

In Brief

Manipur Violence Commission to Continue Till November 2026

Imphal: The Centre has extended the tenure of the Commission of Inquiry investigating the 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur by another six months, pushing the deadline for submission of its report to November 20, 2026. According to a notification issued on May 14, the three-member inquiry panel headed by former Supreme Court of India judge Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan has been directed to submit its findings “as soon as possible but not later than November 20, 2026”. The commission was constituted on June 4, 2023, shortly after large-scale ethnic violence erupted across Manipur following a “Tribal Solidarity March” organised in the hill districts on May 3, 2023. The march was held to oppose the demand for Scheduled Tribe status by the Meitei community. The violence claimed the lives of more than 260 people and displaced thousands of residents as houses, shops and other properties were set on fire in widespread arson attacks.

Hoolock Gibbon Uses Canopy Bridge to Cross Railway Track

Guwahati: Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav today shared a video on X of a hoolock gibbon using canopy bridge to cross a railway track in Assam, and described it as a watershed moment in gibbon conservation in the country. He captioned the post as “Innovation-led conservation!”, and wrote, “Good to see that mitigation measure such as this canopy bridge made over a railway passing through Assam has started being used by hoolock gibbon. This shows science-led small-scale efforts can also be of great help in biodiversity conservation.” The railway line shown in the video traverses the Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary in Assam’s Jorhat district, which is home to an estimated 125 rare hoolock gibbons, the only ape found in India. “This marks a watershed moment in gibbon conservation in India.

Over 60 per cent of Assam investment proposals in advanced stages, says Himanta Biswa Sarma

Guwahati, May 15: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that more than 60 per cent of the investment proposals announced during the Advantage Assam 2.0 summit had reached advanced stages of implementation, with several projects already becoming operational across the state. The Chief Minister reviewed the progress of major investment, infrastructure and power sector projects during a high-level meeting and said the government was closely tracking proposals worth over Rs 5 lakh crore committed during the Advantage Assam 2.0 summit held in February 2025. Sharing details after the review, Sarma said the government was focused on ensuring that investment announcements move quickly towards execution on the ground. “Today, I examined the status of these projects and I’m happy to report that over 60% of investment commitments are in advanced



stages of implementation, with some already operationalised,” the Chief Minister said in a post on X. The meeting reviewed industrial expansion, infrastructure development and energy preparedness

in Assam as the state looks to position itself as a major investment destination in the Northeast. Sarma directed officials to speed up pending approvals and clearances linked to different sectors and proj-

ects. He also said he would personally engage with industrial groups and stakeholders in the coming months to ensure timely implementation of investment commitments. “Once completed, these proj-

ects will be game changers for Assam,” he added. The review also focused on the state’s preparedness to handle rising electricity demand during the ongoing summer season. According to officials, Assam had recorded a peak electricity demand of 2,950 MW last year, while this year the figure is expected to rise to around 3,100 MW. The Chief Minister said the government was fully prepared to manage the increased demand and had instructed all three state power distribution companies to ensure uninterrupted supply and strict compliance with operational standards. “We are adequately prepared to meet this demand,” Sarma said during the review meeting. Officials informed the Chief Minister about the progress of several ongoing thermal power, solar energy and pumped storage projects aimed at strengthening Assam’s long-term power generation and supply capacity.

Manipur Violence Commission to Continue Till November 2026

Imphal, May 15: The Centre has extended the tenure of the Commission of Inquiry investigating the 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur by another six months, pushing the deadline for submission of its report to November 20, 2026. According to a notification issued on May 14, the three-member inquiry panel headed by former Supreme Court of India judge Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan has been directed to submit its findings “as soon as possible but not later than November 20, 2026”.

The commission was constituted on June 4, 2023, shortly after large-scale ethnic violence erupted across Manipur following a “Tribal Solidarity March” organised in the hill districts on May 3, 2023. The march was held to oppose the demand for Scheduled Tribe status by the Meitei community. The violence claimed the lives of more than 260 people and displaced thousands of residents

as houses, shops and other properties were set on fire in widespread arson attacks.

The unrest also exposed deep ethnic tensions between the Meitei community and the Kuki community, with sporadic incidents continuing even after the initial outbreak of violence. The inquiry panel was initially headed by former Gauhati High Court Chief Justice Ajai Lamba, who stepped down from the post with effect from February 28 this year. Justice Chauhan took charge as chairman on March 1.

This is the fifth extension granted to the commission so far. Earlier extensions were issued in September and December 2024, followed by two more in May and December 2025. The previous deadline for submission of the report was May 20, 2026. As per the terms of reference, the panel is examining the sequence

of events that led to the violence and whether there were lapses or negligence on the part of authorities or individuals responsible for maintaining law and order. The commission is also reviewing whether adequate administrative and security measures were taken to prevent the violence and control the situation after clashes broke out. In addition, complaints and representations submitted by individuals and organisations are being examined as part of the inquiry process.

Tensions in the state had reportedly been building even before the violence in May 2023, particularly over eviction drives carried out in reserved forest areas, which had triggered protests in several districts. While announcing the inquiry in 2023, the Ministry of Home Affairs had described the matter as one of “public importance” due to the scale of violence and destruction witnessed across the state.

Vincent Pala Named Congress Candidate for Shillong Seat



Shillong, May 15: The Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee has resolved to name its president, Vincent H. Pala as the candidate for the upcoming by-election to the Shillong Lok Sabha seat. The resolution came after an organisational meeting attended by district and block-level Congress leaders from across the state. Notably, Pala, a seasoned leader and former Lok Sabha MP, brings extensive political experience for the Congress in Meghalaya. The party meeting also discussed about preparations for the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) elections and strengthening the party at the grassroots.

With Pala in the fray, the stage is now set for a triangular contest between the VPP, NPP and Congress. Speaking to mediapersons after the meeting, Pala said the unanimous endorsement of his candidature by the party leaders and workers was a major resolution and that the proposal would now be formally sent to the party high command in Delhi for approval and final announcement. “Detailed discussions were held in the meeting regarding the upcoming Lok Sabha by-election and GHADC elections. The proposal that I should contest the Lok Sabha by-poll will be placed before the party leadership,” Pala said.

More Than 60% Investment Plans Under Advantage Assam 2.0 Near Rollout

Guwahati, May 15: More than 60 per cent of the investment proposals announced during Advantage Assam 2.0 had reached advanced stages of implementation, with several projects already becoming operational, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma informed on Thursday. Sarma took stock of the progress of key development projects across sectors stating that the state government was closely monitoring the execution of proposals worth over Rs 5 lakh crore that were committed during the Advantage Assam 2.0 summit held in February last year.

“Today, I examined the status of these projects and I’m happy to report that over 60% of investment commitments are in advanced stages of implementation, with some already operationalised,” the chief minister said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

The review meeting fo-

cused on accelerating industrial growth, infrastructure expansion and energy security in the state.

Officials have been directed to speed up pending processes.

The Chief Minister said he would personally engage with industrial groups and stakeholders to ensure the proposals translate into actual investments on the ground.

The chief minister also assessed the state’s preparedness to meet rising electricity demand during the summer season.

Assam had recorded a peak power demand of 2,950 MW last year, while demand this year is projected to touch around 3,100 MW.

“We are prepared to meet this demand,” Sarma said, adding that the state’s three power distribution companies had been directed to ensure uninterrupted supply and maintain compliance standards.



The Chief Minister was also briefed on the progress of ongoing thermal, solar and pumped storage power projects aimed at strengthening Assam’s long-term energy

capacity. Sarma further reviewed the Maa Kamakhya Access Corridor project, a major infrastructure initiative linked to the Kamakhya Temple.

“Most legal hurdles connected to the project have now been resolved and work is expected to gather momentum soon,” he added.

Peerless Hospital Highlights Growing Hypertension Risk

Guwahati, May 15: Ahead of World Hypertension Day, Peerless Hospital Guwahati has raised concern over the sharp rise in hypertension cases among young Indians, especially those aged between 25 and 40 years.

The hospital stated that high blood pressure, once considered a disease affecting older adults, is now increasingly being diagnosed among people in their 20s and 30s due to unhealthy lifestyles and rising stress levels.

World Hypertension Day is observed globally to spread awareness about hypertension, often referred to as the “silent killer” because it usually shows no warning signs while significantly increasing the risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney failure and premature death.

According to the ICMR INDIAB Study 2023, nearly 25.3 per cent of urban Indians aged 25–40 suffer from elevated blood pressure, with many unaware of their condition.

Dr. Pranab Barua, Medical Superintendent and Senior Consultant of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Peerless Hospital Guwahati, said the growing number of young hypertension patients is alarming.

“Young Indians today are developing high blood pressure at an alarming rate — something rarely seen a decade ago. Sedentary desk jobs, chronic stress, late-night work schedules, processed food consumption and poor sleep habits are driving this trend,” he said.

He added that many young patients discover their condition during routine check-ups or treatment for minor illnesses.

“They often walk out shocked with a diagnosis that may require lifelong management. The tragedy is that many of these cases could have been prevented through early awareness and lifestyle changes. Youth is not immunity,” Dr. Barua said.

The hospital identified several major risk factors contributing to hypertension among young adults, including long working hours, stress, unhealthy eating habits, lack of sleep, absence of regular health check-ups and ignoring symptoms such as headaches, dizziness and fatigue.

Dr. Barua also warned that uncontrolled hypertension silently damages blood vessels and vital organs over

time, often leading to severe complications later in life.

He noted that hypertension is closely linked to other lifestyle diseases, including diabetes and kidney dysfunction.

Addressing common misconceptions, Dr. Barua said many young people wrongly believe that being fit or symptom-free means their blood pressure is normal.

“In reality, early-stage hypertension can often be controlled or reversed through lifestyle changes if detected in time. Regular blood pressure screening from the age of 18 is extremely important,” he added.

CEO of Peerless Hospital Guwahati, Dr. Gautam Kr Das, stressed the need for preventive healthcare.

“A simple two-minute blood pressure check can prevent decades of complications. Healthcare institutions must focus not only on treatment but also on early detection and prevention,” he said.

The hospital further highlighted that early hypertension screening remains one of the simplest and most cost-effective methods to prevent heart attacks and strokes in the future.

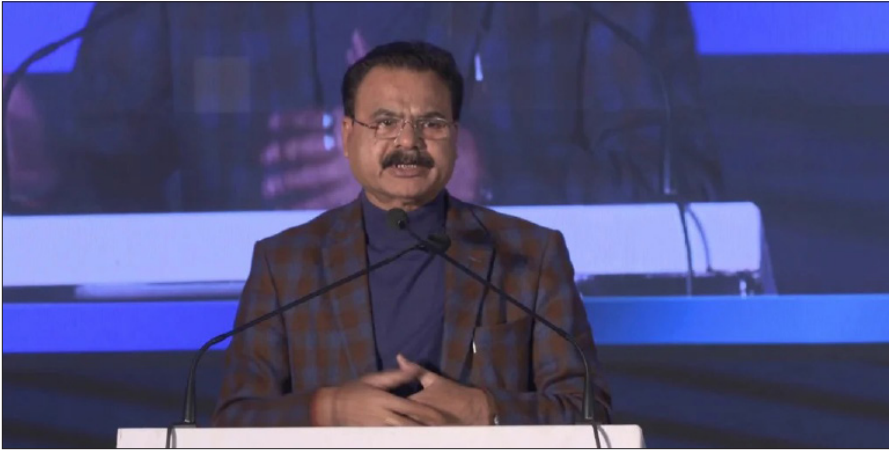
Hoolock Gibbon Uses Canopy Bridge to Cross Railway Track

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Chandramohan Patowary to take oath as Pro-tem Speaker of Assam Assembly today

Guwahati, May 15: Senior BJP leader Chandramohan Patowary is set to take oath as the Pro-tem Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly on May 15, ahead of the first sitting of the newly constituted House following the 2026 Assembly elections. According to official sources, Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya will administer the oath to Patowary during a ceremony scheduled at Raj Bhavan at 11:30 am on Friday. As Pro-tem Speaker, Patowary will preside over the initial proceedings of the Assembly, including the swearing-in of newly elected MLAs and the conduct of the election for the Speaker of the House.

The appointment is considered a key procedural step before the regular



functioning of the new Assembly begins. The development comes at a time when the BJP-led government in Assam, headed by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has initiated major administrative and ministerial changes after returning to power for a second consecutive term. Among the most signifi-

cant changes in the newly formed cabinet is the re-assignment of senior minister Ajanta Neog, who is no longer handling the Finance department. According to an official notification approved by the Governor on May 14, Neog has now been entrusted with the Women and Child Development and Tour-

ism departments. Neog had served as Assam's Finance Minister during the previous BJP government and played a central role in the state's financial administration and annual budget planning.

Her removal from the Finance portfolio is being viewed as one of the biggest changes in the new cabinet

formation. The portfolio allocation notification also detailed responsibilities assigned to other ministers in the expanded cabinet. Senior BJP leader Rameswar Teli has been given charge of the Transformation and Development department along with Labour Welfare and Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare.

Meanwhile, Atul Bora will oversee Panchayat and Rural Development, Implementation of Assam Accord, Border Protection and Development, and Excise. Minister Charan Boro has been allocated the Transport department in addition to Welfare of Bodoland. In his communication to the Chief Minister, Governor Acharya stated that he had approved the allocation of portfolios "as suggested" by the Chief Minister.

The Sarma government moves towards a historic reform

Guwahati, May 15: The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a highly significant and controversial topic in contemporary India, particularly under the leadership of Assam's Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The Assam government's initiative to implement the UCC aims to create a more organized legal framework amid the state's diverse communities, where religion, identity, and gender equality intersect. Supporters regard the UCC as a tool for equality, while critics express concern over potential impacts on religious customs and cultural autonomy. The UCC primarily addresses marriage, divorce, property rights, inheritance, live-in relationships, and marriage registration, excluding tribal communities to preserve their traditions.

The UCC is framed as a protective measure for

women and children, aiming to provide equal legal rights across religions and reduce practices like child marriage and polygamy. Critics argue that it could infringe on religious personal laws, particularly concerning women in Islamic communities, who have historically sought reform regarding issues like triple talaq and inheritance. The Assam government's portrayal of the UCC as an "Assam Model" aims to balance traditional rights with modern legal standards, but sensitive implementation is crucial to avoid social unrest.

Critically, the proposed reforms address polygamy and compulsory marriage registration—issues that affect many women, particularly in rural areas. Ending polygamy is positioned as a means to elevate women's dignity, while compulsory registration aims to elimi-

nate legal ambiguities surrounding marriages. The legislation seeks to enforce a minimum marriage age, helping combat persistent child marriage issues in Assam.

While these efforts are commendable, ongoing dialogue with Islamic leaders and communities is necessary to ensure inclusivity and mitigate fears of marginalization. Constructive criticism is also essential to satisfy all communities involved in the reform process. This initiative aligns with the Indian Constitution's Article 44 and reflects the broader socio-political context of identity, demographic change, and indigenous rights in Assam. Assam, following Goa and Uttarakhand, mirrors the BJP's long-standing support for the UCC as it navigates these complex social dynamics.

Vincent Pala is supported by the Meghalaya Congress in the Shillong Lok Sabha by-election

Shillong, May 15: The Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) has unanimously decided to propose former Lok Sabha MP Vincent H Pala as the party candidate for the upcoming Shillong Lok Sabha by-election. The decision was taken during a meeting of the state Congress leadership held in Shillong on Thursday. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Pala said the proposal would now be sent to the All India Congress Committee (AICC) for formal approval and announcement.

"We'll send a proposal to Delhi and it is up to Delhi to announce first. But from here, we had unanimously decided that I should be contesting for the election," Pala said. The by-election has become necessary following the death of Voice of the People Party (VPP) MP Ricky AJ Syngkon in February. As per election rules, the seat must be filled within six months of the vacancy. Pala said the party has already started preparing for the election at the grassroots level. He informed that district and block committees have been directed to complete organisational



work within this month before campaigning begins formally. "Those districts and blocks who have completed their committees have already started organising meetings. Looking at the new energy of the district and block presidents, I think the Congress will do well this time," he said. The Shillong seat is expected to witness a closely watched contest, especially after Congress suffered a major setback in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. Pala,

who represented Shillong in Parliament for three consecutive terms, saw a sharp fall in his vote share.

His support dropped from 53.52 per cent in 2019 to below 20 per cent in 2024, losing more than two lakh votes as he was defeated by Syngkon. During his interaction with the media, Pala strongly criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led central government on issues related to minority rights, the Foreign Contribution

(Regulation) Act (FCRA), and anti-conversion laws. "I think we should do well.

When you talk of Delhi, it is only Congress that normally protects the minorities," he said. Pala alleged that the proposed amendments to the FCRA were aimed at targeting Christian institutions and properties. "The new bill, which the BJP has introduced for FCRA, is 100 per cent to grab properties like the schools and churches of Christians. That

is the main purpose of the FCRA amendment," he claimed. "The way the bill has been framed, whatever you do, they will grab the property, right from schools," he added. He also expressed concern over anti-conversion laws enacted in several states across the country and warned that similar laws could eventually affect Meghalaya as well.

