

Assam Tables Uniform Civil Code Bill in Assembly, Set to Become Third State to Implement UCC

Guwahati, May 25: The Assam government on Monday formally introduced the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in the State Assembly, nearly two weeks after the draft legislation received approval from the state cabinet. On behalf of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Atul Bora tabled “The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, Bill, 2026” in the Assembly.

The Bill is expected to be taken up for detailed discussion and passage on May 27. Earlier on May 13, following the first cabinet meeting of the second term of the Himanta Biswa Sarma government held at the No. 1 State Guest House in Koinadhara, Guwahati, the state government had announced that the legislation would be introduced during the ongoing Assembly session.

At the time, Chief Minister Sarma had stated that the cabinet had approved the draft UCC Bill and that it would be introduced during the final phase of the Assembly session.

According to the proposed legislation, Scheduled Tribes living in both

hill and plain areas of Assam will remain completely outside the purview of the Uniform Civil Code. The government has also clarified that traditional religious customs, rituals and practices of different communities will not be affected by the law.

The proposed UCC in Assam mainly focuses on four major subjects — fixing the minimum legal age for marriage, prohibition of polygamy, ensuring equal property rights for daughters, and regulating live-in relationships through legal registration.

Under the Bill, the minimum legal age for marriage has been fixed at 21 years for men and 18 years for women. The legislation also proposes a complete ban on polygamy. In another significant provision, live-in relationships would have to be legally registered in order to receive official recognition and regulation. The Bill further seeks to grant daughters equal rights in parental property.

If passed, Assam will become the third state in India to enact a Uniform Civil Code law after Uttarakhand and



Gujarat.

Uttarakhand became the first state in the country to implement a UCC law in 2024, in line with Article 44 of the Constitution of India, which directs the state to endeavour to secure a uniform civil code for citizens throughout the country.

Earlier this year, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami claimed that one year of UCC implementation had helped empower women and improve safety. He stated that public doubts and apprehensions

surrounding the law had largely been addressed and that no cases of privacy violations had been reported despite over five lakh registrations under the system.

The Uttarakhand government had also stated that more than 4.74 lakh marriages were registered online within one year after the simplified UCC system came into effect.

Meanwhile, Gujarat passed its own UCC Bill in March this year. The Gujarat legislation covers matters relating to marriage, divorce, live-in relation-

ships, maintenance and inheritance, with the stated objective of ensuring stronger legal protection and equal rights for women across communities.

Political observers believe the Assam move is part of the broader push by the Bharatiya Janata Party to implement the Uniform Civil Code nationwide. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier stated that the UCC would also be implemented in West Bengal. Addressing a rally in Murshidabad district in April, he said the BJP remained committed to implementing the UCC to “end the politics of appeasement forever.”

The BJP secured a massive victory in the recently concluded Assam Assembly elections, winning 82 seats in the 126-member Assembly. Along with allies Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People’s Front, which won 10 seats each, the NDA alliance’s strength in the Assembly rose to 102 seats, giving the government a comfortable majority to push forward major legislative reforms including the UCC Bill.

In Brief

NEHUTA says NEHU not yet ready for FYUP programme

Shillong: The North-Eastern Hill University Teachers’ Association (NEHUTA) has warned students to avoid the fourth year of the new Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), advising them to stick to the traditional system due to the university’s failure to establish a clear transition to postgraduate studies. NEHUTA president Lakhon Kma told reporters that students completing their third year currently face a “safer option” by enrolling in the existing two-year Master’s programme. He cautioned that continuing into the fourth year of FYUP involves significant risk, as NEHU has yet to finalize the mechanism for the proposed one-year Master’s degree. The association highlighted that the university is now struggling to redesign its syllabus and academic structure to link the FYUP’s fourth year with postgraduate courses.

IIT-G Creates Tech to Detect Fake Products

Guwahati: Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) researchers have developed an advanced light-emitting perovskite nanomaterial that could improve protection against fake currency, forged documents and other counterfeit products. To achieve this, the research team has developed nanocrystals capable of producing light-based security patterns that cannot be replicated using traditional printing and imaging methods. The findings of this research have been published in the prestigious Advanced Optical Materials journal, in a paper co-authored by Prof. Saikat Bhaumik, Assistant Professor, in collaboration with Prof. P.K. Giri, Professor, and their research scholars, Latika Juneja and Garima Choudhary from the Department of Physics at IIT Guwahati.

Manipur Boosts Police Fleet With Advanced Vehicles

Imphal: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand on Monday flagged off newly-acquired advanced vehicles for the Manipur Police Department as part of the state’s police modernisation initiative. The flag-off ceremony was held at the 1st Battalion Manipur Rifles Parade Ground in Imphal in the presence of Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam, Director General of Police Rajiv Singh, Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel and other senior officials. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister praised the contribution of the police department during the ongoing conflict situation in the state and said the force has played a commendable role in maintaining law and order. He also highlighted the achievements of police personnel in sports alongside their security responsibilities. The Chief Minister expressed concern over incidents of violence during protests and agitations, stating that while people have the democratic right to demonstrate, violent means should be avoided.

Union Minister to Roll Out Fisheries Projects in NE

Aizawl: Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Panchayati Raj, Rajiv Ranjan Singh will chair the “Regional Review Meeting: Northeastern Region 2026” and launch fisheries projects worth Rs 32.15 crore, in Aizawl on Monday. The meeting, organised by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India, will be held in the presence of Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Panchayati Raj, S.P. Singh Baghel, and Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Minority Affairs, George Kurian.

NEHUTA says NEHU not yet ready for FYUP programme

Shillong, May 25: The North-Eastern Hill University Teachers’ Association (NEHUTA) has warned students to avoid the fourth year of the new Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), advising them to stick to the traditional system due to the university’s failure to establish a clear transition to postgraduate studies. NEHUTA president Lakhon Kma told reporters that students completing their third year currently face a “safer option” by enrolling in the existing two-year Master’s programme. He cautioned that continuing into the fourth year of FYUP involves significant risk, as NEHU has yet to finalize the mechanism for the proposed one-year Master’s degree. The association highlighted that the university is now struggling to redesign its syllabus and academic structure to link the FYUP’s fourth year with postgraduate courses.

Manipur Police Get Major Mobility Boost as CM Launches 477 Vehicles

Imphal, May 25: Chief Minister Shri Yumnam Khemchand Singh today flagged off 477 newly acquired vehicles of Manipur Police at the 1st Battalion Manipur Rifles Parade Ground, Imphal, under the “Assistance to States for Modernisation of Police” scheme.

Speaking at the programme, the Chief Minister said the large number of vehicles flagged off marked another important day in the history of Manipur. He stated that the vehicles would greatly help in improving police infrastructure in the hill districts and strengthen emergency response capabilities across the state.

A total of 477 vehicles were flagged off including 100 Hero motorcycles, 39 Bolero B6 vehicles, 50 Bolero Neo vehicles, 74 Tata Yodha vehicles, 10 Mine Protected Vehicles, 20 Tata Truck vehicles, 30 Tata 407 vehicles, 20 Mahindra buses, 60 Bulletproof Rakshak vehicles, 19 Water Tankers, 50 Bolero Camper vehicles and 5 HMR vehicles.

The Chief Minister said that without strengthening the police force, no state or country could maintain peace and security. Referring to the unfortunate incidents which began on May 3, 2023, he said Manipur Police had carried out

major responsibilities with dedication and courage, often risking their own lives while working to prevent conflict and maintain peace.

Shri Yumnam Khemchand Singh further informed that the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, had approved Rs. 196.61 crore on October 31, 2025 for police modernisation initiatives in the state. He said the Government is committed to strengthen the police department and modernise policing infrastructure.

He also mentioned that the present Government has increased the ration money of police personnel, which had remained unchanged for a long time, and has also increased uniform allowances. He also lauded the Director General of Police (DGP) Shri Rajiv Singh and his team for taking up initiative for police modernisation.

He expressed his gratitude to the Army, Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF, ITBP, SSB and other agencies for their continued support in maintaining law and order in the state.

Appealing to the public to discourage violence and provocative activities during agitations and rallies, the Chief Minister urged all sections to support

peace and harmony in the state.

Speaking on the occasion, Home Minister Shri Govindas Konthoujam said the programme reflected the far-sighted vision of the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and the leadership of the Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah towards strengthening police and security forces across the country.

He stated that the newly acquired vehicles would significantly improve mobility, efficiency and response capability of Manipur Police during emergencies and other important situations.

The Home Minister stressed the importance of maintaining strong public-police relations and called upon police personnel to remain public-friendly. He said strengthening intelligence gathering and cooperation from the public would help authorities anticipate and prevent incidents in advance.

