questions about the Constitution. “We are not going on that dispute. we are on Articles 25 and 26,” he said “We very well understand your arguments... you are coming to individual practice of a temple in the name of Article 26 (but) we are not hearing that. Please stop with this animal sacrifice!” The nine-judge bench today resumed hearing submissions by intervenors around key issues regarding religious freedom (Articles 25/26), judicial review of faith-based customs, and the 2018 Sabarimala verdict.

PSG defeats Bayern Munich 5-4 to start a Champions League semifinal match

New Delhi: In a thrilling Champions League semi-final first leg on Tuesday that included a record number of goals at this point in the competition, defending champions Paris St. Germain defeated visitors Bayern Munich 5-4. In what will go down in history as a classic, PSG overcame a one-goal deficit to take a 5-2 lead thanks to goals from Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Ousmane Dembele. Just before the hour, Bayern scored twice in three minutes to increase their hopes of winning the return leg in Munich the following week. With Bayern coach Vincent Kompany serving out a ban in the stands and his assistant Aaron Danks in the dugout, the match, which paired the most aggressive Champions League clubs of the season against one another, swiftly lived up to its hype with a relentless pace.PSG coach Luis Enrique stated, “We’re really happy, and I think we deserved to win, but we also deserved a draw, and we would have even deserved to lose, because this game was that incredible.”

“I’ve never seen a game with that rhythm before. You have to congratulate the opponents, the players. When you hold a 5-2 lead like that, the opponents take so many risks – they’re a top-level side. It was difficult, and the second leg will be too.”Harry Kane converted a 17th-minute penalty to beat PSG goalkeeper Matvei Safonov, and become the first English player to net in six successive Champions League fixtures. The England captain then delivered a well-timed pass for Michael Olise but his close-range shot was cleared off the line. The hosts should have levelled when Dembele broke through but his finish flew well wide in the 23rd, but Kvaratskhelia did find the



net with a trademark move and a low shot after cutting into the box. Bayern hit the post following a solo run by Olise and his deflected pass, but it was PSG who scored again in the 33rd with Joao Neves’ glancing header.

There was plenty of drama left in the first half with Olise making amends for his earlier miss and drawing Bayern level with a 41st-minute shot after being given far too much space around the box. PSG were then awarded a stoppage-time penalty and Dembele powered his spot kick past Manuel Neuer to put them back in front. Bayern hit the post following a solo run by Olise and his deflected pass, but it was PSG who scored again in the 33rd with Joao Neves’ glancing header. There was plenty of drama left in the first half with Olise making amends for his earlier miss and drawing Bayern level with a 41st-minute shot after being given far too much space around the box. PSG were then awarded a stoppage-time penalty and Dembele powered

his spot kick past Manuel Neuer to put them back in front.

PSG picked up where they left off after halftime and carved out a two-goal lead when Kvaratskhelia drilled in a 56th-minute effort and the French side struck again before Bayern had any time to recover, this time Dembele beating Neuer once more with a low drive that went in off the post two minutes later. The hosts looked to be running away with the game but Bayern refused to buckle and fought back with two goals of their own in a three-minute span from Dayot Upamecano and Luis Diaz. PSG’s Senny Mayulu rattled the woodwork in the 86th minute as both sides kept up the frenetic pace until the final whistle. “Although we lost the game, we showed what kind of team we are and that we can deal with setbacks,” said Bayern defender Jonathan Tah. “We know we can win by two goals at home. We’re confident and we’ll give everything next week to reach the final.”

Rafael Jodar is stopped by Jannik Sinner to secure a spot in the Madrid Open semifinals

New Delhi: With a 6-2, 7-6 (7/0) victory at the Madrid Open on Wednesday, Jannik Sinner completed his run of semi-final appearances at all nine Masters 1000 events, ending the impressive run of young local favorite Rafael Jodar. This clay season, the 19-year-old Jodar has dominated the circuit. He won his first ATP championship in Marrakesh, advanced to the semi-finals in Barcelona, and reached the quarterfinals in Madrid before being stopped by the world number one at the Caja Magica. At this time last year, Jodar was ranked 687th in the world while representing the University of Virginia in college tennis. When the new rankings are announced on Monday, he will be in the top 35. Before Sinner extended his



current winning record to 21 straight games, he was put to the test. Sinner later cautioned against placing too much pressure on Jodar, saying, “He pushed me to the limit.” Ultimately, the player must take the next move, and we’ll see what happens. However, what he’s doing is amazing. I wish him only the best. “Don’t push him too hard, though. Because it can occasionally get inside your head and be quite difficult to remove.