"Another very dangerous thing is that 12 states in India have amended anti-conversion laws, due to which many pastors and priests have landed in jail. In those states you cannot even organise a Christian prayer meeting," Pala said. "One day, that same anti-conversion law will also cover Meghalaya.

Then people will realise that voting for BJP is suicide," he added. The Congress leader further accused the BJP of practising divisive politics to win elections. "They play Hindu versus Muslim. Where there are no Muslims, they will say Garo versus Muslim. Where there are no Garos, they say Khasi versus Jaintia. They play one religion against another," he alleged.

CM Lalduhoma Launches Online Quarters Allotment and Reservation Systems

Aizawl, May 15: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Thursday said the state government is working to transform Mizoram into a digitally enabled state by using modern technology to improve the accessibility, efficiency, and convenience of public services. He made the remarks while launching two new digital platforms—the Government Quarters Allotment Management System (QAMS) and the Mizoram House Online Reservation System for Mizoram Houses located in Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati, and Mumbai. Both systems are managed by the General Administration Department (GAD) and aim to digitise previously manual administrative processes. Lalduhoma said that allotment of government quarters earlier involved physical submission of documents and manual record-keeping, often handled through individual computers. Tracking vacancies and updating records after retirements or deaths was also time-consuming and inefficient. With QAMS, the entire process has been moved online, allowing applicants to submit and track applications digitally without visiting government offices. He said this will also significantly reduce the administrative burden on officials. Similarly, the Mizoram House Online Reservation System will allow citizens, especially those living outside Aizawl, to book accommodations online without physical visits, making the process faster and more transparent. The Chief Minister noted that QAMS, developed by the ICT Department since August last year, is now fully operational. Turning to the fisheries sector, Lalduhoma addressed the Mizoram Fish Farmers' Meet organised by the Fisheries Department. He said Mizoram has around 24,000 hectares suitable for fish farming, but only about 6,000 hectares have been developed so far, indicating that a large portion of potential remains untapped. He identified limited pond infrastructure and inadequate storage facilities as key challenges affecting fish production.

Rio meets Sitharaman, seeks continued support for Nagaland's development

Kohima, May 15: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi and discussed the state's financial position and key development priorities. According to officials, the Nagaland delegation included deputy chief ministers T. R. Zeliang and Yanthungo Patton along with MLA Achumbemo Kikon. In a post shared on X, Rio said the delegation apprised the Union finance minister about the continued support required for Nagaland's developmental needs and ongoing projects. The discussions reportedly focused on financial assistance and



measures to strengthen infrastructure and growth initiatives in the state. The chief minister also expressed gratitude to Sitharaman for her understanding of the state's concerns and for assuring support to Nagaland. The

meeting assumes significance as northeastern states continue to seek enhanced central assistance for infrastructure, connectivity and welfare projects aimed at accelerating regional development.

No-confidence motion against DMC chairperson to be taken up on May 22

Dimapur, May 15: A special meeting of the elected members of the Dimapur Municipal Council (DMC) has been convened on May 22 to consider a no-confidence motion against DMC chairperson Hukheto Yephthomi.

According to a DIPR report, the meeting was called following a notice issued by Dimapur deputy commissioner Dr. Timojongshi Chang after 12 of the 23 elected members submitted their intention to

move the motion. The special meeting is scheduled to be held at 11 a.m. at the office of the Dimapur Municipal Council.

All elected members, excluding ex-officio and nominated members, have been directed to attend the session. Officials said the notice, submitted by two elected members and received by the deputy commissioner on May 11, was examined and found to be in conformity with the procedural and substantive

provisions under Chapter-II, Section 15 (1) and (2) of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2023.

The report stated that the motion met the statutory requirement of support from the mandated number of elected members. Following scrutiny and verification, the deputy commissioner expressed satisfaction that the motion was procedurally valid and warranted the convening of a special meeting for further consideration.

The Meghalaya High Court orders potholes on the Jowai-Ratacherra stretch to be filled and requests a new NH-6 report

Shillong, May 15: The Meghalaya High Court has reviewed the progress of work on the Jowai-Ratacherra section of National Highway-06 and directed the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the State government to submit fresh status reports by June 8.

The matter came up before a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Justice W Diengdoh during the hearing of a public interest litigation (PIL) originally filed by Kynjaimom Amse, who has since passed away, against the NHAI and others. During the hearing, counsel appearing for the NHAI submitted a fresh status report in compliance with the High Court's earlier order dated April 17, 2026.

The report covered progress made on the Jowai-Ratacherra section of NH-06 up to May 10, 2026. A copy of the report was also provided to the Amicus Curiae assisting the court.

According to the court order, the report detailed the steps taken by the NHAI regarding the ongoing construction work on the highway stretch. It also included updates on the status of three key locations iden-



tified earlier by the Amicus Curiae — Byndihati, Tonseng and Ratacherra. The Bench noted that action had been taken against contractors involved in the project and penalties had been imposed on them. The court further recorded that slope stabilisation work had now been assigned to a third contractor and that the work was currently in prog-

ress. The report also included photographs showing the condition of the road on March 19, 2026, and the condition after concrete was laid on certain portions of the highway. During the proceedings, counsel for the NHAI sought an additional two weeks to continue the work and place updated information before the court. Amicus Curiae S

Panthi also requested time to examine the status report and contracts awarded to various contractors, copies of which were handed over during the hearing.

The Amicus Curiae informed the court that there were still several portions of the road where the condition remained poor and large potholes were visible. He further submitted

that the particular stretch was currently being maintained by the Public Works Department (PWD). Taking serious note of the issue, the Bench directed the State government to ensure immediate action. "Mr Khan, learned AAG to take instructions to ensure that the potholes, if any, to be filled before the next date," the court said in its order.

Kohima Museum to offer free entry on International Museum Day

Kohima, May 15: Visitors will be able to explore the State Museum, Kohima for free on May 18 and 19 as part of celebrations marking International Museum Day on May 18.

According to an official statement, the Department of Art and Culture, Government of Nagaland, will observe International Museum Day 2026 at the State Museum, Kohima on May 18 in line with the global initiative of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

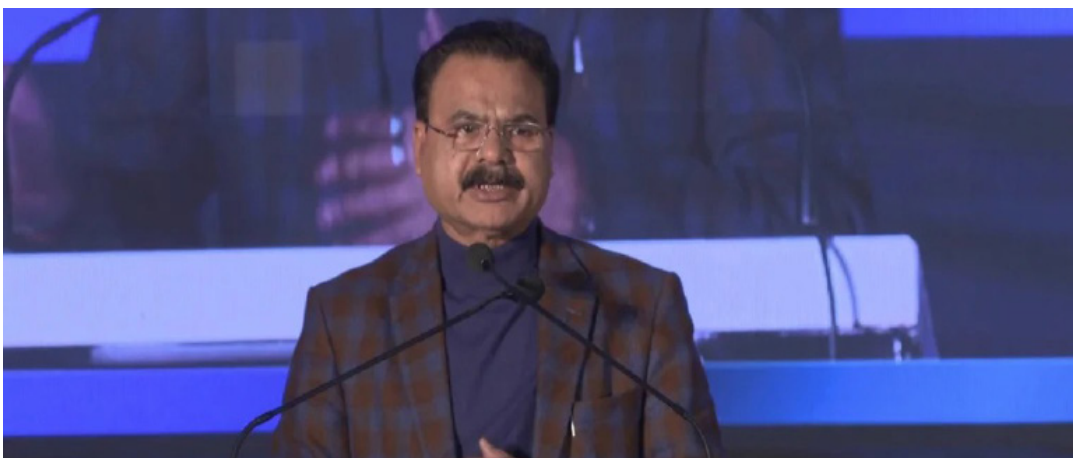
The theme for International Museum Day 2026 is “Museums Uniting a Divided World”, highlighting the role of museums in promoting cultural dialogue, preserving identity, encouraging knowledge-sharing, and fostering peace and harmony among diverse communities.

To mark the occasion, the Department has announced free entry for all visitors to the State Museum, Kohima on May 18 and 19. Students, scholars, researchers, educational institutions, tourists, and the general public are invited to visit the museum and experience the rich cultural heritage, traditional artefacts, and historical collections preserved there.

The observance aims to encourage greater public engagement with museums and create awareness about the importance of preserving and promoting Nagaland’s cultural ceritage for future generations, the statement added.

Chandramohan Patowary to take oath as Pro-tem Speaker of Assam Assembly today

Guwahati, May 15: Senior BJP leader Chandramohan Patowary is set to take oath as the Pro-tem Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly on May 15, ahead of the first sitting of the newly constituted House following the 2026 Assembly elections. According to official sources, Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya will administer the oath to Patowary during a ceremony scheduled at Raj Bhavan at 11:30 am on Friday. As Pro-tem Speaker, Patowary will preside over the initial proceedings of the Assembly, including the swearing-in of newly elected MLAs and the conduct of the election for the Speaker of the House. The appointment is considered a key procedural step before the regular functioning of the new Assembly begins. The development comes at a time when the BJP-led government in Assam, headed by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has initiated major administrative and ministerial changes after returning to power



for a second consecutive term. Among the most significant changes in the newly formed cabinet is the reassignment of senior minister Ajanta Neog, who is no longer handling the Finance department. According to an official notification approved by the Governor on May 14, Neog has now been entrusted with the Women and Child Development and Tourism departments. Neog had served as Assam’s Finance Minister during the previous BJP government and played a

central role in the state’s financial administration and annual budget planning. Her removal from the Finance portfolio is being viewed as one of the biggest changes in the new cabinet formation. The portfolio allocation notification also detailed responsibilities assigned to other ministers in the expanded cabinet. Senior BJP leader Rameswar Teli has been given charge of the Transformation and Development department along with Labour Welfare and Tea

Tribes and Adivasi Welfare. Meanwhile, Atul Bora will oversee Panchayat and Rural Development, Implementation of Assam Accord, Border Protection and Development, and Excise. Minister Charan Boro has been allocated the Transport department in addition to Welfare of Bodoland. In his communication to the Chief Minister, Governor Acharya stated that he had approved the allocation of portfolios “as suggested” by the Chief Minister.

Pensioners' Body Urges Assam MP to Address Issues in Central Health Scheme



Guwahati, May 15: A nine-member delegation of the All-India Services Pensioners Cell, Assam-Meghalaya Cadre, Assam unit, met MP, Darang-Udalguri parliamentary constituency and Assam BJP president, Dilip Saikia, and submitted a memorandum on pressing issues concerning the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) in Guwahati.

The delegation was led by Paramesh Dutta, president, All India Services Pensioners Cell, Assam-Meghalaya Cadre, Assam Unit, Guwahati and Devajyoti Hazarika, secretary.

The memorandum highlighted demands for upgrade of Guwahati from Tier-II to Tier-I under CGHS as a special case, strengthening of Wellness Centre infrastructure, creation of specialist posts, immediate filling of vacancies, and coverage of AIIMS, Guwahati under CGHS.MP Saikia assured the delegation of his full support and committed to taking up the matter with the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare for early redressal.

First-Ever Satellite-Tracked Ganges Softshell Turtle Released into Kaziranga Waters

Kaziranga, May 15: In a first for India, the country’s first satellite-tagged Ganges softshell turtle was released in the Kaziranga NationalPark.

The release coincided with Endangered Species Day.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma called it a major step for wildlife conservation.

“Marking #EndangeredSpeciesDay, the country’s 1st satellite-tagged Ganges softshell turtle was released in @kaziranga , a major step for wildlife conservation. A proud moment for Assam as we continue to protect every species that calls our forests home,” Sarma posted on X.The Ganges softshell turtle is a freshwater reptile whose distribution is largely restrict-



ed to the Ganga, Indus and Mahanadi river systems in northern and eastern India.The species is listed under Part

II of Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and possession of the turtle is an offence under the law.

Manipur Sees Release of Two Kuki Individuals Amid Unrest

Imphal, May 15: Two members of the Kuki community, including a minor, were released on Thursday evening, May 14, after being held hostage amid escalating tensions between Naga and Kuki groups in Manipur.The release came a day after reports surfaced that around 20 Naga community members were allegedly abducted by Kuki groups from Leilon Vaiphei Kuki village and Supermeina on May 13.

Following the incident, Naga groups were also reported to have detained several members of the Kuki community, raising fears of further unrest in the hill districts.Officials said a Kuki woman was handed over to Senapati Police by the Naga Village Guard (Northern Command) at around 5:07 pm in Sena-

pati district. She is expected to be transferred to Kangpokpi Police for further legal procedures.Authorities also confirmed that the second person released was a minor.Despite the release, the situation in the affected areas remained tense, with security forces maintaining heightened vigil and deploying personnel in vulnerable locations.Civil society organisations and community leaders from both communities have also stepped up efforts to ensure the safe return of those still being held and to prevent fresh violence.Earlier, Govindas Konthoujam had stated that around 38 people from both the Kuki and Naga communities were being held hostage following recent clashes and retaliatory incidents.

Slain Pastor’s Son Forgives Killers, Appeals for Peace and Release of Hostages in Manipur

Imphal, May 15: In an emotional appeal for peace amid the continuing tensions in Manipur, the son of a church leader killed in the recent ambush in Kangpokpi district publicly forgave those responsible for his father’s death and urged civil society organisations to help secure the release of civilians still being held captive.

Haominlun Sithlou, son of slain pastor Rev. Dr. V. Sithlou, made the appeal during the burial ceremony of the three church leaders held on Friday, May 15, at the campus of the Thadou Baptist Association India in Motbung. Thousands of mourners attended the ceremony.

“I forgive those who killed my father in the name of the Lord and in the larger interest of peace,” Sithlou said while addressing the gathering.

He also appealed to Naga civil society organisations, including the



United Naga Council (UNC), Naga People’s Organisation (NPO), and Senapati District Students’ Associ-

ation (SDSA), to intervene and ensure the safe release of the remaining Kuki civilians.

Rev. Dr. V. Sithlou was among the three church leaders killed in the May 13 ambush on civilian vehicles at Zero Point along the Kotlen–Kotzim road in Kangpokpi district. The attack also left several others dead and injured, officials said.

The burial ceremony, organised under the aegis of the Thadou Baptist Association India and acknowledged by Kuki Inpi Manipur, witnessed the participation of a large number of mourners from the Kuki-Zo community and neighbouring areas.

Family members, church leaders, and community representatives paid tributes to the deceased as prayers and hymns marked the final rites.

The killings have triggered widespread grief and condemnation across the hill districts, with community leaders calling for justice and the restoration of peace in the conflict-hit region.

Assam’s Riyan Parag named vice-captain of the India A cricket team

Guwahati, May 15: Riyan Parag from Assam has been named vice-captain of the India A cricket team for the upcoming one-day tri-series in Sri Lanka, starting June 9, 2026. He will serve as deputy to captain Tilak Varma in the 15-member squad touring for the tournament featuring India A, Sri Lanka A, and Afghanistan A.“Congratulations to Assam’s very own @ParagRiyan for earning the responsibility of Vice-Captain of India A for the Sri Lanka tri-series,” Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wrote on X. “From Assam to the national stage, he has played every innings with confidence and class. His achievement will inspire countless young cricketers of Assam to pick up the bat and dream big for India,” Sarma said about the Rajasthan Royals captain.

Chandramohan Patowary Sworn In as Assam Pro-Tem Speaker



Guwahati, May 15: Former minister and senior BJP leader Chandramohan Patowary was on Friday sworn in as the Pro-tem Speaker of the 16th Assam Legislative Assembly.Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath during a ceremony held at Lok Bhavan in Guwahati in the presence of ministers, legislators and senior government officials.Notably, Patowary’s oath-taking as Pro-tem Speaker comes days ahead of the commencement of proceedings of the newly constituted Assam Legislative Assembly.As Pro-tem Speaker, Patowary will oversee the initial proceedings of the Assembly, including administering oath to newly elected MLAs and supervising the election process for the Speaker of the House.“Honoured to have taken oath as Pro-tem Speaker of 16th Assam Assembly administered by Governor of Assam Laxman Prasad Acharya at Lok Bhavan today,” Patowary, a seasoned politician with vast experience, stated on his X (formerly Twitter) post on Friday.Biswajit Daimary, who has been elected as an MLA in the recently-concluded Assembly elections, had served as the Speaker of the 15th Assam Legislative Assembly from May 21, 2021 to 2026.

United Christian Forum of Northeast India Appeals for Release of All Hostages in Manipur

Guwahati, May 15: The United Christian Forum of North East India (UCFNEI) has appealed to all concerned authorities and stakeholders in the Northeast region to secure the safe and immediate release of all hostages amid rising tension in Manipur’s hill districts.