DGP Shri Rajiv Singh, in his keynote address, highlighted the need for police modernisation and strengthening infrastructure, particularly in the hill districts of the State. He said the newly acquired vehicles would improve operational efficiency and mobility of the police force. He further informed that 54 per cent of the vehicles would be allocated

to the hill districts, while 46 per cent would be deployed in the valley districts.

The DGP highlighted several achievements of Manipur Police, stating that with the establishment of the Anti-Extortion Cell, 1,000 persons had been arrested so far. He also informed that more than 700 persons had been arrested and 600 cases registered under the anti-drug campaign launched by the state government.

He further stated that Manipur Police had signed an MoU with the National Security Guard (NSG) for specialised training programmes for police personnel. Stressing the importance of public cooperation and intelligence gathering, he said strengthening intelligence networks and enhancing coordination with the public would help improve policing and emergency response across the state.

The programme was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Shri Losii Dikho, Ministers, MLAs, Chief Secretary Dr. Puneet Kumar Goel, Security Advisor, Shri Kuldiep Singh, senior police officers, officers of Army, CRPF and different security agencies, and invited guests among others.

Census Officials Gather for State-Level Conference in Guwahati

Guwahati, May 25: A State-Level Conference of Principal Census Officers (PCOs) in connection with Phase-I of Census 2027 namely House listing and Housing Census (HLO) was held on Monday at the Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati under the chairmanship of Assam Chief Secretary, Ravi Kota.

The conference was sby the General Administration Department, Nodal

cum Principal Census Officers of all Districts and Municipal Corporations and Officers from the Directorate of Census Operations, Assam.

It was informed that the Census 2027 will be India’s first Census in digital mode and will be conducted in two phases namely House-listing & Housing Census (HLO) and Population Enumeration (PE). Phase one of the census will focus on houses



Department for Census, Government of Assam in association with Directorate of Census Operations, Assam under the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

The conference was attended by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan; senior officers of the Government of Assam, Chief Principal Census Officer cum Director of Census Operations, Assam, State Nodal Officer, District Commissioners and Municipal Commissioners

and households, and not on individual persons.

Information relating to housing conditions, amenities available and assets possessed by households will be collected during this phase. The House-listing and Housing Census will also provide the frame for conduct of Population Enumeration during Phase-II. The data generated through Phase-I will help both the State and Central Governments in planning housing, infrastructure and delivery of basic services more effectively in rural and urban areas of Assam as well as across the country.

IIT-G Creates Tech to Detect Fake Products

Guwahati, May 25: Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) researchers have developed an advanced light-emitting perovskite nanomaterial that could improve protection against fake currency, forged documents and other counterfeit products.

To achieve this, the research team has developed nanocrystals capable of producing light-based security patterns that cannot be replicated using traditional printing and imaging methods.

The findings of this research have been published in the prestigious Advanced Optical Materials journal, in a paper co-authored by Prof. Saikat Bhaumik, Assistant Professor, in collaboration with Prof. P.K. Giri, Professor, and their research scholars, Latika Juneja and Garima Choudhary from the Department of Physics at IIT Guwahati.

Counterfeiting has become a glob-



al concern affecting various industries, ranging from pharmaceuticals and electronics to banking and identity documentation. With the help of modern technologies, offenders have found ways to accurately copy conventional security measures such as barcodes, QR codes, holograms, and watermark labels. These challenges can also have implications for national security, as they can pose risks by enabling financial

fraud, illegal activities, and security breaches. This has created an increasing demand for smart and difficult-to-reverse-engineer anti-counterfeiting systems. To address this challenge, Prof. Bhaumik and Prof. Giri, along with their research team, have developed light-emitting perovskite nanocrystals, a group of crystalline materials known for their optical and electronic properties.

Manipur Boosts Police Fleet With Advanced Vehicles

Imphal, May 25: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand on Monday flagged off newly-acquired advanced vehicles for the Manipur Police Department as part of the state’s police modernisation initiative. The flag-off ceremony was held at the 1st Battalion Manipur Rifles Parade Ground in Imphal in the presence of Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam, Director General of Police Rajiv Singh, Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel and other senior officials. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister praised the contribution of the police department during the ongoing conflict situation in the state and said

the force has played a commendable role in maintaining law and order. He also highlighted the achievements of police personnel in sports alongside their security responsibilities. The Chief Minister expressed concern over incidents of violence during protests and agitations, stating that while people have the democratic right to demonstrate, violent means should be avoided.

Speaking at the event, Konthoujam said nearly 400 advanced vehicles had been inducted under the police modernisation scheme, which would significantly improve mobility and operational efficiency of the force.

Lauding the efforts of the DGP in



procuring advanced weapons and equipment to strengthen law enforcement capabilities in the state, the home minister said 54 per cent of

the newly inducted vehicles would be deployed in the hill districts, while 46 per cent will be used in the valley areas.

Meghalaya Slips to India’s Lowest Rank in School Education Index, 206 Schools Found Without a Single Student

Shillong, May 25: The education sector in Meghalaya has plunged into a deep crisis after the Union Ministry of Education’s latest Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2.0 ranked the state as the worst-performing in the country. Despite having more than 55,000 teachers on government payrolls and over 14,500 schools across the state, Meghalaya has been pushed into the lowest Grade 10 category with a score of just 417.9 out of 1,000 points.

The PGI 2.0 assessment evaluated 36 states and union territories on six major parameters including learning outcomes, quality of education, access, infrastructure, equity, governance, and teacher training. Meghalaya remained at the bottom of the national rankings, even behind states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Bihar. Although the state marginally improved from

its previous score of 401.6 in 2022-23, the increase was not enough to lift it out of the lowest bracket. The report exposed alarming gaps in Meghalaya’s school system, particularly in rural regions where educational infrastructure and learning standards continue to deteriorate.

Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma recently acknowledged the severity of the crisis, citing official figures that reveal nearly 22,000 students drop out of school every year. The state currently runs 14,582 schools with a workforce of 55,160 teachers, yet the education system faces a shocking paradox — 206 schools reportedly have zero students, while another 2,269 schools are functioning with single-digit enrolment.

The PGI report further highlighted severe deficiencies in sanitation, digital connectivity, physical infrastructure, and trained

teaching professionals. It also noted the absence of regular teacher training programmes and continuing weaknesses in foundational learning outcomes among students. The crisis has now triggered political tensions within the ruling coalition itself. While the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) government continues to promote its “Education Revolution” campaign, its ally, the Bharatiya Janata Party, has openly expressed concern over the state’s humiliating national ranking. State BJP general secretary Wankit-bok Pohshna called for an urgent all-party meeting involving coalition partners and education stakeholders to address the worsening situation.

He described the PGI findings as a clear warning sign demanding immediate reforms in the education sector. The BJP leader proposed launching a “Learning Recovery Mission” to

bridge academic gaps and improve student outcomes. The party also advocated for the development of model schools equipped with proper sanitation, stable infrastructure, and better facilities, especially in remote rural areas. Additionally, the BJP demanded greater transparency through regular school audits and stronger community monitoring systems. The Opposition Congress also launched a sharp attack on the government, accusing it of relying on publicity-driven policies rather than genuine reforms. Congress leader Manuel Badwar alleged that the state’s education system continues to collapse despite repeated announcements and intervention claims by the government.

Badwar criticised the hurried implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, claiming it was introduced merely to “please Delhi” without

adequate groundwork or preparation. He argued that teachers are increasingly burdened with paperwork, surveys, and data collection instead of actual classroom teaching.

According to the Congress leader, many educators now spend more time filling out forms than interacting with students. He further accused the government of focusing on “showcase politics” while ignoring critical issues such as crumbling school buildings, poor student access in remote blocks, and widening educational inequality between urban and rural areas. The latest PGI findings have intensified pressure on Chief Minister Conrad Sangma and the MDA government to explain the growing disconnect between their claims of educational transformation and Meghalaya’s grim standing as India’s worst-performing state in school education.

To fight counterfeiting, IIT Guwahati creates cutting-edge nanomaterial technology

Guwahati, May 25: Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati have developed an advanced light-emitting perovskite nanomaterial that could significantly strengthen protection against fake currency, forged documents, counterfeit products, and identity fraud.

The research team has created specialised nanocrystals capable of generating highly secure light-based patterns that are difficult to replicate using conventional printing, imaging, or copying technologies. Counterfeiting has emerged as a major global challenge affecting multiple sectors, including banking, pharmaceuticals, electronics, luxury goods, and identity documentation. With rapid advancements in technology, counterfeiters have increasingly managed to duplicate traditional security features such as QR codes, holograms, barcodes, and watermarks with high accuracy.

To address this challenge, the IIT Guwahati researchers developed nanocrystals with a unique double-layer protective coating, making them highly resistant to heat and chemicals while preserving their light-emitting properties. Using an advanced direct laser writing technique, the researchers successfully created microscopic security patterns from these materials. The multilayer coating enabled the team to generate these intricate patterns without relying on traditional lithographic



masks.