“He’s a very, very good kid, he has a great family behind him. The father seems very, very humble. He has a small bubble, which is great for him. I think he’s going to make some incredible results in the future.” The world number one will next face recent Barcelona champion Arthur Fils in Friday’s semi-final after the Frenchman skipped past Jiri Lehecka 6-3, 6-4 to improve to 9-0 on clay this season. The first-set scoreline may

have read 6-2 but it was far from a routine affair for Sinner, who found himself facing a young opponent who could match his firepower, particularly on the forehand wing. The Italian was tested in multiple service games, including a marathon one at 2-2, and had to save a pair of break points before he took a one-set lead in 44 minutes. Leaning on the rowdy home support that included several Real Madrid stars, past and present, Jodar skirted danger at the start of the second set and put pressure on the Sinner serve. But despite his best efforts, Jodar couldn’t convert any of the five break points he created as Sinner forced a tiebreak, and won the last 11 points of the match to advance to his first Madrid semi-final.

Arsenal is held in a cagey Champions League semifinal by Atletico Madrid’s comeback

New Delhi: Atletico Madrid and Arsenal played to a 1-1 draw in the first leg of the Champions League semi-final on Wednesday. Viktor Gyokeres opened the scoring for Arsenal with a penalty after being fouled in the box, giving them a 1-0 lead at half-time. However, in the second half, Julian Alvarez equalized for Atletico with a penalty awarded for a handball by Ben White. Despite Arsenal creating chances and a late penalty decision being overturned by VAR, the match ended level.

Atletico’s captain Koke stated that they had opportunities to win but acknowledged the challenge posed by Arsenal’s defense.

The tie remains open ahead of the return leg in London, where Arsenal will face Atletico again while also contending with their Premier League title race. Notably, Arsenal fielded a weakened attack due to injuries, affecting key players like Bukayo Saka



and Kai Havertz. Overall, the match was characterized by tactical play, contrasting with the thrilling first semifinal between PSG and Bayern Munich.

“In the first half, I think we controlled the game quite well,” said Gyokeres. “They started much better in the second half, maybe deserved to

get a goal, and overall it was a tough game.” At home with our fans, it’ll be different for sure. We have to do our job and be at our best.”

Canadian police rejected FIFA President Infantino’s request for a police escort

New Delhi: The Vancouver Police Department stated on Wednesday that FIFA President Gianni Infantino’s request for a police escort during FIFA meetings in Vancouver, British Columbia, had been turned down. According to a statement from Deputy Chief Don Chapman, “formal motorcades where traffic is stopped are reserved for heads of state.”

“The request was denied because the FIFA executive does not meet Internationally Protected Person (IPP) standards that would warrant such an escort (closing roads, intersections, not adhering to traffic devices, etc.),” Chapman stated. A message requesting comment was not immediately answered by



FIFA. Football’s governing body is holding meetings this week in Vancouver, one of the 16 sites of World Cup matches in a tournament co-hosted by Canada,

the United States and Mexico from June 11 to July 19. FIFA’s Congress, a meeting of representatives from all its members, is scheduled for Thursday.

Ann Li advances to the round of 16 when Swiatek retires sick in Madrid

New Delhi: Iga Swiatek left her Madrid home. She ended her title defense in the Spanish city on Saturday with an open third-round match against Ann Li after being ill during the deciding. With Li up 7-6 (4), 2-6, 3-0, the fourth-ranked Pole, the 2024 champion here, withdrew. Swiatek later disclosed that, despite feeling “terrible,” she had been fighting a stomach ailment for the past two days and had believed she could still find a way through. Li advanced to the round

of 16 to play Leylah Fernandez after Swiatek’s withdrawal, which was his first exit in five games in Madrid. Swiatek’s campaign began with a victory against Daria Snigur, but faced challenges against 34th-ranked Li in the round of 32, losing the first set 7-6 (4) and winning the second 6-2. In the third set, Swiatek was broken and, after a medical timeout, found herself down 3-0 before ultimately conceding the match due to a viral illness affecting her stamina. This defeat



marks an early exit for Swiatek, the defending champion, while Li achieves her second win over a top-10 player and advances to the fourth round in Madrid.