“In these trying times, the United Christian Forum of North East India approaches you with a heavy heart and folded hands, seeking your urgent intervention for the safe and immediate release of the hostages currently held in captivity. Our hearts grieve for the families who are living in anguish and uncertainty, waiting desperately for their loved ones to return home unharmed,” UCFNEI spokesperson, Allen Brooks said in a statement.

Notably, the initiatives taken by civil society organisations in Senapati, in coordination with the law enforcing agencies through the intervention from the United Naga Council (UNC), have led to the release of 28 hostages till the wee hours of Friday.

While there may be more hostages in Senapati, the whereabouts of the remaining six hostages are not known even as Naga civil society organisa-



tions have stated that efforts were on to release the remaining Naga hostages abducted earlier from Leilon Vaiphei village.

“The Northeast region has long been known for its spirit of unity in diversity. Let us not allow this unfortunate incident to fracture the bonds of brotherhood that have sustained us through many challenges. Dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for human dignity must guide our actions

in these critical hours,” Brooks stated.

“Furthermore, we call upon all Churches, Christian Associations, Forums, and believers across the North East and beyond to unite in fervent prayer. We request special prayer services to be held in every church and Christian gathering for the safe and swift release of all hostages so that peace and harmony can return to our beloved region,” he stated.

North East Chronicle

MAY 16 2026 VOL 02 NO. 82



Delayed But Determined: The Case for Late-Blooming Development

Progress, they say, waits for no one. Yet in governance, infrastructure, and social reform, delayed initiatives often define eras more than timely ones — because what matters ultimately is not when a nation acts, but whether it acts at all. Across the developing world, long-overdue projects — rural electrification, urban sanitation, digital inclusion — are finally gaining momentum. Critics are right to question the decades of inertia. But cynicism should not eclipse the significance of a beginning. An irrigation canal completed thirty years behind schedule still waters crops. A school built late still educates children. The danger lies not in delay itself, but in allowing delay to become permanent. Every initiative faces inertia: political will falters, budgets shrink, priorities shift. Breaking that inertia — however belatedly — demands recognition, not ridicule. Accountability and acknowledgment must coexist. Governments must be pressed on why timelines slipped. Simultaneously, citizens and institutions must resist the corrosive habit of dismissing progress because it arrived late. Perfectionism without pragmatism is its own form of paralysis. Development is not a race with a single finish line. It is a continuous journey. And on that journey, starting — even imperfectly, even tardily — remains infinitely more valuable than standing still. The clock may have run slow, but the destination is no less worth reaching

The conflict on Ukraine may be Putin's downfall after four brutal years

Russia honored the sacrifices made by its soldiers and civilians during its four-year war against Nazi Germany on May 9 with its famous annual Victory Day parade. When Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, he had no idea that the conflict would go as long as the Red Army's heroic battle against the Wehrmacht. However, his war continues. Even worse, it's failing and endangering his authority. Even pro-war military blogs are criticizing military mismanagement despite Putin's claims that Russian forces are advancing on all fronts. Some claim that Ukraine has the upper hand, and at least one cautions that Russia may lose. With the front line stopped, an estimated 1.3 million Russian soldiers killed or injured, and growing economic strain on common Russians, the war that Putin thought would provide his greatest success could end up becoming his downfall. The war used to be something that happened over there for Russians. It is now taking place within Russia. Drones and missiles from Ukraine frequently strike targets located over 1,000 miles from the border, deep within the nation. These include the Baltic Sea oil-loading ports at Primorsk and Ust-Luga, as well as Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Perm, Rostov-on-Don, Yaroslavl, and Murmansk. Refineries at Yaroslavl and Tuapse, on the northern shore of the Black Sea, have been regularly set on fire. Additionally, multiple airport closures and flight delays throughout Russia have been brought on by Ukrainian drones. Putin was obliged to scale back Saturday's military display due to Ukraine's persistent drone assaults. Putin proposed a three-day truce starting on May 9 in a phone conversation with Donald Trump on April 29 in order to prevent the humiliation of a Ukrainian attack on Red Square. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the president of Ukraine, later agreed to the idea at Trump's insistence, particularly because it included a prisoner swap. However, he did not fully shield Putin from humiliation; his official ceasefire declaration protected Red Square from attack but not all of Russia. Russia's economy has also been severely damaged by the conflict.

There is a severe labor shortage as a result of the army's and the defense industry's enormous demand for personnel. This has resulted in a low unemployment rate (2.2% in March), but it has also increased inflation as businesses compete for labor, hindered economic development, and put pressure on small businesses already suffering from tax increases. Nearly two-thirds of small enterprises in Russia failed to make a profit in the first quarter of this year, according to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The rate of economic growth dropped from 4.9% in 2024 to 1% in 2025, and it is likely to stay at that level this year. However, 2026 is already off to a poor start: the first quarter saw a 0.3% year-over-year decline in GDP. The same applies to the front if things in the back don't seem well.

Due in part to the way Ukrainian drone warfare has changed the battlefield, the Russian army has made very little progress this year. Because Ukraine's ubiquitous drones can swiftly identify concentrations of soldiers and material, Russian commanders have been struggling for the past two years to mass armored and mechanized formations capable of smashing through the 900-mile border and taking land. Due to the effectiveness of drone strikes against infiltrating infantry, Russia has shifted to deploying small groups of soldiers to enter Ukrainian lines and create footholds for follow-on forces. However, this adaptation will not result in significant advancements. At the expense of over 400,000 casualties, including 200,000 fatalities, Russia only acquired 0.8% of Ukrainian territory last year. Although the prevalence of drones can make accurate evaluations of territorial control difficult, its progress has slowed significantly this year, and in April it lost more land than it gained—a first since the reverses in Kursk in the fall of 2023. Chasiv Yar and Pokrovsk have not yet been completely subjugated despite offensives that started there in the spring and summer of 2024, respectively, even though Russia may undertake a major summer drive in Donetsk. At least 300,000 military and, according to some estimates, over 500,000 civilians have died in Ukraine, along with significant destruction and territorial losses of roughly 8% since 2022 and over 20% since 2014. However, considering Russia's superior firepower, these numbers (as well as Ukraine's difficulties with recruitment and retention) are not surprising; what is striking is the extent of Russian losses. These losses are a reflection of Ukraine's increased drone production and development of more difficult-to-jam or shoot down variants.

India's pursuit of strategic autonomy is indicated by PM Modi's tour to the UAE and Europe

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the only leader since the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, to have filled a significant gap in high-level visits and exchanges between Africa and the Americas, Europe, and Asia. These days, diplomacy is mostly carried out at the highest level and in a very individualized way. This becomes more crucial now that the entire international system is being disrupted by a unique sort of global turbulence. Early on in the post-World War II era, India's diplomacy concentrated on being a part of the international order by being a founding member of global governance initiatives, such as the United Nations, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), and by remaining pragmatically non-aligned in a balance of power defined by rival blocs led by the US and the Soviet Union, while generally benefiting across the Cold War divide. Despite some criticism of hedging, proactive strategic autonomy with multi-alignment is being sought due to the current global circumstances. However, in this very protectionist and unilateral power-syndrome-driven world run by major powers—if any remain to be termed “great”—we must be realists. India's qualifications have made it a significant vector and member of the emerging institutions, even if they are divergent and frequently seen on the opposite end, such as the BRICS and the QUAD, whose summits are anticipated to take place in New Delhi this year. In addition to several trilaterals, minilaterals, FTAs, and CEPAs, India is a member of

the influential G7 and G20 organizations. It is an inclusive symbol of humanity, multilateralism, and multipolarity. The International Solar Alliance (ISA), Global Bio-fuels Alliance (GBA), Big Cat Alliance, and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) are just a few of the international initiatives it has started while adhering to a rational and morally grounded foreign policy. Additionally, New Delhi has established dozens of strategic alliances with nations worldwide. Paradoxically, it also affects and creates a serious problem when our strategic allies turn against us, as in the current battle in West Asia or, for that matter, the crisis between Russia and Ukraine, where our allies are at opposing ends of the spectrum. Expectations clash and the strategic space shrinks, making diplomacy even more challenging. However, Indian leadership has so far done a very good job of playing the game, staying completely involved with all players and stakeholders in the area and outside. In order to minimize the negative impact on one's national interest, strategic outreach also includes strategic patience, strategic silence, and quiet diplomacy. From May 15–20, 2026, the prime minister will travel to the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Italy. These are all significant strategic allies of India. The UAE is particularly significant in the West Asian region because of its strong relationships with other leaders, individuals, and businesses. They participate in BRICS, I2U2, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), and a number

of trilaterals, including the recent conference between India, France, and the United Arab Emirates. This would be PM Modi's eighth trip to the United Arab Emirates. Actually, the prime minister's first trip abroad after assuming office was to the United Arab Emirates. It was a special invitee even during the G20. It was the first nation with which India signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which has proven to be a successful and model deal. The energy alliance can grow much further as it is not constrained by the OPEC decree.

Particularly at a time when the region is enmeshed in the Iran-US-Israel confrontation that affects West Asia, India, and the entire world, India is hosting the BRICS Summit in addition to holding a meeting of foreign ministers in New Delhi at about the same time. Additionally, this would be a brief follow-up to Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's brief visit two months earlier, during which defense and security cooperation was further emphasized. In light of the breakup and lack of trust in the transatlantic alliance, PM Modi's trips to the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway are equally important. Defense, security, innovation, green hydrogen, semiconductors, and a strategic relationship on water have all grown dramatically between New Delhi and The Hague. With \$27.8 billion in bilateral trade in 2024–2025, the Netherlands is one of India's top trading partners in Europe. With \$55.6 billion in total foreign direct investment, the Netherlands is India's fourth-largest investor. Since India was boycotted and branded

as a nuclear pariah in the 2000s, relations with Sweden and other Nordic and Baltic nations have improved significantly. Subsequently, Sweden offered full support to India's bid for its pending membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and assisted India in joining the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). As Sweden continues to be a great innovation hub where industry and academia are in perfect sync and the “garage culture” promotes R&D and invention, innovation and trade have emerged as the key drivers. The highlights include cooperation in the green transition, AI, new technologies, start-ups, resilient supply chains, defense, space, climate action, and interpersonal relationships. Together with Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, the two prime ministers will also speak at the European Round Table for Industry, a prominent event for pan-European business leaders. In this age of technological domination, these collaborations are mutually beneficial. After that, the Prime Minister will attend bilateral meetings and an official visit for the Third India-Nordic Summit. This will be Prime Minister Modi's first trip to Norway and the first time an Indian prime minister has visited Norway in forty-three years. There will be a gap filled. The third Indo-Nordic Summit will continue to investigate cooperation in the fields of technology and innovation, e-mobility, artificial intelligence, renewable energy and green transition, sustainability, blue economy, defense, space, and the Arctic. In addition, the visit would boost India's

investment and bilateral trade (\$19 billion in 2024) with the Nordic nations and aid in the development of robust supply chains in accordance with the India-EU Free Trade Agreement and India-EFTA TEPA. PM Modi's final stop on the tour will be Italy, India's unique friend and strategic partner in the Mediterranean. During the G20 Summit in India, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni had multiple encounters with Prime Minister Modi. In fact, PM Modi highlighted “shared civilizational instincts, such as the defense of heritage, the strength of community, and the celebration of femininity as a guiding force” in the introduction to her book I Am Giorgia. The Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029, a comprehensive roadmap for cooperation in various sectors, including bilateral trade, which reached \$16.77 billion in 2025; boosting investment, which recorded a cumulative FDI of \$3.66 billion (April 2000-September 2025); defense and security; clean energy; innovation; science and technology; and people-to-people ties, according to the Ministry of External Affairs. Italy is also enthusiastic about IMEC, particularly the inclusion of its strategically important port of Trieste. The visit and high-level interactions will undoubtedly strengthen bilateral partnerships and provide fresh strategic direction. Interestingly, though, our strategic allies in Europe are at war, at odds, and on opposite sides, particularly when it comes to Israel and Russia, as well as between Europe and the US over the wars in Palestine and Gaza, Russia and Ukraine, and the US, Iran, and Israel.

The goal of the response against reports of sexual torture of Palestinian detainees is to make speaking out more expensive



The most horrifying thing about the most recent reports of Palestinians being sexually tortured while in Israeli detention is not only how horrible they are. It is that the machinery of abuse and denial keeps growing even when so much evidence has been readily apparent for a long time. The subject received significant public attention thanks to Nicholas Kristof's recent reporting on it in the New York Times. However, human rights organizations have long documented abuses in Israeli custody, as have former detainees, attorneys, physicians, and journalists. This body of data has exposed a terrible truth since October 2023: Israel's prison system has been turned into a criminal network of torture camps. In his reporting, Kristof recorded terrifying accounts from Palestinian men, women, and children detailing widespread rape, sexual torture, and humiliation at the hands of Is-

raeli soldiers, jail guards, settlers, and interrogators. Israel responded to the reports using a well-known formula: deny the abuse, attack those who exposed it, and defend the institution that enabled it. Israel will sue the New York Times, according to the ministry of foreign affairs, which rejected the article as “ Hamas propaganda.” Other officials and pundits used the well-known accusation of “blood libel,” demanded the closure of the New York Times, and generally did everything within their power to discredit not only the work of Kristof, a well-known journalist who has covered sexual abuse in conflicts all over the world, but also that of anyone attempting to expose this abuse. There is more to their collective breakdown than just refuting certain accusations. It is about limiting what is visible, who can be heard, and whose suffering is permitted to be shared with the public.

Through the testimonials of Palestinian inmates who were released from various Israeli facilities, B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights group I lead, has documented this system. Thousands of Palestinians are detained within this system at any given time. According to their accounts, they were subjected to extreme physical and psychological torture, malnutrition, brutality, humiliation, and intentional sexual harassment and abuse. Sexual assault is a component of a larger system that deprives Palestinians of their rights and dignity, treating them more like bodies that may be broken, humiliated, and thrown away than like human beings. The accounts themselves are graphic and consistent. Palestinians detained by Israel report sexual abuse employed as a form of torture and dominance in testimony gathered and validated by B'Tselem. These include forced nudity, severe beat-

ings to the genitalia, dogs placed on naked inmates, and forced anal penetration with objects. “During the torture, one of the soldiers raped me,” Tamer Qarmut said of being raped by a soldier in the Sde Teiman detention center. After inserting a wooden rod inside my anus and leaving it there for a minute or so, he removed it. I let out a loud cry as he pushed it back in with even more force. After a minute, he withdrew the stick once more, instructed me to open my lips, inserted the stick, and made me lick it. “I'm still suffering from severe trauma,” stated another witness. Soldiers attacked me with dogs while they kept me naked. They induced swelling and bleeding, hit me on the penis, and bound it with a plastic string. In his testimony, Ibrahim Fuda, a prisoner at Negev jail, stated that he “saw prisoners who were sexually assaulted.” Some had emergency surgery after being attacked

by dogs in sensitive places. Some inmates had urethral and rectal bleeding. Over 88 Palestinian detainees have passed away while incarcerated in Israel since October 2023—a record high by any measure. There are numerous accounts that have been made public for a long time, including Fuda's testimony. International players and Israeli officials cannot legitimately claim ignorance. And yet the abuse persists because it is a feature of the system rather than a departure from it. Palestinian suffering will not be regarded as proof of a crime by a system based on the rejection of Palestinian humanity. Israel and its allies are not just targeting the jail system or a single piece in their attempt to undermine reporting such as Kristof's. Israel has utilized laws to shut down Palestinian and Arab media outlets, prevented foreign reporters from entering Gaza, and assassinated journalists on an unprecedented scale. In such circumstances, the work of journalists, human rights organizations, physicians, and attorneys—those who are able to elevate the information that the state prefers to suppress—becomes increasingly crucial in affirming the fundamental truth that Palestinians are human beings and that their suffering cannot be disregarded. The atrocities at the Israeli military detention center Sde Teiman, which were made public in the summer of 2024, provided a startling illustration of the extent to which the government will go to avoid holding those responsible for the crimes committed there accountable. Security cameras caught the sexual assault of a Palestinian detainee in Israeli detention, which was made public. Not because of what was done to him, but rather because the soldiers who were accused of assaulting him were taken into custody and there were violent demonstrations on their behalf, the matter became a national controversy. The military chief of staff permitted the troops to resume military service in March after the accusations against them were dismissed following a fierce public and political battle. Celebrating the ruling, Benjamin Netanyahu declared, “The State of Israel must hunt down its enemies – not its heroic fighters,” and referred to the case as a “blood libel.” The military attorney who leaked the video was the only one punished for the episode. In actuality, this is impunity since the system is designed to shield both the abusers and the system itself. A larger Israeli attack on Palestinian lives includes the abuse of Palestinian inmates. The genocide is still going on in Gaza. Whole Palestinian villages are being uprooted from their land in the West Bank due to growing military and settler militia aggression. Palestinians are routinely subjected to abuse in detention institutions. The trend is consistent throughout: the normalization of a system that deprives Palestinians of safety, the escalation of violence, and the elimination of constraints. The outcry against Kristof's reporting and the threats against the New York Times have exposed Israel's and its supporters' true agenda, which is to continuously increase the cost of exposing and denouncing Israel's atrocities. It is no longer an issue of whether the evidence is present. How long will this system remain in place until the world takes action about a fundamental reality that Israel tries so hard to suppress: Palestinians are human beings, and their lives need to be protected.