According to researchers, the technology achieved ultra-high resolutions ranging between 10 to 40 micrometers, allowing the creation of extremely complex patterns and encoded information that are difficult to forge or duplicate. The team stated that the developed laser patterning technique has applications beyond anti-counterfeiting technologies. It can also be utilised in the development of advanced micro-LED displays for smartphones, wearable devices, and Augmented Reality (AR) systems.

Researchers further noted that the innovation has broad industrial relevance and can be applied in sectors where authentication, product verification, and security are critical. The development highlights the growing role of Indian scientific research institutions in creating advanced technologies with practical applications in security, electronics, and next-generation digital systems.

Assam will become the third state to implement the UCC after presenting a bill for a uniform civil code in the assembly

Guwahati, May 25: The Assam government on Monday formally introduced the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in the State Assembly, nearly two weeks after the draft legislation received approval from the state cabinet. On behalf of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Atul Bora tabled “The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, Bill, 2026” in the Assembly.

The Bill is expected to be taken up for detailed discussion and passage on May 27. Earlier on May 13, following the first cabinet meeting of the second term of the Himanta Biswa Sarma government held at the No. 1 State Guest House in Koinadhara, Guwahati, the state government had announced that the legislation would be introduced during the ongoing Assembly session. At the time, Chief Minister Sarma had stated that the cabinet had approved the draft UCC Bill and that it would be introduced during the final phase of the Assembly session. According to the proposed legislation, Scheduled Tribes living in both hill and plain areas of Assam will remain completely outside the purview of the Uniform Civil Code.

The government has also clarified that traditional religious customs, rituals and practices of different communities will not be affected by the law. The proposed UCC in Assam mainly focuses on four major subjects — fixing the minimum legal age for marriage, prohibition of polygamy, ensuring equal property rights for daughters, and regulating live-in relationships through legal registration. Under the Bill, the minimum legal age for marriage has been fixed at 21 years for men and 18 years for women. The legislation also proposes a complete ban on polygamy. In



another significant provision, live-in relationships would have to be legally registered in order to receive official recognition and regulation.

The Bill further seeks to grant daughters equal rights in parental property. If passed, Assam will become the third state in India to enact a Uniform Civil Code law after Uttarakhand and Gujarat. Uttarakhand became the first state in the country to implement a UCC law in 2024, in line with Article 44 of the Constitution of India, which directs the state to endeavour to secure a uniform civil code for citizens throughout the country.

Earlier this year, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami claimed that one year of UCC implementation had helped empower women and improve safety. He stated that public doubts and apprehensions surrounding the law had largely been addressed and that no cases of privacy violations had been reported despite over five lakh registrations under the system. The Uttarakhand government had also stated that more than 4.74 lakh marriages were registered online within one year after the simplified UCC system came into effect. Mean-

while, Gujarat passed its own UCC Bill in March this year.

The Gujarat legislation covers matters relating to marriage, divorce, live-in relationships, maintenance and inheritance, with the stated objective of ensuring stronger legal protection and equal rights for women across communities. Political observers believe the Assam move is part of the broader push by the Bharatiya Janata Party to implement the Uniform Civil Code nationwide. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier stated that the UCC would also be implemented in West Bengal. Addressing a rally in Murshidabad district in April, he said the BJP remained committed to implementing the UCC to “end the politics of appeasement forever.”

The BJP secured a massive victory in the recently concluded Assam Assembly elections, winning 82 seats in the 126-member Assembly. Along with allies Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People’s Front, which won 10 seats each, the NDA alliance’s strength in the Assembly rose to 102 seats, giving the government a comfortable majority to push forward major legislative reforms including the UCC Bill.

Naga National Council Warns of Serious Consequences Over Violence in “Southern Nagaland,” Appeals for End to Retaliatory Attacks

Kohima, May 25: The Naga National Council and the Federal Government of Nagaland (NNC/FGN) have strongly condemned the recent incidents of violence reported from parts of Ukhrul and Kangpokpi districts in Manipur, warning that continued attacks on Nagas would have serious consequences and would not go unanswered.

In a statement issued through its Ministry of Rali Wali Affairs under the leadership of Ino Zhopra Vero, the organisation expressed deep concern over what it described as escalating violence in areas it referred to as “Southern Nagaland.” According to the statement, the recent incidents have caused widespread anguish and insecurity among the Naga population living in the region.

The NNC/FGN referred to several reported incidents of violence, including killings in Litan-Sa-reikhong, Mullam and Shongphal villages. The organisation also highlighted the killing of three Thadou Baptist religious leaders — Rev. Vunthang Sitlou, Rev. Kaigoullun and Pastor Paogoulen — in Kangpokpi district on May 13, describing the incident as deeply disturbing and reflective of the deteriorating law and order situation in the conflict-affected areas. The statement further cited the alleged abduction and



killings of six Naga individuals identified as Pr. Ken-pibou, Rev. Manu, Phenrongwibou, Phenrilungbou, Dilip and Kaliwangbou. The organisation claimed that such incidents have intensified fear, anger and uncertainty among local communities already affected by months of ethnic tension and armed conflict. Describing the reported incidents as “morally indefensible and politically reckless,” the NNC/FGN stated that no political dispute or ideological conflict could justify bloodshed, abduction or destruction of villages.

The organisation maintained that targeting civilians and community

leaders would only deepen divisions and further destabilise the fragile situation in the hill districts of Manipur. At the same time, the NNC/FGN appealed to all armed groups operating in the region to immediately cease hostilities and avoid actions that could trigger another cycle of violence.

The organisation also urged both Naga and Kuki communities to refrain from retaliatory attacks, warning that revenge-driven violence would severely damage any remaining prospects for peace, dialogue and reconciliation between the communities. While calling for restraint, the organisation reiterated that it would continue to defend what it described as

the historical and ancestral rights of the Naga people. The statement asserted that any politically motivated attack on a Naga individual would be viewed as an attack on the entire Naga nation.

The latest statement comes amid continuing tensions in parts of Manipur where sporadic violence, allegations of armed attacks and ethnic hostilities have repeatedly disrupted normal life over the past several months. Security concerns remain high in several hill areas, with both community organisations and armed groups continuing to issue warnings and counter-statements over the deteriorating ground situation.

Amidst renewed attacks in Ukhrul and Kamjong, the Kuki CSO Working Committee accuses governments of failing and issues directives, causing fresh tension in Manipur

Imphal, May 25: Fresh tensions have resurfaced in conflict-hit areas of Manipur after the Kuki CSO Working Committee (WCKCSOs)-Ukhrul issued a strongly worded statement accusing both the Government of Manipur and the Government of India of failing to protect Kuki-Zo civilians in Ukhrul and Kamjong districts.

In two separate statements, the organisation alleged continued administrative neglect, repeated security failures, and co-ordinated armed attacks targeting Kuki villages in the region. According to the statement issued by the WCKCSOs-Ukhrul, the organisation expressed “strongest exception” to what it described as persistent and systemic failures by the authorities to address the grievances and existen-

tial concerns of the Kuki-Zo population.

The committee alleged that despite repeated appeals and representations, the governments had failed to operationalise the March 19 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), ensure adequate civilian security arrangements, or establish any viable alternative administrative mechanism for affected communities. The organisation further claimed that the situation has led to prolonged insecurity, administrative paralysis, and institutional neglect across Kuki-dominated areas of Ukhrul and Kamjong districts.

The statement also alleged that repeated attacks by armed groups had intensified fear and uncertainty among local residents. Referring to incidents reported on May 22, the commit-

tee claimed that Mongkot Chepu village came under repeated firing from the direction of Sikibung at multiple times throughout the day, including early morning and evening hours. Another alleged attack was reported from the direction of TM Kasom/Roudei targeting Patleijang village later the same night.

The organisation blamed the NSCN(IF) for the attacks and accused authorities of failing to prevent recurring hostilities. In response, the WCKCSOs-Ukhrul announced a series of directives with immediate effect. The Kuki Chiefs Association (KCA) was instructed to begin collecting hill house tax from Kuki villages in Ukhrul and Kamjong districts and to coordinate formal remittance of the tax to authorities in Kangpokpi district.

Simultaneously, the Kuki Students’ Organisation (KSO)-Ukhrul was directed to intensify peaceful democratic agitations and install signboards identifying Kuki villages in Ukhrul and Kamjong as falling under Kangpokpi district before June 1.

The organisation stated that these measures had become necessary because of what it described as continued governmental apathy and repeated security failures. It warned that the concerned authorities would bear responsibility for any further deterioration in the situation if immediate action was not taken. In another statement issued on May 24, the WCKCSOs-Ukhrul condemned what it called a “coordinated armed aggression” on Mongkot Chepu village. The organisation alleged that indiscriminate



firing was carried out from multiple directions, including areas near Litan Police Station and Lilen Ridge of Sikibung village. It claimed the attacks were premeditated and aimed at intimidating and uprooting the Kuki-Zo population from parts of Ukhrul district. The committee also alleged that earlier the same day, churchgo-

ers returning from worship came under intermittent firing near Lilen Ridge.