“Just an absolute sensation,” says Pat McAfee in response to Diego Pavia’s NFL draft rejection



New Delhi: Diego Pavia, a quarterback for Vanderbilt, became the first Heisman finalist in twelve years to go undrafted in the 2026 NFL Draft. On Sunday, Pat McAfee gave him high marks on social media. McAfee alluded to greater oppor-

tunities elsewhere, even though the Ravens rookie minicamp invitation began on May 2. McAfee wrote, “I loved what Diego Pavia did for college ball -- just an absolute sensation,” on social media. “I believe that many of the things that made

him outstanding in college were also going to hinder him as an NFL ‘prospect.’ size, speed, play style, and disposition. I would be thrilled for him and his family if he were to enter a building and succeed.” “If it doesn’t work out, is he not the UFL QB Blueprint?” he continued. Recognizable name...can move...not scared to promote. With some well-known companies present, the UFL’s 800,000 viewers each game—good for spring ball—can increase that a little. Regardless of the result, I believe we all anticipate the clips would continue for a while. It seems like a good time for both the Pavia show and the UFL. Fans on Reddit and X had differing opinions about the news. One person made fun of Pavia on X, saying, “Welcome to the UFL,” while another said, “Arrogance is the reason,” following X’s undrafted status. McAfee was praised by Reddit’s r/UnitedFootball-League: “Pat McAfee on Diego Pavia being the UFL QB blueprint,” which quoted his size-speed analysis. Supporters rallied, “Pavia transformed Vandy, clips will go viral in UFL,” on X. A critical response said “Heisman finalist UDFA? Size killed him,” on Reddit. McAfee fans on social media agreed with the theory “Opportune time for Pavia show.”

Italian football is rocked by a refereeing scandal, and Inter Milan is on the verge of winning Serie A

New Delhi: As a developing referee scandal jeopardizes the credibility of Italy’s top division, Serie A leaders Inter Milan might win the Italian championship this weekend when they play Parma at the San Siro. With a 10-point advantage over Napoli, who play Champions League contenders Como on Saturday night, Inter only needs to win one of their next four games to capture their 21st league title and third in six years. However, if Napoli loses at Como and AC Milan, who are 12 points behind in third place, lose at Sassuolo on Sunday afternoon, Inter supporters may already be celebrating the Scudetto when they take their seats on Sunday night. The same could have been said last weekend when the league leaders gave up a two-goal lead to draw at mid-table Torino, but Parma has nothing to play for and should be easy pickings for Inter. In actuality, securing Champions League qualification is Milan’s and Napoli’s only feasible goal. If Napoli defeated Como and Roma but lost to Fiorentina on Monday night, they would do just that. Both Como, who are in fifth position, and Roma, who are in sixth, are eight points behind Napoli as they attempt to sneak into the top four in the last few weeks of the season. Milan is



three points ahead of Como and Roma, who are three points behind Juventus, who are in the fourth and final Champions League qualifying slot. However, a crisis involving the head of Serie A and Serie B referees being probed by Milan prosecutors for the crime of “sporting fraud” overshadows the on-field activity. After it was revealed that he, VAR chief Andrea Gervasoni, and two other people were accused of the same crime, which carries a possible six-year prison sentence, Gianluca Rocchi suspended himself on Sunday.

The 52-year-old Rocchi will not speak to prosecutors at a hearing on Thursday, but Gervasoni will be questioned over

accusations that the selection of referees has, in some instances, been piloted and that VAR officials have received outside communication from both him and Rocchi on what decisions to make. Another official, Daniele Paterna, is accused of giving false testimony on an incident in which Rocchi is suspected of banging on the door of the VAR room to get him to change his ruling on a handball offence during Udinese’s 1-0 win over Parma in March last year. Rocchi is also suspected of having decided on the selection of Andrea Colombo as the referee for Inter Milan’s 1-0 defeat at Bologna in April last year as he was “likened by Inter.”