Fuel price hike may push inflation to 5% in FY27, lift bond yields further

New Delhi: India is currently grappling with one of the most severe external energy shocks in recent memory. Brent crude has remained above \$100 per barrel since the Hormuz crisis erupted in late February. The government held retail petrol, diesel, and domestic LPG prices steady until Friday, May 15, absorbing the burden through a widening subsidy bill. For the Reserve Bank of India, this presents a dilemma. Tightening monetary policy in response to an exogenous energy shock risks suppressing growth without addressing the root cause. With GDP growth already softening to 6.2-6.5 per cent, the RBI may prefer to pause rather than hike rates. However, a fuel price increase would likely force a more hawkish forward guidance, signalling readiness to act if inflation expectations become unanchored. This fiscal stance, however, become increasingly strained, especially with the rupee down over 6 per cent year-to-date.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, meanwhile, has appealed to citizens to adopt “import discipline” and conserve energy through measures such as carpooling, working from home, and reducing gold purchases. Concrete steps have already been taken, including raising import duties on gold and silver from 6 per cent to 15 per cent -- a move reminiscent of similar hikes in 2013 and 2022 during past external shocks. Markets now anticipate further measures to conserve foreign exchange, ranging from disincentivizing non-essential imports like electronics to tightening rules under the Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS). Proposals such as diaspora bonds to mobilize FX deposits are also being discussed. Yet the most consequential decision has now been taken: India has raised petrol and diesel prices by ₹3 per litre and CNG by ₹2 per kilogram. After months of absorption, the government has blinked and the macroeconomic consequences are



immediate. The inflationary impact is unavoidable, though the magnitude is manageable if this remains a one-time adjustment. Retail fuel prices feed into CPI both directly through the transport and fuel components, whose weight in the revised index has risen to 4.8 per cent from 2.3 per cent previously and indirectly, through higher logistics costs flowing across food and manufactured goods supply chains. The combined ₹3 per litre hike in petrol and diesel is estimated to add approximately 10-15 basis points to CPI inflation on a direct basis, with a further 20-30 basis points of indirect pass-through over 6-8 weeks. In aggregate, CPI could rise by ~50 basis points, pushing FY27 inflation closer to 5 per cent. The 10-year government security, currently hovering around 7.0-7.1 per cent, could test higher levels as inflation expectations rise and fiscal deficit concerns deepen. While short-term yields may remain anchored by RBI liquidity support, the curve

is likely to bear-steepen, a dynamic already evident globally. Investors appear to prefer a transparent, controlled fuel price adjustment today over the risk of uncontrolled fiscal deterioration tomorrow. India’s structural energy vulnerability amplifies these risks.

With imports accounting for nearly 89 per cent of domestic consumption and approximately 25 per cent of the total import bill, sustained high crude prices are not merely an inflation problem, they are a balance of payments problem. If oil averages \$85-90 per barrel for the full year, the import bill could inflate by 35-40 per cent, widening the current account deficit beyond 2 per cent of GDP and placing further downward pressure on a rupee. The fuel price hike, while reducing the fiscal subsidy burden, does not change this external dynamic. It simply shifts the pain from the government’s balance sheet to consumers and the CPI basket.

Muthoot Finance slides 7% despite record profit:

New Delhi: It was expected that the government would finally raise the prices of petrol and diesel. The questions were when and by how much. Now that there has been a Rs 3 per litre increase announced, the next question is whether this is the be all and end all, or will there be further hikes. On the face of it, there could be more coming as this will only partly address the under recovery challenge for oil marketing companies (OMCs). What does this mean for the economy? The evident apprehension is on inflation, which will be impacted. LPG price were hiked to begin with after which came ATF. More recently the CNG price was increased, and now retail prices of petrol and diesel. The last two have a weight of nearly 5 per cent in the CPI and it is easy to gauge the initial impact. But there would be secondary and tertiary effects. Transport costs such as taxi and auto fares as well as trucking would increase. This is something that needs to be watched as it has wider ramifications. The tertiary effects will be seen when transport costs go up as most commodities use these services. This will push up the input costs of production and possibly raise the question to corporates on whether there should be a fresh round of price increases. Companies in the chemicals sector, real estate, glass ceramics etc. have already announced increase in prices. This can become wider given the spike in fuel prices. We have already seen the WPI witnessing an increase of over 8 per cent in April, which reflected the impact of higher crude prices. Now it will manifest in retail prices too. More importantly, the monetary policy committee (MPC) can no longer



ignore the inflation impact, and hence it looks more or less certain that there cannot be any further rate cuts. There is only a case of rates going up and the future discussion will be on when and the quantum of rate hikes. Higher inflation can come in the way of the consumption story that was to play out this year. Lower inflation coupled with GST cuts and income tax rationalization helped to boost consumption in fiscal 2025-26 (FY26). Things will change this year and consumption can be pushed back with higher inflation. It looks likely that inflation will cross the 5 per cent mark for sure even if we disregard the El Nino effect. Therefore this will be a concern especially for consumer durables and FMCG companies.

India VIX spikes 22% on West Asia jitters; D-St volatility soars 119% YTD

New Delhi: Indian stock market volatility surged more than 20 per cent on Wednesday to its highest level in over nine months, as escalating West Asia tensions rattled investor sentiment. India VIX, the measure of market volatility in the domestic market, rose as much as 22.4 per cent to 20.98, the highest level since May 12, 2025. This comes a day after the index soared 25 per cent, taking the year-to-date volatility spike to 119 per cent. The volatility gauge measures the market’s expectation of future volatility based on Nifty50 index options contracts. It typically rises when market volatility is expected to increase, indicating higher uncertainty or risk in the near future. The stock market plummeted while the rupee depreciated amid a broader flight to safe-haven assets and continued foreign outflows from domestic equities. On the bourses, the Nifty and Sensex fell as much as 1.43 per cent and 2.2 per cent, respectively, while the rupee breached the 92 per dollar mark. Investor sentiments continued to be in a risk-off mood as the US and Israel fired missiles across Iran last week, with the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei being killed. Iran responded with strikes against Israel, as well as US bases and other targets in states including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Bahrain. Brent crude oil prices rose above \$82 a barrel after rallying about 12 per cent over two days, the biggest gain since 2020, according to Bloomberg. Trump said the US will provide insurance guarantees and naval escorts to ensure safe passage for vessels through the Strait of Hormuz.

With the war escalating and crude oil rising, markets are



going into a period of heightened uncertainty, analysts said. From the market perspective, the impact of potentially widening trade deficit, depreciating currency, higher inflation and perhaps lower growth is the real issue. If this fear materialises, corporate earnings will be impacted, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments, said. “Experience tells us that panicking and getting out of the market during uncertain times like these is not the right thing to do. Markets have an uncanny ability to surprise and climb all walls of worries. So remain invested and wait patiently,” Vijayakumar said.

Meanwhile, while equities may take a risk-off tone in the initial reaction to the military escalation, the overall backdrop for equities remains positive, analysts at UBS said, with robust US economic growth, strong corporate earnings growth, and high levels of fiscal spending around the world supporting a further 10 per cent rise from current levels by the end of 2026.

Novo Nordisk is cautioning against the sale of semaglutide generics in India

New Delhi: Novo Nordisk has flagged growing generic competition in markets including India as a potential drag on its international business in 2026, highlighting rising pressure on branded obesity and diabetes therapies as semaglutide loses exclusivity in several countries.

The Danish drugmaker said it “still expects to experience an adverse impact on sales in 2026 from loss of exclusivity for the semaglutide molecule in certain markets in International Operations.”

Novo Nordisk specifically pointed to India, where competing companies introduced semaglutide generics during the first quarter

“During Q1, semaglutide generics were launched in India by competing companies,” the company said in its first-quarter earnings report.

India has emerged as one of the earliest major markets globally to witness large-scale generic competition in semaglutide after the molecule’s patent expiry in March 2026. More than a dozen Indian pharmaceutical companies, including Sun Pharma, Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories, Cipla and Zydus Lifesciences, have already launched semaglutide products targeting diabetes and obesity. According to Pharmarack data and industry estimates cited by market analysts, India’s GLP-1 market is currently valued at around ₹1,600 crore and is projected to expand to nearly ₹12,000 crore over the next five years following semaglutide patent expiry and generic launches. “Despite India’s high obesity burden, therapy care remains in its infancy. Far from slowing down, India’s market is opening new opportunities to deliver innovation at scale and helping millions live healthier, longer lives,” Vikrant Shrotriya,



Managing Director, Novo Nordisk India, told Business Today.

Shrotriya said more than 50 companies have already registered over 150 brands across different delivery devices and dose formats in India’s weight-loss drug market, creating “an environment overwhelmed with communication around doses, prices and formats, often leading to confusion.” The entry of multiple Indian drugmakers is expected to intensify pricing competition in a market that had until recently been dominated by imported branded GLP-1 therapies. Analysts expect lower-cost generic versions to expand access for diabetes and obesity patients in India while increasing pressure on innovator companies. Globally, the GLP-1 market is estimated to exceed \$70 billion in 2026, driven by soaring demand for obesity and diabetes therapies. Novo Nordisk said the “global GLP-1 market expansion” is expected to continue in 2026. Novo Nordisk said the outlook for its International Operations business reflects “continued volume penetration from GLP-1 treatments and market expansion, mainly within obesity, as well as intensifying competi-

tion and negative impacts from the compound patent expiry of the semaglutide molecule in certain markets. International Operations sales increased 6% at constant exchange rates during the first quarter, driven by growth in Europe and Asia-Pacific markets, although the company said the performance was partly offset by weakness in emerging markets and China. Globally, Novo Nordisk reported sales of DKK 96.8 billion (about ₹1.23 lakh crore) in the first quarter of 2026, while obesity care sales increased 22% at constant exchange rates. The company said more than 45 million people globally are currently on Novo Nordisk’s obesity and diabetes treatments, while the Wegovy pill has crossed more than one million patients since its US launch. The company is simultaneously expanding its obesity portfolio globally. Wegovy pill, launched in the US in January 2026, has crossed two million prescriptions since launch, according to the company. “Wegovy is driving a strong start to 2026 for Novo Nordisk, led by the rapid adoption of the Wegovy pill,” said Mike Doustdar, president and CEO of Novo Nordisk.

LinkedIn cuts 5% workforce and scales back investments amid restructuring Microsoft-owned networking

New Delhi: platform, is restructuring its workforce by laying off 5% of its employees. The decision is said to affect nearly 900 employees in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), and Asia-Pacific (APAC) regions. According to an internal memo shared by LinkedIn CEO Daniel Shapero, the layoffs have affected teams across engineering and marketing. Shapero highlighted that LinkedIn will go through major operational changes as it restructures its focus toward its “highest priorities” and scales back investments in certain areas to improve efficiency and long-term growth. Now, LinkedIn plans to “reinvent” how it works with “agile teams.” LinkedIn reportedly has 17,500 employees globally, and the 5% reduction could impact nearly 900 employees across various teams and regions. Alongside layoffs, Shapero also highlighted that LinkedIn is scaling back on its spending and investments in areas across marketing campaigns, vendor spend, customer events, and underutilised office space. “We can focus teams on priorities that have the broadest impact with the highest ROI,” he added. Shapero also acknowledged the contributions



of employees affected by the layoffs, saying that “You have helped build LinkedIn’s culture and platform into what it is today, and I hope you are proud of the lasting impact your work will continue to have on our members, customers, and colleagues. LinkedIn joins the tech layoff drive after some of the biggest tech companies, including Amazon, Meta, Mic-

rosoft, Oracle, and others, announced layoffs this year. Previously, Microsoft offered temporary exit to its employees, showcasing how major tech firms are increasingly restructuring operations and reallocating resources. In addition, Cisco on May 13 also announced to cut 4,000 jobs as it restructured plans to expand the company’s AI efforts.

Tata Motors rallies 5%: Why is the market ignoring the Q4 profit dip

New Delhi: The Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles (PV) shares rallied over 8% to the day’s high of Rs 366.95 on the NSE after reporting its quarterly numbers for the fourth quarter of FY26. The Q4 numbers were slightly ahead of most brokerage estimates. Analysts believe that the JLR volume trajectory is likely to be a key factor to watch out for in FY27. While Nuvama and JM Financial expect double-digit growth, Motilal Oswal flags margin risk in the near-term. Nuvama Institutional Equities raised the price target to Rs 470 from Rs 400, looking at a lift of 38.6% over the next 12 months. The brokerage has maintained its ‘Buy’ rating on the stock. The domestic PV EBITDA rose 79% to Rs 1,770 crore, above the estimate of Rs 1,510 crore, due to scale benefits and higher PLI. JLR EBITDA fell 19%, but above

estimates, aided by a better mix, reversal of emission provision and forex gains. “We build in revenue at 19% and EBITDA at 36% CAGR for India PV over FY26-28, driven by robust volumes, PLI benefits and better mix. Moreover, JLR revenue at 16% and EBITDA at 55% CAGR is owing to low base, launches, better scale and cost savings,” said Nuvama. The company’s Q4 performance has certainly been ahead of estimates, both in India and JLR, said Motilal Oswal Financial Services. While the Indian PV demand outlook remains positive, the company is expected to see margin pressure in the near term, given the material surge in input costs. This led the brokerage to retain its ‘Sell’ rating on the stock, with a target price of Rs 303, implying a downside of 11% from the current market price. Further, JLR continues

to face multiple headwinds, both on the demand and cost front. While the company has embarked on a major cost reduction initiative, it is likely to only help partially offset the current headwinds. On the other hand, JM Financial not just raised the target price, it also upgraded the stock rating to ‘Buy’ from ‘Reduce’. The brokerage house increased the price target to Rs 415 from Rs 327, an upside of 27% from the current market price. The turnaround at JLR post the cyber-attack drove Q4FY26 EBIT margin to 9.2% (1,600 basis points QoQ), 590 bps above the brokerage’s estimates, led by operating leverage. Improving JLR demand outlook – stable trends in the EU/UK, growth potential in North America and resilient demand in the Middle East, despite the conflict, has been one of the reasons behind the upgrade.

“This Place We Call Home Is Our Nation”: Molly Crabapple Discusses Reviving the Jewish Narrative of Anti-Zionism

Labanon: We speak with the acclaimed artist and author Molly Crabapple about her new book, *Here Where We Live Is Our Country: The Story of the Jewish Bund*. Although largely forgotten today, the Jewish Labor Bund was once a powerful secular, socialist revolutionary party that fought for freedom and dignity for Jews in Europe. The movement formed in the waning days of the Russian Empire in an atmosphere of intense antisemitism, but it “rejected, from the very start, calls to create a Jewish ethnostate in Palestine,” Crabapple says. “They felt that Zionism was a capitulation to the same bigots that wanted to kick Jews out of Europe.” Bund members — known as Bundists — navigated profound historical changes from the founding of the movement in 1897 until its ultimate destruction in the Holocaust. But Crabapple, who learned Yiddish for the book, says the Bund is not just Jewish history. “This is a history that be- longs to all rebels. It belongs to everyone who believes in the necessity of hu- man solidarity,” she says. NERMEEN SHAIKH: A new study finds a dramatic increase in Israel’s attacks on the Gaza Strip in the five weeks since it halted its airstrikes on Iran. According to the conflict monitoring group ACLED — that is, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data — Israel carried out 35% more attacks on Gaza in April than it did in March. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, 120 Palestinians, including 13 children, have been killed since April 8th. All the attacks came despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire agreement that was supposed to have taken effect in October. AIZA AL-AJRAMI: [translated] The war has not stopped yet. The war has not stopped in order for me to worry that

it will return. The war is ongoing. The bombing continues. And every day we hear that there are martyrs here and there. There is grave danger everywhere. Every moment we are expecting a missile to fall on us, on my son or daughter. We are scared. forces continue to occupy more than half of Gaza, forcing over 2 million people to crowd into a thinner sliver of land along the coast. More than a million people are living in makeshift tents, most others in damaged structures. MOLLY CRABAPPLE: In Vilna, Lithuania, then part of the Czarist Empire. That same year, Theodor Herzl was launching the Zionist Congress at a ritzy casino in Switzerland. And the two groups hated each other from the start. On Friday, Palestinians across the Occupied Territories plan to mark Nakba Day, the day that marks the mass expulsion of Palestinians from their homes during Israel’s founding in 1948. NERMEEN SHAIKH: Well, today, we spend the rest of the hour looking at an often-forgotten piece of history about Jewish anti-Zionist activists in Eastern Europe who opposed calls in the early 20th century to form a Jewish ethnostate in Palestine. We’re joined by the award-winning artist and author Molly Crabapple. Her new book is titled *Here Where We Live Is Our Country: The Story of the Jewish Bund*. The Guardian praised the book, saying, “The relevance of her material for our present mo- ment is impossible to ignore.” Molly Crabapple is an award-winning artist and author. “Here where we live is our country” is a slogan from a Bundist campaign poster in 1918. And I chose it because it encompasses this value that the Bund always held, the value of doikayt, hereness. Born in probably the

most antisemitic place on Earth in 1897, the Bund built their philosophy on the defiant insistence that Eastern Europe was their home, and they had a right to live in freedom and dignity and have a beautiful, flourishing life there. And they also rejected, from the very start, calls to create a Jewish ethnostate in Pal- estine. NERMEEN SHAIKH: And, Molly, as you just mentioned that czarist Russia was perhaps the least welcoming place for the Jews of Eastern Europe, and that’s the year that the Bund was — the year — was the location where the Bund was created, and was that — it was the year 1897, which is the same year that Theodor Herzl launched the World Zionist Organization. So, if you talk about this, the coincidence of these two organizations, and also what gave rise to the two in that historical moment and place? The reasons, they evolved as Zionism evolved, but there were two major ones. But after the Balfour Decla- ration gave Zionism the backing of the British Empire and the British Empire’s bayonets, the Bundists opposed Zionism for another reason. They thought it was the handmaiden of imperialism. And Bundists scrupulously supported on — scrupulously reported the brutality that has always marked Zionism: the expropriation of Palestinian land, the brutal evictions of Palestinian farmers and the collaboration, hand in hand, with the British occupation. The first was that they felt that Zionism was a capitulation to the same bigots that wanted to kick Jews out of Europe. At a time when all of these governments were saying that Jews were swarthy, Oriental foreigners that ought to get the hell out to somewhere else, for Bundists, Zionists seemed to agree.