One villager, identified as Ngamkhohen Khongsai, reportedly sustained injuries to his palm after being struck by a bullet. The targeting of unarmed civilians and worshippers was described by the organisation as deeply alarming. At the

same time, the WCKCSOs-Ukhrul acknowledged the intervention of the 8 Bihar Regiment, stating that the security forces responded promptly and helped deter further escalation. However, the committee argued that the deployment of forces alone was insufficient without stronger operational mandates and

decisive preventive action against armed groups. The organisation reiterated that the Kuki-Zo community could not be blamed for acts undertaken in self-defence, claiming that the protection of life and property remained both a constitutional and natural right in the face of repeated attacks and inadequate security arrangements.

The latest developments have once again highlighted the fragile security situation prevailing in parts of Manipur, where ethnic tensions and recurring violence continue to disrupt normal life. The statements issued by the Kuki CSO Working Committee are expected to intensify political debate and place additional pressure on both the state and central governments to address the worsening ground situation in the hill districts.

No more illegal vehicle alterations: Meghalaya govt issues warning

Shillong, May 25: The Meghalaya Transport Department has warned vehicle owners and transport operators against unauthorized vehicle body modifications and the operation of vehicles without valid documents, saying strict enforcement drives will soon be intensified across the state. In public notices issued on May 20, the office of the Commissioner of Transport stated that several light, medium and heavy goods vehicles have been found operating with illegal extensions in length, width and height beyond manufacturer-approved specifications. According to the department, such alterations violate provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and

the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, while also posing serious road safety risks and affecting the structural stability of vehicles. Vehicle owners and operators have been directed to restore modified vehicle bodies to their original approved dimensions. Owners purchasing chassis- only vehicles for trucks or buses have also been instructed to obtain approval from the concerned District Transport Officer before undertaking body construction works. The department also raised concern over vehicles operating without valid statutory documents, particularly in border arons and vulnerable routes.

Meghalaya BJP calls for urgent all-party meeting on 'education crisis'

Shillong, May 25: While the MDA government touts its “Education Revolution,” its own ally, the BJP, has joined the Opposition in sounding the alarm over Meghalaya’s rock-bottom national ranking, exposing a deepening crisis where “paperwork” is reportedly replacing “teaching” in the state’s crumbling classrooms. The latest Performance Grading Index (PGI) released by the Union Ministry of Education has placed Meghalaya in the 401-460 score bracket—the lowest tier in the country. The report card identifies systemic failures across learning outcomes, infrastructure, governance, and teacher training. State BJP general secretary Wankitbok Pohshna on Sunday called for an urgent all-party meeting involving coalition partners and stakeholders.

Kokrajhar Police Suspect Drowning in Schoolgirl's Deaths

Kokrajhar, May 25: The mystery surrounding the deaths of two schoolgirls in Kokrajhar has taken a significant turn after district police stated that preliminary investigations suggest the students died due to drowning in a pond. The incident, which had triggered widespread tension and speculation across the district, involved two students of Dholmara Higher Secondary School whose bodies were recovered from a pond in Lalkura Second Block village under Dholmara on May 21.The deceased students were identified as Anamika Bara and Sarita Lakra. Following the recovery of their bodies from a tea garden pond, Kokrajhar Police launched an extensive investigation with assistance from local residents and family members. Addressing a press conference at the office of the Senior Superintendent of Police,

Union Minister to Roll Out Fisheries Projects in NE

Aizawl, May 25: Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Panchayati Raj, Rajiv Ranjan Singh will chair the “Regional Review Meeting: Northeastern Region 2026” and launch fisheries projects worth Rs 32.15 crore, in Aizawl on Monday.

The meeting, organised by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India, will be held in the presence of Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Panchayati Raj, S.P. Singh Baghel, and Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Minority Affairs, George Kurian.

Ministers in-charge of Fisheries and Animal Husbandry from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura will also

participate in the Regional Review Meeting.

Besides, Secretaries of the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, along with senior officers from the Central and State Governments, will also attend the meeting. The event will be conducted in hybrid mode. The meeting aims to review the progress of various schemes and programmes being implemented in the Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying sectors across the North Eastern Region and discuss future strategies for sustainable sectoral growth, farmers’ welfare and livelihood enhancement.

Union Minister Singh will also inaugurate and lay the foundation for key projects amounting to about Rs. 32.15 crore under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

(PMMSY) and Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF), underscoring the Government’s commitment to advancing and targeting the self-sustained fisheries sector in the Northeastern Region.

Certificates will be distributed by the union minister to fisheries beneficiaries from the Northeastern Region on the occasion, including Fisheries KCC cards and awards for Best Fisheries Startups and Fisheries Cooperatives. The programme will also feature experience-sharing sessions by MULCO farmer members, National Livestock Mission Entrepreneurship Development Programme (NLM-EDP) beneficiaries and fisheries beneficiaries, showcasing successful grassroots initiatives and livelihood enhancement in the North Eastern Region.

accused after reports emerged that they had allegedly engaged in arguments and suspicious behaviour before the bodies were recovered from the pond. Investigators are continuing to examine all possible angles linked to the incident.The tragic deaths have deeply shocked the region, prompting political leaders and local representatives to visit the bereaved families. Baokhungri MLA Rupam Chandra Roy and Makum MLA Sanjay Kishan visited the homes of the deceased students and expressed condolences to the grieving families. The legislators assured that if anyone is found directly or indirectly involved in the incident, strict legal action would be taken and no guilty person would be spared. They also informed that fencing work around the pond has already begun to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Fresh Tension Grips Manipur Amid Renewed Attacks

Ukhrul, May 25: Fresh tensions have resurfaced in conflict-hit areas of Manipur after the Kuki CSO Working Committee (WCKCSOs)-Ukhrul issued a strongly worded statement accusing both the Government of Manipur and the Government of India of failing to protect Kuki-Zo civilians in Ukhrul and Kamjong districts. In two separate statements, the organisation alleged continued administrative neglect, repeated security failures, and coordinated armed attacks targeting Kuki villages in the region.

According to the statement issued by the WCKCSOs-Ukhrul, the organisation expressed “strongest exception” to what it described as persistent and systemic failures by the authorities to address the grievances and existential concerns of the Kuki-Zo population. The committee alleged that despite repeated appeals and representations, the governments had failed to operationalise the March 19 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), ensure adequate civilian security arrangements, or establish any viable alternative administrative mechanism for affected communities.

The organisation further claimed that the situation has led to prolonged insecurity, administrative paralysis, and institutional

neglect across Kuki-dominated areas of Ukhrul and Kamjong districts. The statement also alleged that repeated attacks by armed groups had intensified fear and uncertainty among local residents. Referring to incidents reported on May 22, the committee claimed that Mongkot Chepu village came under repeated firing from the direction of Sikibung at multiple times throughout the day, including early morning and evening hours. Another alleged attack was reported from the direction of TM Kasom/Roudei targeting Patleijang village later the same night. The organisation blamed the NSCN(IF) for the attacks and accused authorities of failing to prevent recurring hostilities.

In response, the WCKCSOs-Ukhrul announced a series of directives with immediate effect. The Kuki Chiefs Association (KCA) was instructed to begin collecting hill house tax from Kuki villages in Ukhrul and Kamjong districts and to co-ordinate formal remittance of the tax to authorities in Kangpokpi district. Simultaneously, the Kuki Students’ Organisation (KSO)-Ukhrul was directed to intensify peaceful democratic agitations and install signboards identifying Kuki villages in Ukhrul and Kamjong as falling under

Kangpokpi district before June 1. The organisation stated that these measures had become necessary because of what it described as continued governmental apathy and repeated security failures. It warned that the concerned authorities would bear responsibility for any further deterioration in the situation if immediate action was not taken.

In another statement issued on May 24, the WCKCSOs-Ukhrul condemned what it called a “coordinated armed aggression” on Mongkot Chepu village. The organisation alleged that indiscriminate firing was carried out from multiple directions, including areas near Litan Police Station and Lilen Ridge of Sikibung village. It claimed the attacks were premeditated and aimed at intimidating and uprooting the Kuki-Zo population from parts of Ukhrul district. The committee also alleged that earlier the same day, churchgoers returning from worship came under intermittent firing near Lilen Ridge. One villager, identified as Ngamkhohen Khongsai, reportedly sustained injuries to his palm after being struck by a bullet. The targeting of unarmed civilians and worshippers was described by the organisation as deeply alarming.

Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh calls on Mizoram CM

Aizawl, May 25: Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, who is currently on a visit to Mizoram, called on Chief Minister Lalduhoma at the Chief Minister’s official residence in Aizawl on Sunday.The Union Minister accompanied by Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying George Kurian and senior central government officials.The Chief Minister welcomed the Union Minister to Mizoram and expressed hope that the visit would greatly benefit the state. He also conveyed his best wishes for a pleasant stay in Mizoram. During the meeting, the Chief Minister highlighted various needs and priorities of Mizoram in the Fisheries and Animal Husbandry & Veterinary sectors.The Union Minister informed the Chief Minister that the Centre is working towards sanctioning key projects proposed by Mizoram, including the establishment of a Wholesale Fish Market, an Integrated Aqua Park, and expansion of Paddy-cum-Fish Culture clusters to more districts. He further stated that the upcoming Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) 2.0 would include provisions for new fish ponds, rejuvenation and renovation of existing ponds, and enhanced support for fish farmers. He encouraged the Mizoram Government to submit well-prepared proposals so that the state could benefit substantially under PMMSY 2.0.The Union Minister also expressed the Centre’s desire to see Mizoram become not only self-sufficient in fish production but also capable of exporting fish. He assured support for development-oriented projects submitted by the state.On dairy development, the Chief Minister informed the Union Minister that under the new central scheme being formulated for setting up Milk Processing Plants, the funding pattern is proposed to be revised from the existing ratio to a more favourable 90:10 Central-State share.

Meghalaya BJP Demands All-Party Meeting on Education Crisis

Shillong, May 25: The Meghalaya BJP has called for an urgent all-party meeting involving coalition partners and stakeholders sounding an alarm over the State’s rock-bottom national ranking in the education sector.

The latest Performance Grading Index (PGI) released by the Union Ministry of Education has placed Meghalaya in the 401-460 score bracket—the lowest tier in the country.

The report card identifies systemic failures across learning outcomes, infrastructure, governance, and teacher training.

State BJP general secretary Wankitbok Pohshna stated that the ranking was a clear signal to overhaul the system and address ac-

ademic gaps and the development of “model schools” that provide basic necessities like sanitation and stable infrastructure, particularly in remote regions.

The party also called for greater transparency in school administration through regular audits and community monitoring, rather than relying on current governance models.

The move is seen as a significant “vote of no confidence” in the Education Department’s current trajectory.

Meanwhile, the Congress launched a scathing attack on the government, alleging that a lack of genuine reform is costing the state “another generation.”



Congress leader Manuel Badwar said the state continues to slide despite years of government “interventions” and PR-heavy announcements. He accused the administration of rushing the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to “please Delhi” without conducting the necessary groundwork. “Policy by press releases will not help our children,” Badwar said. He highlighted a growing burden on educators, noting that teachers are increasingly forced to focus on data collection and excessive paperwork instead of classroom engagement. “Teachers spend more time filling forms than teaching,” he remarked.

CBI arrests key accused in 2023 Manipur students’ murder case

Imphal, May 25: The main accused in the kidnapping and murder of two students-- Hijam Linthoingambi and Phijam Hemanjit -- was arrested by a joint team of security forces and CBI from Churachandpur district.

Sources said he has been taken to Guwahati for further investigation and interrogation.

Acting on specific information shared by the CBI about the presence of the main accused, Nohgin Baite Kuki alias Tiger Nohgin (39) s/o (L) Janglam Baite of Leimatak Bungmol village who is also said to be the commander of KNF (Zougam), a combined team of Central armed force, Assam Rifles and State force carried out massive search operation in Henglep area of Churachandpur district and arrested the accused.

The accused was first brought up to Imphal airport under very tight security arrangement and then taken to Guwahati in an Indigo flight, sources said. Earlier on October 1, 2023, a combined team of CBI, Indian Army and Assam Rifles arrested four persons including the wife of the main accused in connection with the abduction and cold blooded murder of the two students.

The four accused arrested in October 2023 were identified as Paominlin Haokip, Smalsawn Haokip, Lhingneichong Baite and Paolunmang and they allegedly had direct knowledge of the crime.

Widespread protest erupted in the valley districts of the State after photos of Linthoingambi and Hemanjit who went missing on July 6, 2023 emerged on social media on September 25, 2023 .

Naga National Council Warns of Serious Consequences Over Violence in “Southern Nagaland,” Appeals for End to Retaliatory Attacks

Kohima, May 25: The Naga National Council and the Federal Government of Nagaland (NNC/FGN) have strongly condemned the recent incidents of violence reported from parts of Ukhrul and Kangpokpi districts in Manipur, warning that continued attacks on Nagas would have serious consequences and would not go unanswered.

In a statement issued through its Ministry of Rali Wali Affairs under the leadership of Ino Zhopra Vero, the organisation expressed deep concern over what it described as escalating violence in areas it referred to as “Southern Nagaland.” According to the statement, the recent incidents have caused widespread anguish and insecurity among the Naga population living in the region.

The NNC/FGN referred to several re-

ported incidents of violence, including killings in Litan-Sareikhong, Mullam and Shongphal villages. The organisation also highlighted the killing of three Thadou Baptist religious leaders — Rev. Vunthang Sitlou, Rev. Kaigoullun and Pastor Paogoulen — in Kangpokpi district on May 13, describing the incident as deeply disturbing and reflective of the deteriorating law and order situation in the conflict-affected areas.

The statement further cited the alleged abduction and killing of six Naga individuals identified as Pr. Kenpibou, Rev. Manu, Phenrongwibou, Phenri-lungbou, Dilip and Kaliwangbou. The organisation claimed that such incidents have intensified fear, anger and uncertainty among local communities already affected by months of ethnic tension and armed conflict. Describ-

ing the reported incidents as “morally indefensible and politically reckless,” the NNC/FGN stated that no political disagreement, territorial dispute or ideological conflict could justify bloodshed, abduction or destruction of villages. The organisation maintained that targeting civilians and community leaders would only deepen divisions and further destabilise the fragile situation in the hill districts of Manipur.

At the same time, the NNC/FGN appealed to all armed groups operating in the region to immediately cease hostilities and avoid actions that could trigger another cycle of violence. The organisation also urged both Naga and Kuki communities to refrain from retaliatory attacks, warning that revenge-driven violence would severely damage any remaining prospects for

peace, dialogue and reconciliation between the communities. While calling for restraint, the organisation reiterated that it would continue to defend what it described as the historical and ancestral rights of the Naga people. The statement asserted that any politically motivated attack on a Naga individual would be viewed as an attack on the entire Naga nation.

The latest statement comes amid continuing tensions in parts of Manipur where sporadic violence, allegations of armed attacks and ethnic hostilities have repeatedly disrupted normal life over the past several months. Security concerns remain high in several hill areas, with both community organisations and armed groups continuing to issue warnings and counter-statements over the deteriorating ground situation.

Education Crisis Deepens in Meghalaya

Shillong, May 25: The education sector in Meghalaya has plunged into a deep crisis after the Union Ministry of Education’s latest Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2.0 ranked the state as the worst-performing in the country. Despite having more than 55,000 teachers on government payrolls and over 14,500 schools across the state, Meghalaya has been pushed into the lowest Grade 10 category with a score of just 417.9 out of 1,000 points.

The PGI 2.0 assessment evaluated 36 states and union territories on six major parameters including learning outcomes, quality of education, access, infrastructure, equity, governance, and teacher training. Meghalaya remained at the bottom of the national rankings, even behind states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Bihar.

Although the state marginally improved from its previous score of 401.6 in 2022-23, the increase was not enough to lift it out of the lowest bracket. The report exposed alarming gaps in Meghalaya’s school system, particularly in rural regions where educational infrastructure and learning standards continue to deteriorate.

Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma recently acknowledged the severity of the crisis, citing official figures that reveal nearly 22,000 students drop out of school every year. The state currently runs 14,582 schools with a workforce of 55,160 teachers, yet the education system faces a shocking paradox — 206 schools reportedly have zero students, while another 2,269 schools are functioning with single-digit enrolment. The PGI report further highlighted severe deficiencies in sanitation, digital connectivity, physical infrastructure, and trained teaching professionals. It also noted the absence of regular teacher training programmes and continuing weaknesses in foundational learning outcomes among students.

The crisis has now triggered political tensions within the ruling coalition itself. While the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) government continues to promote its “Education Revolution” campaign, its ally, the Bharatiya Janata Party, has openly expressed concern over the state’s humiliating national ranking.State BJP general secretary Wankitbok Pohshna called for an urgent all-party meeting involving coalition partners and education stakeholders to address the worsening situation. He described the PGI findings as a clear warning sign demanding immediate reforms in the education sector.The BJP leader proposed launching a “Learning Recovery Mission” to bridge academic gaps and improve student outcomes. The party also advocated for the development of model schools equipped with proper sanitation, stable infrastructure, and better facilities, especially in remote rural areas. Additionally, the BJP demanded greater transparency through regular school audits and stronger community monitoring systems.