Trump Was Flattering, Xi Was Resolute The Difference Spoke Volumes

Island: For President Trump, the first day of his visit to Beijing was all about the personal relationship between him and Xi Jinping, the Chinese leader. “The U.S. must handle the Taiwan issue with ut- most caution,” he said according to a readout from Xinhua, China’s official news agency. The warning came just minutes into his pub- lic remarks in the Great Hall of the People, the center of power for the People’s Republic starting just a decade into Mao’s revolu- tion. For Mr. Xi, it was all about setting boundaries, from the start. The moment seemed to capture the new equilibrium between the two adversaries. Mr. Xi arrived highly scripted, leaving no doubt that for all of China’s problems — defla- tion, depopulation, the bursting of the real estate bubble — the mo- ment when China acts as a peer su- perpower had arrived.

At every turn, at least as he be- gan his two-day trip to China, Mr. Trump sounded conciliatory, the exact opposite of his portrayals of China in public appearances back home, where during his presiden- tial campaigns he has talked about the country as a job-stealer and na- tional security threat. Mr. Xi, while smiling and welcoming to Mr. Trump, was quietly more confron- tational — especially on Taiwan, where he delivered an unequivocal warning. The gap spoke directly to the new level of confidence and authori- ty Mr. Xi has adopted in his pub- lic speech, despite his challenges with the domestic economy, as he watches the United States plunge into conflict with Iran, another



Middle East confrontation with no easy The Chinese president designed the day meticulously, down to a visit to the Temple of Heaven, the Ming dynasty complex not far from the Forbidden City. As Mr. Trump sat in the 13th-century won- der, he got a history lesson from the Chinese leader, tailored to echo the modern era. At his toast at a televised State Banquet on Thurs- day night, Mr. Trump came with a lesson of his own, describing links between China and the United States that went back to the Em- press of China, the ship that took a 14-month journey in 1783 to open trade and bring the first American diplomats to what was then known

as Canton, now called Guangzhou. “You’re a great leader,” he told his host, whom he has often said he admires for his “powerful” control over a nation of 1.4 billion people. “I say it to everybody.” “We’ve gotten along when there were dif- ficulties, we worked it out,” Mr. Trump said. But even then he cast relations in personal terms, mak- ing clear that the huge divisions between the two countries had to be solved by two strong leaders. “I would call you, and you would call me whenever we had a prob- lem, people don’t know, whenever we had a problem,” he said. “We worked that out very quickly, and we’re going to have a fantastic fu- ture together.”

For his part, Mr. Xi returned to his mantra: to keep from turning competition into conflict, the two nations must keep from falling into the “Thucydides Trap.” Mr. Xi, unsurprisingly, spent little time Thursday on flattery. Once the 21- gun salute and precision-marching by units of the People’s Liberation Army were finished, the disci- plined Chinese leader plunged right away into setting boundaries for the two countries’ relations. The red line was Taiwan, he said, making it abundantly clear that Mr. Trump’s effort at rapprochement could crash on takeoff if he inter- feres with China’s long-term effort to take control of the self-govern- ing island.

Surge Under Trump’s Mass Deportation Campaign

Island: Yennifer England, a 32-year-old nurse’s assistant and DACA recipient, has been held in ICE custody in Texas for nearly three months after she was stopped for driving with a suspended license. She was born in Mexico but was brought to the United States at the age of 4. She leaves behind two daughters, aged 12 and 14. This comes as immigration lawsuits hit a record 9,911 in March 2026 alone, up 1,278% from five years ago, driven almost entirely by habeas corpus filings that have surged 85 times over the past year as immigration attorneys chal- lenge ICE’s mass detention and deportation campaign. Meanwhile, Florida’s notorious “Alligator Alcatraz” jail in the Everglades is set to close by June, after DHS concluded the facility’s \$1 million-per-day price tag was too expensive. The Pentagon’s comptroller testi- fied on Capitol Hill Tuesday that the cost of the war with Iran had risen to around \$29 bil- lion, an increase of \$4 billion from the figure provided two weeks ago. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth also refused to tell lawmakers at the hearing how much emergency funding he would request to cover the cost of the war, despite repeated questioning from both Dem- ocrats and Republicans. It comes a day after President Trump called Iran’s latest ceasefire proposal “garbage.” Iran is demanding repa- rations, sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz and a full end to sanctions as conditions for any deal. As President Trump arrives in Bei- jing today, he’s expected to discuss the Iran war with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The New York Times reports that U.S. intelligence assessments contradict the Trump adminis- tration’s public messaging about destroying Iran’s military capabilities. Iran has report- edly regained access to 30 of its 33 Strait of Hormuz missile sites, enough to threaten American warships and oil tankers. Iran also has access to about 90% of its underground missile storage and launch facilities. The Wall Street Journal says it has received subpoenas for the records of journalists who reported on the Trump administration’s internal delibera-



tions on Iran. The Journal reports the Justice Department investigation came after Presi- dent Trump privately complained to acting Attorney General Todd Blanche about media leaks in the wake of the Iran war last month. Trump reportedly passed a stack of offending news articles to Blanche “with a sticky note on it that said ‘treason.’” Meanwhile, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the Pentagon will review whether Arizona Democratic Senator Mark Kelly improperly disclosed classified information when he told CBS News the U.S. had rapidly depleted stockpiles of weapons, including long-range missiles. Senator This comes amid reports that the UAE and Saudi Arabia carried out covert retaliatory strikes against Iran back in March. Since the U.S-Is- raeli war on Iran erupted, some Gulf countries have arrested dozens of Shiite Muslim citi- zens, calling them traitors loyal to Iran, which is majority Shiite. The Labor Department reports the U.S. inflation rate rose to 3.8% in April, with energy costs comprising nearly half of the increased prices. Real average hourly wages fell half a percentage point from March, meaning salaries failed to keep pace with the rising cost of living. Gasoline prices rose by 5.4% as Iran shut traffic through the Strait of Hormuz in response to President Trump’s bombing campaign. On Tuesday, a reporter asked Trump whether he’d make a deal with Iran to address the war’s economic fallout.

U.S. Military Surges Surveillance Flights Off Cuba’s Coast

Cuba: President Trump blasted Iran’s response to the U.S.’s 14-point ceasefire proposal, calling it “totally unacceptable.” Iran’s Foreign Ministry says the U.S. continues to have “unrea- sonable demands” and that Iran’s response to the U.S. proposal “was not excessive.” This comes as Iran’s economy is reeling from the impact of U.S.-Israeli strikes. An Iranian government official estimated that the war has caused the loss of 1 million jobs, in comments reported by Iranian state media. On April 25, an Iranian job search platform reported a record 318,000 ré- sumés submitted in a single day, which is 50% higher than the previous record, according to the news site Asr Iran cited by The New York Times. According to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, 3,636 people have been killed in Iran by U.S.-Israeli strikes, among them 254 children. Meanwhile, the Pentagon confirms 13 U.S. service members have been killed and 415 wounded in the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted in an in- terview with CBS News’s “60 Minutes” that the Iran war isn’t over, because nuclear material remains in the country. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: “It’s not over, because there’s still nuclear material, enriched uranium, that has to be taken out of Iran. Nobel Peace laureate and activist Narges Mohammadi has been transferred to a hospital in Tehran more than a week after collapsing in prison. In a statement, her foundation said, “We must ensure she never returns to prison to face the 18 years remaining on her sentence. Now is the time to demand her un- conditional freedom and the dismissal of all and then make sure no help arrives, or they create conditions in which death can come easily, helping it along by standing in the way of life-sav- ing care.” There are still enrichment sites that have to be disman- tled. There are still proxies that Iran supports. There are ballistic missiles that they still want to produce. Now, we’ve degraded a lot of it, but all that is still there, and there’s work to be done.”

Children Among the Dead as Israel Continues Bombing Lebanon Despite Ceasefire

Labanon: Israel’s military targeted multiple locations across southern Lebanon overnight, following another day of deadly attacks that came despite the U.S.-brokered April ceasefire. On Wednesday, Israeli strikes killed at least 12 peo- ple, including two children, according to Lebanon’s Health Ministry. Today the Trump administration is hosting Israeli and Lebanese diplomats for a third round of peace talks; once again, Hezbollah is not a party to the negotiations. Chinese President Xi Jinping has warned of the potential for “conflict” between the U.S. and China over the status of Taiwan. President Xi’s warning came after he hosted Presi- dent Donald Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Bei- jing on Thursday, where the two spoke for about two hours and 15 minutes. Trump had arrived in Beijing a day earlier aboard Air Force One, flanked by his son, Eric Trump; Cab- inet members Scott Bessent, Marco Rubio and Pete Hegseth; and billionaires Elon Musk and Jensen Huang, the CEO of chip maker Nvidia. After Trump’s talks with Xi, China’s state broadcaster said the status of Taiwan remains the most im- portant issue in China-U.S. relations. Ahead of Trump’s visit, U.S. lawmakers in both parties pressed the White House to move forward with the delivery of \$11 billion in weapons sales to Taiwan approved by Congress in December; law- makers are also pressing Trump to approve an additional \$14 billion arms sale including Patriot missiles and anti-drone hardware. Presidents Trump and Xi also reportedly dis- cussed topics ranging from trade to artificial intelligence to the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. Speaking at a banquet follow- ing the talks, President Trump invited Xi to the White House for a visit on September 24. We’ll have more on President Trump’s visit to China after headlines. The U.S. Senate has once again voted down a war powers resolution seeking to rein in President Trump’s power to attack Iran. On Wednes- day, three Republican senators broke from their party and



voted to discharge the Iran war powers resolution from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but the motion failed on a vote of 49 to 50 after Pennsylvania Democratic Sena- tor John Fetterman voted against it. It’s the seventh time the Senate has blocked a war powers resolution on Iran since Trump began airstrikes on February 28. Palestinian officials say Israeli police shot and killed a Palestinian man as he tried to scale the concrete barrier separating the occupied West

Bank from Jerusalem. According to his brother, 44-year-old Zakaria Qatusa had been attempting to cross into Israel to find work. He leaves behind four children. Elsewhere, Israeli settlers killed a 16-year-old Palestinian boy in the town of Sinjil, north of Ramallah. Health officials say Youssef Ali Youssef Kaabneh died from a gunshot wound to the chest. The killing came as Israeli settlers backed by soldiers as- saulted shepherds and stole large numbers of their sheep.

A fitness coach indicates that this common mindset could be obstructing your advancement



According to Raj, the issue is not the establishment of unrealistic weight loss goals, but rather the lack of understanding regarding one's body's ability to achieve the desired results within a specific time-frame. He emphasized that weight loss fundamentally

revolves around creating a calorie deficit. To achieve significant weight loss, one must generate a substantial calorie deficit, which necessitates both expending a considerable amount of calories and significantly restricting caloric intake. Most individuals find it challenging to accomplish this, which is why such unrealistic plans tend to fail within a few days. Only a select few manage to succeed by exerting excessive effort and depriving themselves, resulting in temporary weight loss. However, in the following months, they typically regain all the weight, necessitating a return to the beginning of the process. Losing weight is not just the only purpose of your life; there are a lot more. Thus, it's important to fit this journey into your lifestyle and not make it your lifestyle. Raj highlighted that losing this much weight in such a short span of time requires additional efforts, and it will impact your lifestyle. In order to create such a big calorie deficit, you have to exercise almost every day, walk for one to two hours every day, sleep for about seven to eight hours every

day, have protein in every meal, restrict starch, and more. For most people adding all these in their everyday lifestyle is a big challenge, and if they try to achieve this, they have to deprive themselves of a lot of things. This doesn't go in the long run, and things come crashing down. "Thus, it is important to ensure that our lifestyle is able to take these changes before setting these goals," suggested Raj. Raj mentioned that our body doesn't work on a timeline. No matter what timelines or deadlines we set for our body, it doesn't reciprocate the same way. "Your body is not going to lose one kilo every week. There will be ups and downs. There will be days when you do well, and there will be days you don't. There will be weeks when you lose weight, and there will be weeks when you don't," said Raj. He recommends setting effort-based goals. For instance, rather than setting a goal to lose 10 kg in a month, you can consider walking more every day. Building effort-based goals will help you lose weight more sustainably and keep it off in the long run.

Is it possible for your eyes to bleed while pregnant

Pregnancy represents a significant milestone in the life of every woman. It is often celebrated as a 'magical' event. However, the actual experience that an expectant mother endures is anything but straightforward or uncomplicated. The side effects of pregnancy can be peculiar, intense, unsettling, and physically taxing, with some being quite sudden and unusual, ranging from the loss of teeth to noticeable alterations in facial appearance.

Today let's zero in on the vision changes that expecting mother might experience, with one of them sounding straight out of a body horror subgenre from horror or sci-fi. While there is no need to panic, as there is always a medical explanation behind these unusual side effects, it is still important to have a well-rounded understanding of pregnancy rather than dismissing every symptom as 'normal.' When every unusual symptom is brushed under the carpet in the guise of 'mysterious wonders' of pregnancy, expecting mothers can end up feeling less supported and less understood throughout the journey.

Can your eyes bleed in pregnancy? To understand this peculiar side effect, HT Lifestyle spoke with Dr Mounika Bolisetty, cataract and vitreo retina specialist at NIO Super Specialty Hos-

pital, Pune, who acknowledged that the retina can bleed in certain pregnancy-related complications. We also explored 2 other visual changes an expecting mother may experience during her pregnancy. "Sudden increase in the blood pressure can cause bleeding in the retina or at times cause fluid collection in the retina like macular edema," the doctor explained what is the medical reason behind this weird side effect.

Furthermore, during pregnancy, certain physiological changes can lead to conditions that affect the blood vessels in the retina, and the doctor observed that pregnancy-related complications may also have a severe impact on eye health.

"Conditions like pregnancy-induced hypertension or preeclampsia or eclampsia can affect blood vessels in the retina," she mentioned which conditions may affect retina's blood vessels. Can pregnancy worsen your pre-existing eye conditions?

Most of the time, the narrative around pregnancy focuses on the new changes it causes in the body. But what about pre-existing health conditions? A human body may have certain ailments. What does pregnancy do to those? It turns out that the major hormonal and metabolic changes during

pregnancy can adversely affect them too, worsening the condition!

Dr Mounika described which eye-conditions are expected to worsen, "The preexisting eye conditions like hypertensive retinopathy and diabetic retinopathy can also worsen during the course of pregnancy. Additionally, a higher cortisol levels during the various stages of pregnancy along with vascular changes affect the retina resulting in a fluid accumulation in the retinal layers, a condition called CSR (Central Serous Retinopathy)."

Let's quickly go through some of the other vision-related changes, albeit less intense and may even seem normal, but still disorienting for maternal health nonetheless. Dr Mounika outlined the following side effects:

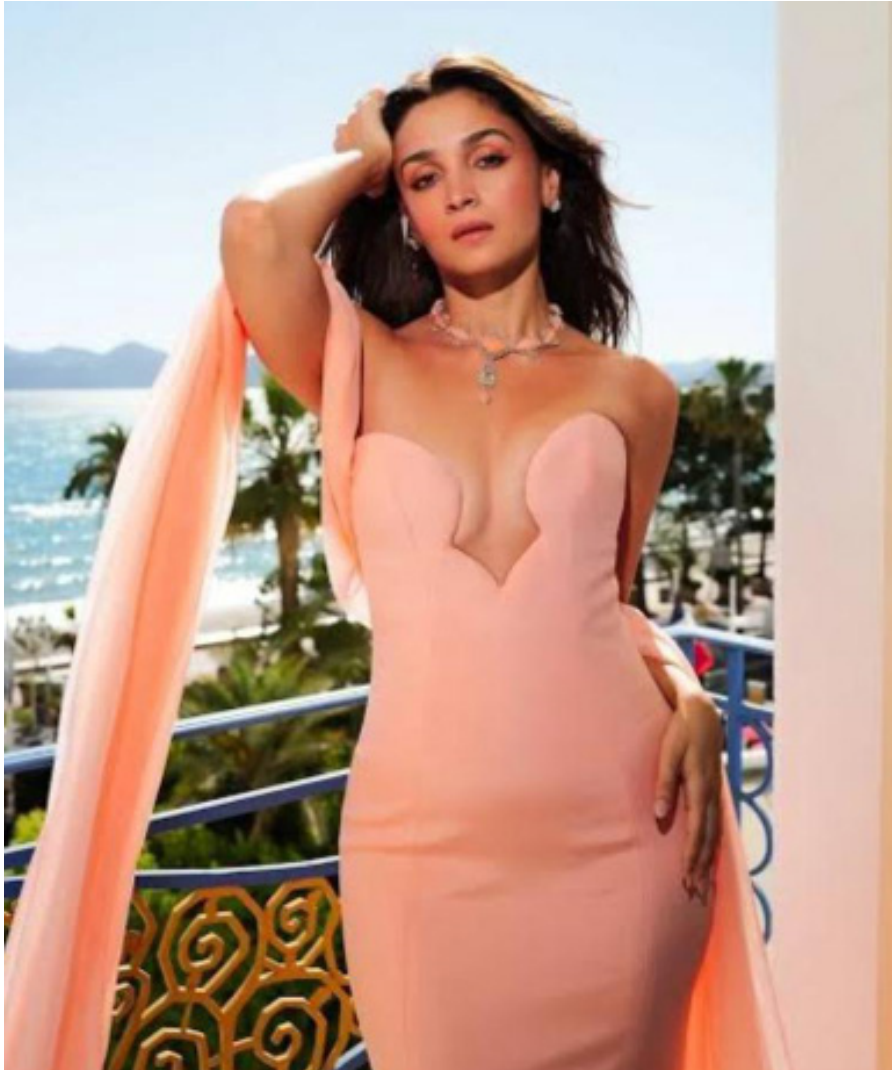
1. Dry eyes
Common symptom in pregnancy. Due to reduced tear production. Because of dry eyes, one may also experience redness, sensitivity to light or gritty sensation.
2. Temporary changes in eye power
Temporary refractive changes occur. This happens because of hormonal fluctuations during pregnancy causes fluid retention in the cornea.
- In simple words, you may need to get a new pair of glasses.
- Should you change eye glasses if

power fluctuate?

Now that you are aware that changes in the cornea during pregnancy may also lead to refractive changes in your vision. Should you get a new pair of glasses? Resolving this doubt, the doctor said, "Avoid changing glasses prescription unless vision is significantly affected as these changes are not permanent, using lubricating eye drops to reduce discomfort and to get relief from symptoms such as redness or pricking sensation." If not glasses, the other obvious instinct may be to switch to contact lenses, but the doctor did not consider that to be a good idea. Adhere to the previous advice, which is lubricating eye drops. "If the expecting mother is experiencing sudden blurred vision, seeing spots or flashing lights or partial loss of vision immediate referral to an ophthalmologist is a must," Dr Mounika advised. In the end, it is high time that all pregnancy side effects, even the strange ones, are approached through a clinical and medical lens first. While fatigue and weight gain primarily remain as the common signs, and are widely known, the doctor also agreed, that very few are aware of vision-related changes. This makes them believe that such symptoms exist in isolation, rather than interconnected with pregnancy.

LIFESTYLE

Alia Bhatt's exercise regimen leading up to Cannes 2026



Alia Bhatt maintained her commanding presence at the 79th Cannes Film Festival with a succession of stunning appearances. If you have been eager to uncover the secret to her luminous complexion and toned figure, the explanation lies not solely in the couture; it is in the effort she invested behind the scenes. On May 14, Alia Bhatt's fitness trainer and co-founder of The Tribe India, Karan Sawhney, revealed the reality of her preparation. Sharing a high-energy workout montage on Instagram, Karan captioned the post: "Alia Bhatt prepping for Cannes, putting in the work! To make it work."

Decoding Alia Bhatt's Cannes 2026 workout

The video offers a glimpse into the specific exercises Alia used to tone up for the red carpet's unforgiving lenses. Her routine focused on functional strength, core stability, and explosive power. Alia was seen performing suspended holds on gymnastic rings. This high-level callisthenics move targets the triceps, chest, and shoulders — essential for pulling off those strapless and plunging necklines. Utilising heavy-duty bands while squatting near a weighted sledge, Alia focused on lower-body endurance and glute activation. To build the sculpted structure her fans raved about on social media, Alia performed deep squats with heavy dumbbells, ensuring functional leg strength. Even in her downtime, the

work didn't stop. Alia commented on the post, "This band work in my pyjamas," referring to the lateral walks and arm pulses she performed to keep her muscles active between events. The results: 5 looks, 5 wins

Alia's Cannes 2026 journey has been a masterclass in versatile fashion, seamlessly transitioning from avant-garde global couture to 'unapologetically filmy' Indian roots. She was seen on the red carpet at the opening in a peach Tamara Ralph gown featuring a dramatic chiffon dupatta trail, hours after stepping out in a hand-painted Yash Patil creation that paid tribute to the French Riviera. Alia cemented her 'modern royal' status in an ivory Tarun Tahiliani ensemble, proving that her intense physical prep allowed her to carry heavy silks and structured corsets with effortless grace. Her streak continued with a blue Danielle Frankel gown that exuded 'Cinderella-core' vibes thanks to its intricate lace choker.

Finally, while her ivory Bharat Pavilion saree-gown celebrated traditional roots, Alia's appearance at the Cannes 2026 gala dinner was a masterclass in global fusion. Designed by Tarun Tahiliani, this was Alia's fifth look of the festival, perfectly blending Victorian structure with Indian opulence. The custom off-shoulder gown was crafted from heavy brocade fabric, showcasing hand-painted floral motifs in deep burgundy and ivory.

A gynaecologist from Gurgaon discusses daily lifestyle modifications that could enhance fertility in women

You will be astonished by the various factors that can influence fertility, including your age, lifestyle choices, stress levels, sleep patterns, diet, and even your own body. While not all cases of infertility can be prevented, the reality is that as a couple, you have the opportunity to take proactive steps in altering your daily habits, which can lead to significant improvements. On a more positive note, while intricate medical treatments are crucial in addressing infertility, they are also heavily reliant on the healthy decisions you are making today. In a discussion with HT Lifestyle, Dr. Anshika Lekhi, Director and Gynaecologist at The Fertilife in Gurgaon, provided several recommendations to enhance female fertility. 1. Maintain a healthy weight

Dr Anshika highlighted that women who are either underweight or overweight encounter issues with their hormones and consequently have a lack of ovulation. There are many fertility benefits linked to exercise. "An increased blood flow,

decrease of stress-producing hormones, fertility-regulating hormones and also need to maintain a healthy weight all will aid fertility," added Dr Anshika. She recommends light and gentle forms of exercise, such as walking, swimming or yoga, over vigorous exercise; however, vigorous exercise would be harmful to women's fertility. 2. Diet has played an increasingly important role in fertility

Eating a healthy and nutritious, balanced diet high in vegetables and fruit, whole grains, nuts and seeds, lean protein and healthy fats will prove very useful for fertility. Such nutrients as Iron and folic acid would be highly beneficial for reproduction. "Omega-3 fatty acids are excellent for men's and women's fertility and have strong anti-oxidising capabilities," said Dr Anshika. Lifestyle habits promoting consumption of fast food, sweets, liquor, alcohol, smoking and the excessive intake of coffee are not recommended for both men



and women when attempting to conceive, as they are proven

to have detrimental effects on men's sperm and women's egg

quality. 3. Stress is by far the most overlooked component of

fertility Excessive stress could cause an imbalance of repro-

ductive hormones. The stress of a high-pressure lifestyle, the stresses of family and love, and also worrying about not conceiving can have adverse effects on the human's fertility. Meditation, mindfulness practices, support from family and friends, and leisure activities are helpful for reducing stress.

4. Sleep quality is very important for reproductive health

Disturbed sleep patterns can affect hormone secretion and have a contributive role in fertility. It is generally recommended that adults sleep for about 7-8 hours. 5. Track menstrual cycle

Knowing and determining one's menstrual cycle is one way women are conscious of their fertility period in trying to conceive. "Abnormalities in the menstrual cycle, such as heavy flow periods, very painful periods, excessive hair growth, acne and large amounts of fluctuations in weight could be signs of underlying medical conditions," Dr Anshika told HT Lifestyle.

ENTERTAINMENT

BTS joins
Shakira,
Madonna at
FIFA



Agency: Queen of pop Madonna, along with K-pop phenomena BTS and Grammy winner Shakira are all set to co-headline the first-ever FIFA World Cup halftime show. The news was shared by the International Federation of Association Football. Coldplay frontman Chris Martin and Elmo announced the news in a teaser trailer for the World Cup halftime show. Joined by Miss Piggy, Kermit the Frog and several other familiar faces from the Muppet crew, Martin and Elmo announced the news in a teaser trailer for the World Cup halftime show. Joined by Miss Piggy, Kermit the Frog and several other familiar faces from the Muppet crew, Martin and Elmo handpicked BTS, Madonna and Shakira as the co-headliners, reports variety.com.

The teaser also announced that proceeds made from the show will be donated to the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund, which is “a landmark initiative working to raise \$100 million to expand access to quality education and football for children worldwide,” according to FIFA. The FIFA World Cup Finals take place on July 19 in New Jersey. FIFA first experimented with half-time entertainment by bringing in Doja Cat, Tems and J Balvin for the 2025 Club World Cup. That trio was also selected by Martin.

The last time the FIFA World Cup was hosted in the United States was in 1994, and it was the most attended World Cup in history. For 2026, the festivities kick off on June 11. Bollywood’s dancing diva, Nora Fatehi, will be seen performing and singing at the upcoming opening ceremony of the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Toronto, Canada. The Opening Ceremony, which will take place on June 12 at BMO Field in Toronto. She is joined by names such as Michael Bublé, Alanis Morissette, Alessia Cara, Elyanna, Jessie Reyez, Sanjoy, Vegedream, and William Prince. As per fifa.com, the ceremony begins with a journey across Canada, as the countdown unfolds through moments that reflect the country from coast to coast to coast. A sense of welcome builds, carried by the people and their shared excitement, inviting the world to be part of this historic moment.

‘Welcome to The Jungle’ teaser
highlights actors, not animals



Mumbai: TAfter a long wait, the makers of Akshay Kumar-led Welcome To The Jungle have unveiled the first teaser of the film, and it looks like a laugh riot is coming the audience’s way. The film, which has faced significant production delays, will now hit theatres on June 26. It is directed by Ahmed Khan.

The teaser begins with a crowd crossing the LoC amid heavy military presence. It then transports the audience to a ‘dangerous’ film shoot set in a jungle. Paresh Rawal calls

“action” as Suniel Shetty hits Akshay Kumar with a big hammer, injuring his feet. Suniel is also seen falling from a height. The tagline reads, “Real danger and real idiots.” All the cast members are seen entering the jungle with guns, dressed in army outfits as they shoot the film, unaware that ‘real danger’ is lurking just behind. What follows is the group coming face-to-face with a giant gorilla, getting thrashed around and more chaos unfolding. Akshay also takes a funny dig at himself. A scene in the teaser sums it up — while walking with a gun, Akshay suddenly stops. Arshad Warsi asks him, “Why have you stopped? Is there a signal in front of you?” To which Akshay replies, “I don’t want to do this film.” But Tusshar Kapoor tries to convince him, saying, “You are getting crores for it.” Akshay responds, “Every time money comes in between.” The last scene shows Suniel firing multiple shots at Akshay and asking him, “Tu marta kyu nahi hai.”

Saif Ali Khan reveals Shah Rukh Khan wanted
him in Main Hoon Na, but Farah Khan declined



Mumbai: Saif Ali Khan, who will be seen in Shah Rukh Khan-backed Kartavya, recently opened up about his long association with the superstar and revealed that he offered him a role in Main Hoon Na. However, director Farah Khan later called him and refused to cast Saif in the film.

Saif Ali Khan told Bollywood Hungama, “He once called me for a movie that didn’t happen. Shah Rukh once called me for Main Hoon Na; he said

there is a great part. Then Farah called me later and said, ‘No, no, no.’” While Saif didn’t reveal which role was offered to him, fans believe that it was Zayed Khan’s part as Lucky. He added, “I shouldn’t say these things, but I am too honest. This will get highlighted somewhere. But yes, Red Chillies is a wonderful production; they pick up really exciting and interesting ideas. It was very cool to get an offer like that.” Previously, in a chat with SCREEN,

Saif praised SRK as a producer. He said, “As a producer, SRK has not made his presence felt in the movie. One of the nice things that many producers do is give a lot of space and scope to the production. This film has kind of been run by Pulkit, and he has been given the space by Red Chillies to do that, which is really generous of them.”

Saif added, “As a production company, the subjects they choose, the people they put together, are very interesting. SRK has a huge love of cinema, and we can feel that in his production.” At the film’s trailer launch, Saif had said, “Shah Rukh Khan is someone I look up to in many ways. He told me there is a lovely script that he wanted me to hear and read, so we went through the process of listening to it and meeting the director. Once the film was complete, he said it had come out as a lovely movie, and he was very happy with it. So that was pretty much it.” Kartavya will be out on May 15. It also features Rasika Dugal, Zakir Hussain, Sanjay Mishra, and Manish Chaudhari in key roles.

Nagarjuna backs Telugu film chamber decisions,
a positive step amid industry rift

Hyderabad: Veteran actor Nagarjuna Akkineni and Annapurna Studios have clarified their stand amid the ongoing tussle between the Producers Guild and the Telangana Exhibitors Association.

Annapurna Studios stated on X, “Annapurna Studios firmly stands by the interests of the film industry and wishes to clarify that Annapurna Studios Distribution will continue to abide by the decisions of the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce (TFCC) and adhere to its guidelines. This has been our consistent practice over the years, and it will remain so in the future.” Nagarjuna owns Annapurna Studios, one of the leading production and distribution houses in

the Telugu film industry. His niece, Supriya Yarlagadda, oversees several operations of the studio and is also an active member of the Producers Guild. “They are members of both the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce and the Active Producers Guild and have consistently supported discussions related to cost-cutting measures in the industry,” says a source.

At the same time, Nagarjuna and Annapurna Studios share a long-standing association with exhibitor-distributor Suniel Narang of Asian Cinemas. Because of this, the studio is said to be maintaining a balanced approach during the ongoing dispute between producers and exhibitors. With



tensions escalating in recent days, Annapurna Studios’ statement is being viewed as an effort to support the apex trade body and maintain industry unity. Meanwhile, Annapurna Studios has also been expanding its distribution activities in recent months. The company is releasing Tamil star

Suriya’s Veerabhadru in the Telugu states and is also set to distribute the Kannada film Bala The Boy in June. “Annapurna Studios is now becoming more active in distribution and is looking to acquire more content-driven films to reach Telugu audiences,” the source concludes.

Sreeleela’s metro station photos trend
online, fueling buzz and curiosity

Mumbai: Actress Sreeleela has once again grabbed attention, but this time not for a movie event or glamorous appearance. The young actress was recently spotted at a metro station along with actress Sheeba Chadha, and the pictures are now going viral on social media.

In the photographs, Sreeleela is seen standing on the metro platform while checking her phone. She kept her look simple yet stylish, pairing a light blue jacket with a yellow skirt. Beside her, Sheeba Chadha was also seen waiting at the station, adding more curiosity around the unexpected sighting. Fans are generally used to seeing Sreeleela at film functions, at the airport, or at promotional events. That is why many social media users were surprised to spot the actress using public transport like a regular commuter. The photos have



now become a major talking point among movie lovers online. According to a source present at the station, many commuters were initially unsure if it was really the actress. “I had to look twice to make sure it was her. I really didn’t expect to spot Sreeleela at a metro station because it’s not every day you see actors at such places,” the source reportedly said.