North East Chronicle

MAY 26 2026 VOL 02 NO. 92



The Growing Neglect of Personal Health Check-Ups

Many people seek medical attention only after health problems become serious. Regular health check-ups and preventive screenings are often ignored due to busy schedules, financial concerns, or lack of awareness. This delay frequently results in diseases being detected at later stages, making treatment more difficult and expensive. Lifestyle-related illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease particularly require early monitoring. Preventive healthcare remains far more effective and affordable than emergency treatment. Health awareness must move beyond treatment-focused thinking. Regular check-ups should become a routine part of responsible living rather than an afterthought during illness.

Can't Hollywood blockbusters grasp the little things well if they have to experiment with science

I recently saw Project Hail Mary at the movies on my teenage son's recommendation. There is science in the movie. He was certain that I would enjoy it because I write about science. But you can imagine how shocked I was halfway through when I started to get so angry that I felt like I would blow up. The main character, Ryland Grace, a molecular biologist who ought to have known better, had just placed two plastic tubes next to one another in a centrifuge! To put it plainly, this is not cool. Just consider the central spindle's strain! Even the most inexperienced lab technician is aware that symmetrically balancing the samples is the proper method for loading a centrifuge. Two tubes? Put them on opposing sides of the precisely calibrated equipment. What are we? Luddites? I want to be trans-



parent about what makes me uncomfortable. While many people lament the absence of factual accuracy in movies, my grievance is more specific. As long as it advances the plot, I don't mind when filmmakers violate the rules of

physics or push the boundaries of scientific plausibility. However, I want to throw my popcorn at the television when they make tiny, careless, seemingly insignificant scientific errors. I have nothing against Rocky,

the mostly inorganic alien in Project Hail Mary, despite the fact that the centrifuge left me spinning. The fact that its spaceship is constructed from a solid form of the noble gas xenon and that the movie's made-up micro-

organisms, or "astrophages," can power a spacecraft and flourish in a vacuum don't bother me. These reality-bending problems may have dubious roots, but they are essential because they keep things moving forward. Similarly, because Han Solo is a busy man, I don't flinch when the Millennium Falcon defies Einstein's theory of special relativity and surpasses the speed of light. He has places to go and things to do. However, when the same spacecraft roars beyond space, a tiny part of me perishes because sound cannot exist in a vacuum.

The idea that dinosaur DNA may be extracted from fossils is the basis of Jurassic Park. It is unable to. The oldest DNA found dates back two million years. The "de-extinction" of dinosaurs is impossible because they became extinct 66 million years ago. I don't mind this false information because it advances the plot, but when I see the purportedly bloodsucking mosquito from which the scientists harvest dinosaur DNA, I get hives. I can tell the bug is a nectar feeder because of its distinctively downturned proboscis. Although I'm not a pedant, details are important. Filmmakers, please don't worry about the little things because scientific knowledge, in all its delightfully nerdy depth, is hard earned. Not only is the centrifuge in Project Hail Mary imbalanced, but it is also insane. Don't choose the simple solution just because it seems or sounds fine when it comes to seemingly insignificant details. Instead, do it correctly. Don't even try to make the film if you can't accomplish that. I honorably fall onto my pipette.

It is not inevitable that the tragedy over Iran will worsen, Trump has to be stopped

Loose parallels to other US quagmires in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam are being made as the impasse in the conflict in Iran approaches its fourth month. Warnings of another "forever war" appeared overblown at the start of the conflict. No more. As things stand, this fiasco's detrimental international humanitarian, economic, and geopolitical repercussions are destined to cause more long-term harm to the world than any of those previous US-caused catastrophes. Given this, the question of who will stop Donald Trump from dropping additional bombs on Iran is crucial, especially in light of recent rumors that the US president and his secretary of war are planning to do so. Encouraged by Israel's leading provocateur, Benjamin Netanyahu, the US president has put himself in a difficult situation by beginning something he cannot complete. Either he accepts a negotiated compromise that falls embarrassingly short of his original goals, including ending Iran's nuclear program, and leaves an irate, more hard-line, strategically strengthened regime in power, or he resumes the illegal bombing of Iran on an even larger scale while blatantly threatening war crimes in an attempt to force surrender. For Trump, neither option is appealing or viable. He and his fanatical sidekick, Pete Hegseth, ought to be aware by now that Iran's defiance and te-



nacity cannot be destroyed by bombing. According to reports, 70% of Iran's missile stockpile is still in place, thus it is not even militarily effective. In any event, the majority of US voters, Washington's allies (apart from Israel), and Gulf states afraid of further retaliatory attacks oppose Trump's threats to violate the truce, such as his abandoned Project Freedom in the Strait of Hormuz. A peace agreement with add-ons that roughly resembles Barack Obama's 2015 nuclear agreement with Tehran—which Trump foolishly destroyed and is now the most Iran is willing to offer—would

undoubtedly be regarded as a complete failure on Trump's part. It would be a historic strategic setback for the United States and have a big impact on the international struggle with China and Russia. Furthermore, it would be completely degrading if any agreement allowed the regime to charge transit fees across the Strait of Hormuz. Such a disaster that would define the administration could not be covered up by any amount of spin. Trump is aware that he cannot do nothing. He seems frantic and Micawberish, lurching back and forth in indecision. Claims that something will turn

up frequently follow spine-tingling threats within the same day. That is, in a way, his issue. It is entirely justified that his approval ratings have plummeted to roughly 37%. Unfortunately, individuals all across the world are suffering severe, potentially irrevocable injury as a result of the standoff. Now, everyone is concerned about Trump's Iran issue. The necessity to put an end to the war is not ideological among the poorest nations. It's existential. Since the start of the conflict, the cost of staples like wheat and rice has doubled in Somalia. Fertilizer shortages might damage the growing season and portend catastrophic famines. According to the World Food Programme, 45 million more people will experience severe hunger if the conflict persists. Additionally, the cuts to foreign aid made by Trump, the UK, and other nations worsen the suffering. It is also brutally obvious how the better-off are affected economically. The full effects of rising energy, gasoline, food, and commodity costs have not yet been felt, penalizing developed nations from Europe to Asia. Due to the "shadow of war," the IMF lowered its prediction for global growth to 3.1% in 2026 last month. In essence, the Trump war tax is being paid by common people everywhere. The geopolitical balance is being upset by Trump's war. Germany, France, and Britain, the US's closest

friends, are currently publicly at odds with the US. The Gulf states are also reconsidering a US partnership that has turned them into targets for Iran. All of this is harming Ukraine and strengthening Russia, whose oil exports are exempt from sanctions. In the meantime, this month's Beijing summit underlined China's increasing global dominance as a servile, ignorant Trump failed to get its assistance on Iran, much to the dismay of Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Every day, the unprovoked, preventable conflict's universally detrimental knock-on repercussions take place. Democratic accountability, political stability, human rights, the UN charter, the Geneva conventions, climate policy and environmental conservation, common decency, and most importantly, common sense are all compromised. However, where is the ferocious cry of international indignation about what Trump is doing to the world virtually by himself? As this catastrophe worsens, where is the pushback? A calamity that keeps getting worse is not inevitable. It is necessary and possible to stop Trump. There is an urgent need for radical, coordinated response. Both individually and together, Western governments have the greatest influence. For instance, if Britain and the US really have a "special relationship," now is the moment to take advantage of it for the

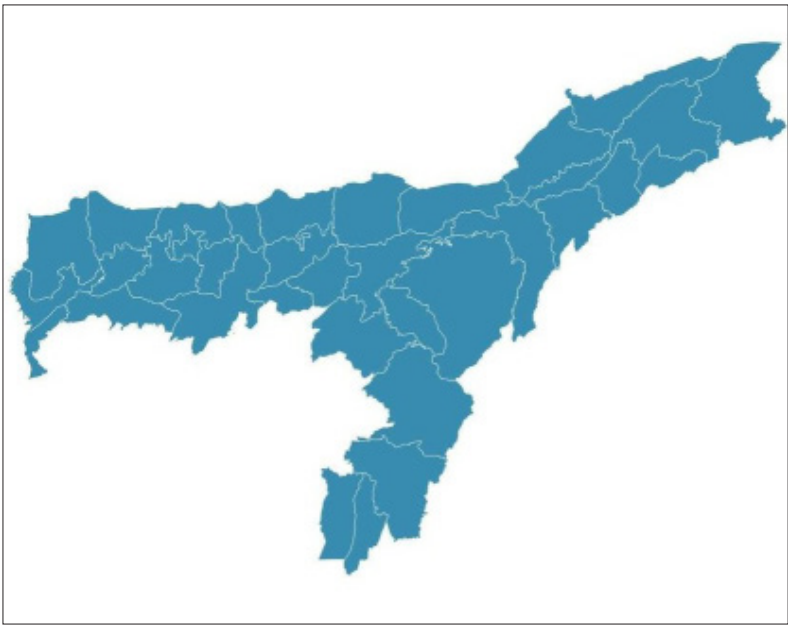
benefit of all. The president of France, Emmanuel Macron, has called for "middle powers" like Canada, India, Brazil, and Japan to form a "coalition of independence" with Europe. The time to use this concept in the fight to persuade Trump to see reason is now. A far stronger, unified approach to Washington is required where governments are already gathered together, such as in the EU, the African Union, the G20, and the Brics. The US should be subject to import tariffs, punitive sanctions, and a downgrading of relations if Trump persists in obstructing significant peace negotiations. The leaders of other western democracies must finally work together to hold Trump accountable at the EU summit next month and the G7 summit in France that comes before it, which Trump is anticipated to attend. Another forum where more pressure ought to be exerted is the UN Security Council. What would happen if France and the UK joined China, Russia, and other members in calling for an immediate and permanent cessation of hostilities, followed by impartial mediation? That might make Washington think twice. Non-Ukrainian military cooperation could be restricted or suspended by European NATO members. Restrictions or shutdown may be imposed on more US bases in Europe. And why keep up the pretense of friendly diplomatic ties? Send Trump's