As of now, there is no official clarity on why Sreeleela and Sheeba Chadha were tra-

velling together through the metro station. While some fans speculate that it could be linked to a film shoot, others believe the actresses may have simply chosen the metro for a quick and convenient commute across the city. Whatever the reason may be, the pictures have certainly generated strong buzz online. Many fans are appreciating Sreeleela for keeping things simple and staying grounded despite her growing popularity and busy film schedule.

Raaka makers move to legally protect Allu Arjun’s signature style

Hyderabad: The producers of Raaka are reportedly planning to approach the Delhi High Court to safeguard the distinct identity of Allu Arjun’s character in the film. According to reports, the initiative aims to secure exclusive rights over specific character traits, stylized gestures, and signature mannerisms associated with the actor’s role. If the legal strategy materializes successfully, it could help protect Allu Arjun’s unique body language, physical expressions, and trademark dialogue delivery from unauthorized commercial usage. In today’s cinema landscape, these elements are increasingly viewed as valuable commercial and branding assets.

The move reportedly comes in response to the wi-

despread unauthorized use of actor personas by businesses and digital creators. Following the massive success of Pushpa, Allu Arjun’s signature beard-stroking gesture and catchphrases were extensively used across platforms and promotional campaigns without official permission. With Raaka, the makers are said to be keen on preventing brand dilution and unauthorized exploitation of the film’s iconic visual identity. The production house is also reportedly looking at stronger mechanisms to curb digital misuse and protect intellectual property linked to the character. In Hollywood, personality rights and likeness protection have long been recognized as serious legal matters. Actors such as Tom Cruise and Arnold

Schwarzenegger have frequently invoked publicity rights to safeguard their image and screen identity. One of the most cited examples remains Vanna White’s successful lawsuit against Samsung after the company used a robot resembling her iconic stance in an advertisement. Similarly, George Lucas famously trademarked the breathing sound associated with Darth Vader. Meanwhile, Raaka is already witnessing strong demand in the Hindi market. Long before Pushpa became a nationwide phenomenon, Allu Arjun had built a loyal fan base in North India through Hindi-dubbed versions of films like Sarrainodu and DJ, which became hugely popular on satellite television and YouTube. Directed by Atlee Kumar,



Raaka is a sci-fi entertainer featuring Deepika Padukone in a pivotal role. Reports

suggest that Allu Arjun will be seen in a dual role in the film. The title poster of

Raaka was unveiled on April 8 on the occasion of the actor’s birthday. Most of the

film’s production has reportedly taken place on specially erected sets in Mumbai.

Rubina Dilaik slams bias against
actresses post motherhood



Mumbai: Television superstar Rubina Dilaik has spoken candidly about the harsh realities many actresses in the entertainment industry face after embracing motherhood. She revealed how women often lose out on projects because of pre-conceived notions within the entertainment industry. Opening up about the bias against mothers returning to

work, Rubina, in an exclusive interview with IANS, said that many makers assume a woman who has just given birth may no longer have the same stamina, ambition, or professional drive. Speaking about the stereotypes, Rubina said, “Studies show that 62 percent of women do not resume work after pregnancy because society is unwelcoming towards a woman who

has just given birth. At times, the industry looks down upon her and thinks, stamina will not be there, strength will not be there, there will be no ambition. And if there is no ambition, then maybe she won’t be able to prove herself. If she won’t be able to prove it, then keeping her in this project will be harmful for us. These are the thoughts women are constantly judged with.”

The actress further explained that this societal pressure often makes women doubt their own capabilities. “Society never gives us that space to just be. It never says ‘it’s okay, we will not judge you, even if you make a mistake’. There is always this constant pressure, and not every woman may be

equally strong or able to navigate her own path with confidence.” Rubina, who has embraced motherhood while continuing her professional journey, added that she considers her current phase an opportunity to set an example for other women. “Whereas I, with my journey, since I am blessed that I get this opportunity to show myself that there is still more that I want to achieve. There is a path that I want to pave for myself and my fellow contemporaries who are contemplating that after becoming a mother, not all doors will be closed. So this is for all of them.” Rubina Dilaik is currently all set to fly to Cape Town to participate in the reality show Khatron Ke Khiladi season 15.

Rajpal Yadav sparks rumors of
joining Bhuvan Bam’s Dhindora 2

Mumbai: Bhuvan Bam’s much-awaited Dhindora 2 may have an exciting new addition to its cast. Recent interactions between Bhuvan and veteran comic actor Rajpal Yadav have sparked speculation about a possible collaboration for the second season of the popular creator-led series.

A recent picture of Bhuvan Bam with Rajpal Yadav has caught the attention of fans, leading to chatter around whether the actor could be joining Dhindora 2. While there has been no official confirmation yet, sources suggest that the collaboration may be for Bhuvan’s next long-format project, which is currently in production. The first season of Dhindora became one of India’s most successful creator-led digital shows, earning praise for its humour, emotional beats and Bhuvan’s ability to play multiple characters within his own storytelling universe. The second season is expected to be mounted on a much larger



scale than the first, with the makers reportedly expanding the world of the show while keeping key details under wraps. Rajpal Yadav’s potential involvement has only added to the excitement. Known for his impeccable comic timing and memorable performances across Hindi cinema, the actor could bring a new flavour to the

Dhindora universe if the talks materialise. For now, the makers have not made any formal announcement about his casting.

However, the buzz around Rajpal and Bhuvan’s recent meeting has already made Dhindora 2 one of the most closely watched digital projects in the creator-led entertainment space.

Scottie Scheffler shares seven-way lead on congested US PGA leaderboard

Agency: It was gridlock on the opening day of the US PGA, where the leaderboard was backed up like Philly traffic. By the time it was all over, seven men were tied in the lead on three under par, and another 42 were within three shots of them. Altogether, a third of the field was within easy reach of the lead. It was record for a major championship, and they have been playing them since 1860. There are 16 major winners spread among them, including, ominously for everyone else, that man Scottie Scheffler. All the talk before the tournament was that it would be a turkey shoot, but it turned out to be one long tail-back. The only thing missing was the traffic police. Actually they had one of them, too, or something near enough. A rules official on the 1st tee gave the 27-year-old South African Garrick Higgo a two-shot penalty for arriving 30 seconds late from the practice green. He still shot a 69. The really odd thing was that in a field where even a man who dropped two shots because he missed his tee time managed to end the day in contention, a couple of the biggest names in the game wound up all but out of it.

Rory McIlroy finished on four over after scoring four straight bogeys on his last four holes for the first time in his major career. Asked to sum up his round in the moments after he had finished he offered a single-word verdict: “Shit.” Aronimink can do that to you. The course, which last hosted a major back in 1962, is laid out around a natural basin. It is all canted fairways and cambered greens, and the players spent most of the day tilting over the ball like they were playing on the deck of a listing ship in a heavy swell.

“I started missing fairways,”



McIlroy said when he was asked to expand on his thoughts. “From there, it’s hard.” It was only a couple of days ago that he was insisting that the course didn’t require any particular strategy off the tee beyond “bash the driver down there and figure it out”. He was good enough to admit that he had got that one wrong, which he realised after his opening drive landed in such deep rough that he could only chop his next shot a hundred yards on along the fairway. “That lie,” he said, “was as bad as I’ve seen.”

He wasn’t the only one who suffered. Bryson DeChambeau finished six over. He did say recently that his top priority was to grow his YouTube following. All he needs now is a grabby title for the high-lights package of his first round. “This CHANGES Everything! An expert reveals five mistakes most players STILL make!” maybe, or: “I SNEAKED into the PGA Championship... and THIS happened!”

perhaps. Lowlights included an iron shot that hit the grandstand at the 17th, another that landed on the porch steps of the bar by the 2nd, a 30ft putt that rolled 60ft past the hole at the 11th. DeChambeau, who recently explained that if the LIV tour falls through what he would really “love to do” is begin translating his videos into different languages, finished on six over, and may well have the weekend to work out the Mandarin Chinese for “another missed cut”.

All this wayward play made for a brisk day in the medical tent. There were as many ouches as there were ooohs from the gallery, as yet another shot flew long into some unsuspecting spectator. McIlroy was out playing with Jordan Spieth and Jon Rahm, who caught one volunteer marshal in the shoulder with a divot when he was trying to make an air-swing in frustration about the awful shot he had just hit on the seventh. It was that sort of a day. McIlroy, Rahm and Spieth have

more major victories between the three of them than they managed birdies during their round.

Unlike McIlroy, Rahm and Spieth did manage to scramble around, and both finished among a thicket of players on one under. It was a day for grinding away. “The pace of play was incredibly slow,” complained Nicolai Høgaard, and he wasn’t wrong. By the end of the day they were finishing in five and a half hours. Høgaard was another on one-under, along with Brooks Koepka, Jason Day, Collin Morikawa, Justin Thomas and Cam Smith, who just has sacked the coach he has had since he was a little kid after missing the cut in each of his past six major championships.

Xander Schauffele and Patrick Reed were among the group one shot ahead of them, and then came Scheffler and the other six – Aldrich Potgieter, Stephan Jaeger, Min Woo Lee, Ryo Hisatsune, Martin Kaymer and Alex Smalley – tied for the lead.

Discipline and consistency need of the hour: Indian women’s hockey team coach Marijne

Following an impressive outing against Argentina, Indian women’s hockey team chief coach Sjoerd Marijne wants his players to maintain discipline to produce consistent performance in the upcoming tournaments. The Indian team drew 2-2 against world no. 2 Argentina in a four-match series. After losing the first two games, India staged a strong comeback, winning the final two matches to level the series.

India will next tour Australia for a four-match series from May 21 to June 3 as part of its preparations for next month’s FIH Nation’s Cup in New Zealand, which is a pathway to the elite FIH Pro League.

The Nations Cup is scheduled to be held from June 15 to 21 in Auckland. India will play all the four matches against Australia at the Perth Hockey Stadium. India need to win the tournament to regain entry into the Pro League after being relegated last year. Marijne, who guided India to a historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics, took charge of the side for a second term earlier this year, and said fitness was his biggest criteria.

“When I took charge in January my first step was to get off a lot of injuries. We had almost 14 and then the qualification for the World Cup was important, so there was no time for development, no time for managing the load and after that we had a really good tour to Argentina.

Argentina is No. 2 in the



world and we could get to know the benchmark of world hockey,” the Dutchman said in an online interaction organised by Sports Authority of India on Friday. “The benchmark was very important from there on we had more time to work on the fitness in the camp. And now we will head to Australia where we will have practice matches there and see them play a different style than Argentina.

“In the last two matches in Argentina tour we played really well, where we won and played a draw and that’s where I saw the behaviour I always wanted to see. The main thing which I want to achieve in Australia tour and the Nations Cup is to continue the good habits, continuity in behaviour.

“If we get more consistency in our game, our level goes much higher and higher.”Marijne said all these tours and tournaments are crucial to India’s preparations for this year’s two big-ticket events the World Cup and the Asian Games. “We will not only play matches, we also have training there and from there on we move to the Nations Cup. All these tournaments, all these matches must lead to be a good preparation for the Asian Games,” he said.

He said injuries continued to haunt his side as two players are out for an indefinite period.“Unfortunately two players are out with ACL Sangita and Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke but the rest of the players are fit. Vaishnavi had her operation a few days back and that’s similar with Sangeeta. Normally for an ACL injury it takes nine months to a year to recover,” he said.

He also stressed on discipline and team culture to prosper at the world stage. “The game awareness is also important. I like discipline that’s one of the most important thing for me. We also need to focus on the team culture.”India captain Salima Tete too said discipline is first and foremost in achieving success at the world stage.“The girls are really working hard in terms of fitness, everyone knows the importance of fitness. If we are fit we can beat any team.“Discipline can beat any team. Australia tour will be a very good preparation for us and we will give our best,” she said.

Next year’s NEET test will be computer-based: Center amid controversy about paper leaks

New Delhi, May 15: Days after the NEET-UG 2026 exam was cancelled, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday said that the NEET exam will be conducted in a computer-based format from next year. Addressing a press conference, Pradhan vowed strong action against those responsible for the paper leak and said the decision to cancel this month’s exam was taken in the interest of meritorious students. “We will have to fix wherever the NTA is falling short, and the NTA will be held responsible,” the minister said, adding that certain issues had “come to notice” and would be thoroughly investigated.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) said that the NEET (UG) 2026 re-examination will be held on June 21. The NTA on Tuesday announced its decision of cancelling the NEET (UG) 2026 examination con-



ducted on May 3 over paper leak allegations. NEET (UG) is the nationwide entrance examination conducted by the NTA for admission in undergraduate medical

programmes.“The National Testing Agency, with the approval of the Government of India, has scheduled the re-examination of NEET (UG) 2026 on Sunday, 21 June 2026. Candidates and parents are requested to rely only on the official channels of NTA,” the NTA said in a post on X on Friday. Announcing the cancellation of the May 3 exam, NTA said on Tuesday the decision has been taken in view of the inputs received, taken together with the findings shared by the law enforcement agencies, established that the present examination process could not be allowed to stand.

The “inputs” here referred to reports of alleged irregularities being probed by the Rajasthan special operations group (SOG). Investigation over paper leak allegations that emerged from Rajasthan, now being carried out by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), has led to multiple arrests.

‘We live in a fake world’: Alexander Bublik on honesty, insults and why doubles isn’t real tennis

Russia: There are few experiences on the professional tennis circuit more uncomfortable than being Alexander Bublik’s opponent. The task of deciphering one of the more talented and unpredictable players is challenging enough, but there is also a risk of being on the receiving end of a few stinging insults.Over the years, Bublik has become notorious among Russian-speaking fans for his scathing rants about his rivals. There have been times when he has loudly wondered, to nobody in particular, how on earth his opponent could be ranked so high and others when he has focused on viciously skewering their games. He has also reserved plenty of scorn for himself and the sport as a whole. Bublik’s foul mouth has become a source of much discussion over his career. Some people believe his candour is refreshing, particularly compared to his more closed-off colleagues, while others find his attitude abhorrent. This elicits little more than a shrug: “I think emotions are emotions,” he says. “I guess it’s just we live in a world where everyone tries to fake and I think there’s nothing wrong in just releasing your emotions in a way because it’s a stressful sport. We travel a lot, we play a lot, there’s a lot of things on the line so occasionally, if you release it, I guess there’s nothing wrong with that.”Another shrug follows as Bublik considers whether tennis players are generally dishonest in how they present themselves in public: “I guess the entire social media is fake, so I guess all the people who are there pretend to be someone they’re not. I guess it’s fake,” he says.Either way, the past 12 months have given Bublik fewer reasons to curse either his adversaries or himself. This has been, by some distance, the best year of the Russian-born Kazakhstani player’s career. This time last year, he had fallen out of the top 80 and his dire form meant he had to take the disheartening step of dropping down to the Challenger circuit. Bublik had already been widely considered an underachiever in his career, but this was a new, desperate low. His struggles forced him to make changes: “No one wants to be 80 in the world,” he says. “It’s a little step in my career. I’ve never been there. I guess I was out of the top 50 for the first time in seven years. So for me, it was a hit.”Bublik spent much of his 20s declaring his lack of interest in anything related to tennis outside making money. He did not apologise for his relative lack of commitment to the sport, from his poor diet to a lack of consistency on the court. A pertinent example of his questionable professionalism came early in his career, the first time he competed at Wimbledon in 2017. After reaching the main draw as a lucky loser, Bublik headed back to St Petersburg and spent his days hanging out in the city. He returned to London only a day before his first-round match against Andy Murray, the world No 1 and defending champion, naturally losing in straight sets.It is a reflection of his enviable talent that, after years of not fully committing to his tennis, his transformation was so quick. Bublik ended the clay-court season last year by defeating Alex de Minaur and Jack Draper, ranked No 9 and No 5, en route to his first grand slam quarter-final at the French Open. In his next tournament, Bublik toppled the No 1, Jannik Sinner, on the way to winning the ATP 500 title in Halle. Having won five titles over the past year, he broke into the top 10 for the first time in his career in January. He now sits at No 11.Reaching the top 10 is impressive, but as underlined by Sunday’s 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 defeat to the 19th seed, Learner Tien, in the third round at the Italian Open, it is far tougher to maintain that status week in, week out. The top players have targets on their backs and it is far easier to swing freely with nothing to lose. Bublik will have a significant amount of points to defend over the coming months, starting with his return to Roland Garros one year on from the most beautiful moment of his career.

Haryana rights panel registers suo motu case over unnatural deaths, suicides, violence in state prisons

Chandigarh, May 15: The Haryana Human Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognisance of increasing incidents of suicides, unnatural deaths, violence, mental health issues, overcrowding and inadequate psychological support systems in state prisons, as reflected in the NCRB’s “Prison Statistics India-2024” report. Flagging the issues as grave concerns to human rights, the commission has registered a suo motu case in the matter.