loud-mouthed, usually incompetent diplomats home to reconsider. Boycott the World Cup next month or relocate games to locations outside of the United States. Prohibit Budweiser and McDonald's. A worldwide community of nations that is being severely harmed by an arbitrary US war of choice and refuses to remain its defenseless victim may try all of this and more. However, American pressure is still the most direct means of halting Trump. Most people regret his war. The majority are seeing sharp increases in the cost of living. They are also concerned about the direction his despotic actions are taking. Congress is taking action to halt this unconstitutional war. We need to step up these efforts. Additionally, Trump and his cowardly Republican supporters need to face harsh consequences when the midterm elections in November take place. Given how damaging Trump and Trumpism have been to the US, they run the risk of spreading throughout the world. His war in Iran is but a symptom. Cuba might become infested next. Trump needs to realize that his over-sized, poorly run, deficit-funded, school-bombing military does not make him the world's ruler. There is an urgent need for the United States' allies to take a bold, daring, and creative collective action. Trump needs to be stopped by all legal methods.

Preserving the native tongues of Assam

The convergence of three major language families—Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan, and Austro-asiatic—defines Assam as a dynamic linguistic melting pot. The linguistic and cultural legacy of Assam is intricately linked to the identity of its many ethnic groups. However, there have been several challenges to the state's rich ethnolinguistic legacy recently. According to the 2011 Census Report, Assamese-speaking individuals, or those whose mother tongue is Assamese, make up the largest group (less than 49% of the state's total population), but there are a number of other indigenous communities with their own unique and rich languages. Again, according to the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, the Bodo language, which is spoken by roughly 4.51 percent of the state's population, has equal status with the Assamese language. There are many fewer members of each of the other ethnic groups that speak different languages, such as Mising, Rabha, Tiwa, and Karbi. This does not, however, lessen the significance or depth

of these native tongues, which have greatly enhanced Assamese language and culture. It's also important to remember that Assam's Bengali-speaking population has been growing every ten years. There are a few more factors contributing to the rise in the number of Bengali speakers in Assam, even if it is still true that Bengali has long been spoken in some parts of the state. One is that, for a variety of historical causes, many Bengali-speaking Hindus moved to Assam from what was once East Bengal. Although that occurred during the period of independence, the mass migration of Muslims from what was once East Bengal, East Pakistan, and modern-day Bangladesh is mostly to blame for the unusual rise in the number of Bengali speakers. It is important to always remember that the second type of migration was a part of a broader scheme to invade Assam's population, a risky plot that was conceived back in 1906 at the founding of the Muslim League. However, from 1206, the Assamese had consistently prevented all at-



tempts to conquer Assam by several Muslim kings of northern and central India as well as their subsidiary that dominated Bengal. The Mughals, who had attempted to fabricate a narrative of their invincibility, suffered the most devastating defeat at

the Battle of Saraighat (1671), the pivotal event in Indian history. It is similarly significant to highlight that the immigrant Muslim community's population has been growing astronomically in contrast to the state's other communities. In order to pro-

tect the indigenous communities—including all Assamese, Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Tiwa, Rabha, Dimas, etc.—at all costs, a multifaceted strategy is currently needed. Providing a constitutional guarantee is one crucial step. Although this policy was outlined in the historic Assam Accord back in 1985, the BJP-led government led by Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma was only recently able to partially implement it through the delineation of the state's Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies. In the recently concluded Assam Assembly election, candidates from diverse indigenous and ethnic communities were able to secure victory in over 100 of the 126 Assembly constituencies, demonstrating the good result of that approach. However, the population of Muslim immigrants who speak Bengali is growing at a far higher rate, thus this might not be a long-term solution. Given this reality, a significant awareness campaign is also needed to educate the state's younger generations about the sinister plan of a demographic invasion that aims to realize a dangerous

conspiracy to include Assam in the so-called larger Bangladesh, which, under the influence of fundamentalist forces, frequently behaves more like Pakistan. A specific feature of the oath-taking ceremony for the newly elected members of the 16th Assam Legislative Assembly, which happened on Thursday, would also be relevant in this context. According to reports, some recently elected MPs, including Mising, Rabha, Karbi, and Rajbangshi, took an oath in their mother tongues. These languages are not yet included under the eighth schedule of the Constitution, in contrast to Assamese, Bodo, Bengali, Hindi, and Sanskrit. However, the current government's decision to allow these languages to be used in the state's highest legislative body by allowing them to take an oath in their native tongues is a historic step toward the constitutional protection of indigenous languages. After all, identity is far more closely linked to language than anything else for the majority of Northeastern groups.

Nomura maintains ‘Buy’ rating as order book hits record \$96 billion Samvardhana Motherson:

Mumbai: The brokerage house Nomura has maintained a ‘Buy’ rating to Samvardhana Motherson International. The brokerage raised the target price of this Auto Ancillaries stock to Rs 155 from Rs 140. This translates to an upside potential of 17% from the current market price. A favourable EUR/INR exchange rate (estimated at 112) is expected to support higher revenue and earnings. This foreign exchange benefit, combined with the Q4 beat and new acquisitions, led Nomura to raise its revenue estimates for FY27–28 by 8–10%. Samvardhana Motherson has reached an all-time high order book of \$96 billion, providing a very strong and predictable pipeline for future revenue.Furthermore, this order book is strategically diversified to capture future market shifts, with 22% of the total booked business dedicated to the Electric Vehicle (EV) segmentSamvardhana Motherson’s share price performance

The share price of Samvardhana Motherson has risen 4.5% in the last five trading days. The stock has



given a return of over 6% in the past one month and 23% in the last six months. Samvardhana Motherson’s stock price has increased more than 35% over the previous one year.According to the brokerage report, the target price was raised on the back of a strong fourth-quarter performance, strategic acquisitions, a robust order book, and several other factors. The automotive component manufacturer’s Q4 results significantly beat expectations, with EBITDA coming in

21% ahead of consensus. This was driven by a strong revenue beat in the Wiring Harness and Emerging Business segments, as well as higher-than-expected EBITDA margins in integrated assemblies and emerging businesses. As per Nomura report, there is a strong organic growth outlook driven by non-automotive sectors, particularly consumer electronics and aerospace. The aerospace order book has grown by over 20% to \$1.6 billion, and a new consumer

electronics plant (GF3), which is a multiple of current capacity, is scheduled for commissioning in Q3FY27. Growth from strategic acquisitions The company reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 1,497 crore in the fourth quarter of FY26, representing a growth of 42.5% year-over-year, compared to Rs 1,051 crore profit recorded in the same quarter a year back.

The company’s revenue from operations came in at Rs 34,309 crore for the reporting quarter, reflecting a growth of 17% YoY from Rs 29,317 crore reported in Q4 FY25.On the operating front, Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation (EBITDA) came in at Rs 3,792 crore for Q4FY26, a 43.4% YoY jump from Rs 2,640 crore posted in the same period a year ago.Nomura increased its estimates to account for the integration of the Nexans and Yutaka Giken acquisitions, both of which are expected to close in the first half of FY27. These acquisitions are expected to contribute to a 5–7% increase in EPS estimates.

3 reasons market is rallying Nifty hovers near 24,000

Mumbai: The Indian domestic indices saw a sharp rally in intraday trading session today as investors returned to buying amid easing global concerns and improving sentiment across sectors.