In a detailed order passed May 13, the bench comprising Chairperson Justice Lalit Batra, Judicial Member Kuldip Jain, and Member Deep Bhatia, sought explanations and reports from state authorities.

The commission observed that inmates cannot be deprived of their rights to live with dignity, health, protection and mental care guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution, merely because they are incarcerated.

According to a news report, based on the findings reflected in the National Crime Records Bureau report, which was placed before the Commission, Haryana recorded fifteen unnatural inmate deaths during

2024, and all such deaths were attributed to suicide. The report further said Haryana was the only state to record firearm-related violent clashes inside prison premises. Serious concerns regarding mental stress, depression, withdrawal-related issues, violence, overcrowding and lack of adequate counselling facilities in prisons were also highlighted.In its order, the HHRC observed that custodial institutions are under constitutional obligation to protect inmates from self-harm, mental trauma, violence, depression and social isolation. It emphasised that incidents of custodial suicides can substantially be prevented through timely psychological intervention, regular counselling, psychiatric supervision, emotional rehabilitation, grievance redressal mechanisms, family support systems and de-addiction treatment. The commission specifically referred to rules 299 and 300 of the Haryana Prison Rules, 2022, which contain safeguards relating to suicide prevention and monitoring of inmates with suicidal tendencies.

Rule 299 mandates strict precautions to ensure that articles such as knives and other tools used in work-

shops, barber shops, tailoring sections, kitchens and canteens, which are capable of being used for suicide or violence, are not left accessible within prison premises and further requires secure handling of tools and poisonous substances.Rule 300 provides that prisoners exhibiting suicidal tendencies must be kept under careful watch, should not be left alone, and must be provided counselling for psychological support and emotional rehabilitation.

The commission also recalled that during previous inspections conducted in various Haryana jails, particularly District Jail Kurukshetra, female inmates had disclosed that psychologists and social counsellors visited the jail premises only once a month.At that stage, the commission had stressed the need for weekly visits by psychologists and psychiatrists. Necessary directions had also been issued to the Kurukshetra civil surgeon and the prison administration to strengthen counselling mechanism and to involve psychology students in inmate interaction and emotional rehabilitation programmes. The bench observed that the latest NCRB statistics indicate

that stronger, structured and sustained intervention is still required in prison mental healthcare and emotional rehabilitation.

It further noted that the incidents reflected in the report prima facie indicate possible violations of internationally recognised human rights principles, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners , which mandate humane treatment, mental health protection and adequate healthcare facilities for prisoners.

Accordingly, the bench sought detailed reports from the authorities on state-level policy measures adopted for prevention of custodial suicides, prison violence and mental health crisis in prisons, the steps undertaken by the state government for implementation and monitoring of provisions of Haryana Prison Rules relating to inmate welfare and mental healthcare, proposed policy reforms and coordination mechanisms for strengthening prison administration, and protection of prisoners’ human rights. A detailed report has also been sought on jail-wise availability of psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors, medical officers and mental

health professionals, and the frequency of visits conducted by psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors and medical officers in each jail.

The commission also directed authorities to apprise it on the mechanisms adopted for identification, treatment, counselling and monitoring of inmates suffering from depression, trauma, stress, withdrawal symptoms, mental illness or suicidal tendencies.Jail-wise details on unnatural deaths, suicides, attempted suicides, violence, inmate clashes and firearm-related incidents during the last three years, present occupancy as compared to sanctioned capacity, and steps undertaken to address overcrowding, have also been sought.

Assistant Registrar, HHRC, Dr Puneet Arora said the commission has directed the additional chief secretary, Haryana home and jails department; additional chief secretary, health and family welfare; Haryana director general health services; and Haryana director general of prisons, to submit their reports at least one week prior to the next date of hearing. The matter has been listed for further hearing on August 13, 2026.

SPORTS

Mentally Drained Nikhat Zareen Hits Out After Crashing Out of Asiad Race

Zareen Slams Officials Following Torturous Asian Games Exit

New Delhi: One of India's top boxers, Nikhat Zareen, has lashed out at the administrative chaos surrounding Indian boxing after crashing out of the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games selection trials on Thursday, May 14. Reacting after the event, Nikhat said that athletes were left "mentally and physically drained" because of the tussle between the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) and the Sports Authority of India (SAI). Nikhat's hopes of qualifying for the two major events ended after she lost 1-4 to Sakshi Chaudhary in the 51kg semi-finals during the selection trials on Thursday. Speaking to PTI after the bout, the two-time world champion said the uncertainty over the selection process had made life extremely difficult for the boxers over the last few weeks.

"The last two weeks was like torture for us boxers. I don't want to blame any one person or body. But the athletes got crushed between the issue between those two (SAI and BFI)," Nikhat said. The selection process had descended into confusion after SAI objected to BFI's proposed assessment-based system following complaints



from several boxers. The federation was eventually forced to abandon the model midway and return to the traditional trials-based format. Nikhat revealed that athletes had spent weeks preparing according to constantly changing schedules while also trying to maintain strict weight targets. "We were told the camp will start from April 25 but then the sanction didn't come. Then they said once the camp starts on April 29 the assessment system will also start," she explained.

The Hyderabad boxer said athletes were warned that missing training sessions or

modifying schedules due to injuries would lead to point deductions. Boxers were also repeatedly asked to stay within varying body-weight limits during the camp. "First five per cent bodyweight, then four, then two and then one. They kept taking weight till May 10," she said. Nikhat added that the entire assessment process was eventually scrapped, leaving athletes frustrated after weeks of intense preparation. "We had physical tests, beep tests, strength tests and everyone gave their best. In the end, we were told that whatever tests we took, the points given won't be counted," she

said. The 29-year-old admitted that she now plans to take a break after an exhausting few months. "I am mentally and physically drained. Since January 2025, I haven't got a break. Now I want to take a break and prepare for future tournaments," Nikhat said. Despite missing out on the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games, the former world champion said her focus was already shifting towards next year's Olympic qualification cycle. "But I'm looking at the bigger picture, which is the World Olympic qualifiers," she concluded. The clash between the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and

the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) was triggered by a dispute over the selection methodology for the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. SAI intervened after several boxers complained about the BFI's proposed "marking-based" system, which critics argued lacked transparency by prioritizing sports science and attendance over match results.

The administrative friction intensified when SAI suspended the BFI's national camp and the Sports Ministry issued a show-cause notice to the federation. This forced the BFI to scrap its controversial assessment model midway and return to a traditional trials-based format, causing significant mental and physical strain for athletes like Nikhat Zareen due to constant schedule and weight-limit changes. Administrative chaos has left Indian athletes "mentally and physically drained," with many reporting that the uncertainty surrounding selection processes feels like "torture." Tensions between governing bodies have disrupted training schedules, forced last-minute changes to selection formats, and limited crucial sure for competitors.

Camavinga and Griezmann Shockingly Omitted From France World Cup Squad



Paris: Real Madrid star Eduardo Camavinga and Atletico Madrid stalwart Antoine Griezmann missed out as the French squad for the FIFA World Cup was announced by coach Didier Deschamps. France is a part of Group I and will be competing against Senegal, Iraq and Norway in the group stage, with their campaign starting from June 16 in New Jersey against Senegal. Besides Camavinga and Griezmann, another high-profile player to miss out is Randal Kolo Muani - currently on loan at Tottenham.

The surprise call-ups have gone to Robin Risser and Maxence Lacroix, as per Goal.com. Camavinga's exclusion has been a shocker as he, along with Griezmann were crucial to France's 2022 run to the finals, where they lost to Argentina. Despite his experience, the

Real Madrid star has missed out, and Deschamps said, "He has the right to be angry". Camavinga was a part of a very testing 2025-26 season for the club, which ended with no major silverware and a UEFA Champions League quarterfinal exit. "His season made him lose his place. Injuries too. And the competition, which is very strong in the position," Deschamps told the press when explaining the rationale behind leaving him out. "Cama is among the disappointed. He is still young. In March he was there. I am not questioning what he is capable of doing. But today, he has the right to be angry with me. I understand him," he added. 13 players are set to get their first feel of the grandest stage in the sport, including Crystal Palace striker Jean-Philippe Mateta and Wolfsburg's Lac-

roix. "Mateta has been very effective with us, and with his club too without having played for two months with 20 goals. He has a different profile, which we may need at some point," the coach explained. On other youngsters within the side, including Michael Olise and Warren Zaire-Emery, Deschamps added, "There should be no tension.

But if they are there... it is good for oxygenation. Olise, today, he is a phenomenon. The first four or five games were complicated. Sometimes it takes time. But these players are ready for that, the level is high. It is an experience. You do not just need beginners, but it is a question of maturity. Managing the emotional side is important. The World Cup, there is nothing above that. We accompany them of course.

Former Captain Jude Felix Slams Hockey India Over Sreejesh



New Delhi: It was March 27 at the Hockey India Awards. Every Indian team and coaching staff member was present under one roof. It was a day of celebration, with players and coaches freely interacting with the media. Yet one man seemed detached from it all, unusually withdrawn for someone known for his warmth and energy around the media. The often talkative PR Sreejesh stayed away from the spotlight, avoiding questions throughout the evening. When we finally got a brief chance to speak to him, the legendary goalkeeper politely said he did not wish to interact with the media that day. There was a quiet sense that something was simmering beneath the surface. But the event moved on, and so did everyone else. And then May 13 arrived. The storm that had been building inside Sreejesh finally broke over Indian hockey. In an explosive social media post, the 38-year-old revealed that he was no longer the head coach of the Indian junior men's hockey team — a role he had taken up immediately after India's emotional bronze medal triumph at the Paris Olympics. Despite delivering five medals, including a podium finish at the FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup, Sreejesh was suddenly out. He slammed Hockey India, claiming the federation had removed him in favour of a foreign coach, later revealed to be Frederic Soye. Hockey India quickly attempted damage control, insisting Sreejesh had not been "sacked" and had instead been offered the role of coaching the development squad — a position detweet.

Aryna Sabalenka Dethrones Iga Swiatek As World Number One Before WTA Finals

Florida: Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus dethroned Poland's Iga Swiatek to grab the much sought-after World No. 1 ranking. The Belarusian has enjoyed a terrific season on the WTA tour so far, winning the Australian Open and the US Open this year. She further solidified her dominance with victories at the Cincinnati and Wuhan Opens. With the WTA Finals just around the corner, the race for the top position is heating up, but Sabalenka's solid 2024 season puts the 26-year-old in pole position. Despite these achievements, Sabalenka's season has also been marked by struggles as she was forced to withdraw from Wimbledon owing to a shoulder injury. The reigning World No. 1's personal life also took a huge toll when her boyfriend tragically passed away earlier in March this year.

Meanwhile, Sabalenka had previously held the World No.1 spot for eight weeks last year before being leapfrogged by Swiatek. Sa-



balenka will set her eyes on retaining her top spot ahead of the WTA Finals this year. The Belarusian currently has 9,706 points to her name as compared to her nearest rival Swiatek with 9,665 points. "Everyone reacts in a different way," he said. "If I lose today some (hate) messages are coming in, but I try to be as less as possible on social media because of that. It's like when you live something positive then you see compliments and then when you lose, you see something a bit more negative, but that's how everything works," Sinner remarked. We always try to do our best. Sometimes we

win; sometimes we lose," he said of an athlete's journey. "As I said, there are always going to be some people who are going to talk in a negative way, but that's also why you have family, you have the close people who know you as a person, I just stick them because they give you the real values," he added. Meanwhile, his rivals and tournament favourites Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz were knocked out of the US Open in the first week itself, sending shockwaves across the tennis world. "This sport is unpredictable," Sinner said of Djokovic's and Alcaraz' early exits in New York.

Sivaramakrishnan Urges BCCI To Ban Arshdeep Over Racist Remark

New Delhi: Former India spinner, Laxman Sivaramakrishnan has called for a season-long ban for Punjab Kings (PBKS) pacer Arshdeep Singh on Friday, May 15. This comes in the wake of a viral video where Arshdeep allegedly directed a "racist" comment toward Mumbai Indians' batter Tilak Varma ahead of their game in Dharamsala. The controversy stems from a viral Snapchat video shared by Arshdeep on Thursday, May 14. In the clip, the Punjab Kings pacer is seen engaging in what he likely intended as playful banter with Tilak Varma. Arshdeep looked directly at Tilak and said, "Oye Andhere, sunscreen lagaaya?" (Hey dark one, did you apply sunscreen?). The conversation didn't stop there. Arshdeep then pointed toward Tilak's teammate, Naman Dhir, calling him the "real Noor" (light/glow) from Punjab.

The clip has ignited a storm on social media. Laxman Sivaramakrishnan took to X on Friday morning to express his outrage and dismiss the bantered defence used by some fans. He argued that the power dynamics in professional cricket often keep younger players from speaking out. The former leg-spinner, who has previously voiced concerns over colour-based discrimination, ar-



gued that dismissing such remarks as dressing room humour is exactly why these issues persist. He emphasized the professional nature of the modern game, stating simply, "It is not a game any more, it is a profession." In a follow-up post, he called for a financial and competitive penalty to ensure a firm precedent is set. Sivaramakrishnan concluded his series of posts with a significant offer to the board, suggesting that a crackdown on current players could lead to him revealing deeper issues from his own career. He wrote, "If BCCI takes action, I will name people who racially abused me if BCCI will take action

against them." This incident puts the BCCI in a difficult position. Earlier this season, the board issued a strict seven-page advisory to all IPL franchises regarding off-field behaviour and social media conduct. Arshdeep has already been under the scanner this month after another of his vlogs allegedly caught teammate Yuzvendra Chahal in a vaping controversy.

Under the current IPL Code of Conduct, any conduct that is considered to be contrary to the spirit of the game or which brings the game into disrepute can be subject to review by the Match Referee or the BCCI committee.

Chennai Super Kings Eye Important Playoff Push As Lucknow Look To Spoil Their Party

Lucknow: Chennai Super Kings head into Friday's clash against Lucknow Super Giants, knowing defeat could seriously damage their IPL 2026 playoff hopes. After an inconsistent season marked by injuries and missed opportunities, CSK have stayed alive in the race with important wins in recent matches and now need another strong performance in Lucknow.

With six wins from 11 matches, Chennai sit fifth on the table and remain firmly in contention for a playoff place. But with several teams fighting for the top four spots, the five-time champions cannot afford another slip-up. CSK's campaign has lacked consistency. Strong performances have often been followed by disappointing defeats, while concerns over their middle order and finishing have persisted through the



season. Even so, the side has managed to stay in the hunt through crucial contributions from experienced players and a few emerging names. Captain Ruturaj Gaikwad has led the batting unit steadily despite constant changes around him. Sanju Samson has also played important innings in pressure situations to help Chennai recover from difficult positions. A

major positive for CSK in recent matches has been the attacking approach of young opener Urvil Patel. His intent in the powerplay has helped Chennai get quicker starts and put opposition bowlers under pressure early in the innings.

The middle order will again carry significant responsibility on a surface expected to favour batting. Shivam

Dube remains important against spin, while Dewald Brevis and Kartik Sharma will look to maintain momentum through the middle overs. Chennai, however, have suffered a setback with all-rounder Jamie Overton ruled out for the remainder of the tournament because of a thigh injury.

The England all-rounder had become one of CSK's key performers this season, taking 14 wickets in 10 matches and regularly providing breakthroughs in the middle overs. Despite the injury concerns, Chennai's bowling attack has continued to produce disciplined performances. Akeal Hosein has added control and variation, while Mukesh Choudhary and Anshul Kamboj have delivered important spells at different stages of the tournament.

Spain's Rodri Is Crowned Ballon d'Or 2024 Winner While Disappointed Vinicius Jr. Breaks His Silence

Paris: Against all odds, star Spanish midfielder Rodri has been crowned as the 2024 Men's Ballon d'Or winner following his spectacular performance during the 2023-24 season. The Spaniard played a vital role in helping his club Manchester City lift the English Premier League title for the fourth consecutive year. He was also instrumental in the Spanish National Team's success at the UEFA Euro 2024 held in Germany, where La Roja were crowned champions after beating England 2-1 in the finals back in July.

The midfielder produced stellar performances for his team at the Euros, earning him the 'Player of the Tournament' award. The 28-year-old defensive midfielder was rock-solid throughout last season, providing defensive stability as well as key passes for both



his club and country, totaling 14 assists in all competitions. He also scored 10 goals during the 2023-24 season. Meanwhile, Brazil and Real Madrid star Vinicius Jr. broke his silence on being snubbed for the top award presented by France Football. The 24-year-old left-winger, who was clearly not happy with the verdict, posted a cryptic post

on X to voice his anger. "I'll do it 10x if I have to. They're not ready," the post read. Meanwhile, Barcelona Femeni player Aitana Bonmati won the women's Ballon d'Or for the second consecutive time. The early years had their magic moments. Sandesh Jhingan went from an unheralded defender to a national team mainstay.