The benchmark Sensex surged over 1%, while the Nifty moved close to the 24,000 mark in the intraday trade as optimism around global developments, falling crude oil prices and supportive market trends lifted investor confidence.The rally comes after several sessions of volatility driven by concerns around rising oil prices, geopolitical tension in West Asia and foreign fund outflows. “We are starting the week on a positive note. Crude has dipped by \$5 to below \$100 on expectations that US and Iran are close to a deal. The market will wait and watch for clarity and certainty since many similar expectations have been belied since the start of the war. If this expected deal holds and crude drifts down, that can turn out to be turning point for the market,” said Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments. One of the biggest triggers behind today’s rally is the growing optimism around a possible peace understanding between the United States and Iran.US President Donald Trump recently indicated that discussions between Washington and Tehran had progressed significantly and that negotiators had “largely negotiated” a memorandum of understanding.Investors have remained nervous for months because the conflict

had disrupted shipping routes and increased fears around global energy supply.The possibility of a smoother flow of oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz has now started calming market nerves globally.Falling crude oil prices bring major relief to India Lower crude prices, on the other hand, reduce these pressures and improve the overall outlook for the economy as well as corporate earnings.Market experts believe this sudden fall in oil prices has significantly improved short-term sentiment for Indian equities.“Markets have rallied today post a sharp correction in Brent crude oil prices following the hopes of a peace deal that is likely to be signed between USA and Iran to end the West Asia conflict. Brent crude price corrected below the psychological mark of \$100/barrel. Cool off in US Bond yield and the Dollar index has also contributed to the rally,” said Sunny Agrawal, Head of Fundamental Research at SBI Securities. For India, this is a major positive development because the country imports a large portion of its crude oil requirement. Higher oil prices usually increase inflation, pressure the rupee and raise input costs for several sectors including aviation, paints, logistics and oil marketing companies.The second major reason behind today’s rally is the sharp correction in crude oil prices. Brent crude prices slipped below the psychologically important \$100 per barrel level, while West Texas Intermediate crude also saw a steep fall.

AI layoffs & job readiness Will your degree survive

Mumbai: Against the backdrop of recent global corporate layoffs, the value of a college degree is undergoing a structural shift. While still essential to get through the door, graduates quickly realise that execution-heavy, rule-based roles are shrinking—replaced by data-fluent, decision-making positions that traditional college programmes rarely teach.Entry-level jobsWhile the employability gap has been around for a while, AI has accelerated it. Nikhil Barshikar, founder & CEO, Imarcticus Learning, told this newspaper that in banking, finance, analytics, and consulting, the entry-level jobs of yesteryears are evaporating. “Basic financial reporting support, manual data reconciliation, first-layer data cleaning, and repetitive slide-building are now handled by enterprise automation and AI-assisted platforms,” he said. “Instead, a new breed of entry-level roles is emerging one layer higher in the value chain.”Barshikar added that the market now demands ‘insight engineers’ and hybrid professionals. “In global capability centres (GCCs), employers are scouting for credit analysts who understand automation pipelines and risk associates capable of navigating AI-driven scoring models,” he said. “The question confronting a graduate is no longer ‘Do you know AI?’, but ‘Can you use AI to work faster, deeper, and better within your do-

main?’” Despite overhauls like the National Education Policy (NEP), average Indian colleges struggle with execution. Curriculum updates remain uneven, and industry-faculty engagement is limited. “The career mandate is moving from knowledge delivery to employability delivery,” Barshikar said. “Curriculum updates cannot happen every 4-5 years anymore. They need continuous feedback loops with employers, live projects, practitioner-led teaching, internships, and simulation-based learning that measure real capability instead of rote memorisation.”To bridge this, Barshikar emphasises fusing domain knowledge with technical fluency. “AI fluency, data interpretation, business communication, and domain expertise need to be embedded across disciplines,” he said. “The market is asking: Can you think in your domain and use AI to work faster, deeper, and better than before?”The ecosystem approachWhere traditional models lag, specialised ecosystems are connecting academic progression with hiring demand. Barshikar explained how this functions at the Imarcticus School of Finance & Business (ISFB): “Our programmes are designed backwards from hiring demand. We work with more than 3,500 hiring partners. GenAI and AI-assisted workflows are now embedded across our finance, analytics, marketing, and management programmes.”

Tata AIA launches dividend leaders pension fund focused on retirement wealth creation

Aizawl: Tata AIA Life Insurance has announced the launch of its new “Tata AIA Dividend Leaders Index Pension Fund”, aimed at helping consumers build long-term retirement wealth through investments in India’s leading dividend-paying companies.

The fund will invest in 50 companies tracked under the BSE 500 Dividend Leaders 50 Index and follows a passive investment strategy aligned with IRDAI regulations. According to the company, the fund is designed to combine market-linked growth opportunities with life insurance protection,

while focusing on financially resilient businesses with a strong history of rewarding shareholders through dividends.

The insurer said dividends generated by the companies will be reinvested into the portfolio to support long-term compounding and retirement corpus creation. The fund will maintain an equity allocation of 70 to 100 per cent, while 0 to 30 per cent may be invested in cash and money market instruments for portfolio flexibility.The New Fund Offer (NFO) opened on May 20 and will close on May 27, 2026, with

policies issued during the period priced at a Net Asset Value (NAV) of ₹10. The fund is available through Tata AIA Smart Pension Secure and Tata AIA Premier Pension Secure plans.

Industry observers said the launch reflects growing demand for retirement-focused market-linked products among middle-income and salaried investors seeking disciplined long-term savings solutions.

In Mizoram, awareness around retirement planning and life insurance-linked investment products has been gradually increasing

among young professionals and government employees. Market participants believe products focused on stable dividend-paying companies could attract conservative investors in the state looking for long-term wealth creation with insurance protection.

Tata AIA reported a total premium income of ₹31,484 crore in FY25, registering a 23 per cent growth over the previous fiscal. The company continues to rank among the top three private insurers in Individual Weighted New Business Premium (IWNBP).

Angel One, Groww, 360 One report up to 250%

Mumbai: Shares of Angel One, Billionbrains Garage Ventures (Groww) and 360 One Wam have displayed a mixed trend in May thus far, despite reporting up to 250 per cent growth in Q4 net profit. Meanwhile, on the stock exchanges, Angel One stock has surged 12 per cent thus far in May, and 360 One has gained 9.7 per cent. Groww, however, has declined 11.6 per cent in the same period.

Cement companies may need Rs 5–7 per bag price hike to offset rising fuel costs: Nomura

Mumbai: Hike in imported fuel and domestic fuel costs is expected to weigh on the profitability. “Stronger demand for domestic thermal coal has already resulted in a sharp increase in recent auction prices, suggesting that any further increase in international thermal coal prices could also translate

16% since the conflict began and 7% month-on-month. The brokerage added that Indonesia’s proposed move to tighten state pressure in global thermal coal markets.Cement spreads remain resilient in the cement sector. While the immediate impact on margins remains manageable as companies may

offset higher costs through cement pricesNomura noted that if imported fuel Before this, oil marketing companies (OMCs) had already raised prices three times — by around Rs 3 per litre on May 15, nearly 90 paise on May 20, and about 87–91 paise on May 23.

Domestic fuel hike coupled with dropping global crude is a win for IOC, BPCL, HPCL

Mumbai: State-owned oil marketing firms, such as Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation, have come under scrutiny following a fuel price hike for the fourth time in under 10 days on Monday, May 25.The price of petrol was increased by Rs 2.61 per litre, while diesel prices rose by Rs 2.71 per litre, resulting in petrol prices in Delhi exceeding the Rs 102 threshold.With this recent adjustment, the total increase in petrol and diesel prices has approached Rs 7.5 per litre since the resumption of fuel price adjustments on May 15, following an extended period of stability.The market’s response was swift. The share price of Indian Oil Corporation increased by over 3.5%, while HPCL experienced a nearly 5% rise during intraday trading.BPCL also performed well, rising 4% intraday as investors responded favorably to the improving earnings outlook for oil marketing companies (OMCs). What is making investors more optimistic this time is not just the fuel price hike itself, but the fact that global crude oil prices have started cooling off sharply after weeks of geopolitical tension-driven rally. The sharp rise in domestic fuel prices was largely triggered by the sudden rally in global crude oil prices over the past few months.International crude prices had surged more than 50% since late February following escalating tensions in West Asia after the US-Israeli strikes on Iran. At the same time, disruptions in shipments through the Strait of Hormuz which



the US-Israeli strikes on Iran. At the same time, disruptions in shipments through the Strait of Hormuz which is one of the world’s most important oil transit routes created fresh supply concerns across global energy markets.India, being one of the world’s largest crude oil importers, remains highly vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. A rise in crude prices increases import costs for Indian refiners and oil retailers, putting pressure on fuel marketing margins. The sharp rise in domestic fuel prices was largely triggered by the sudden rally in global crude oil prices over the past few months.International crude prices had surged more than 50% since late February following escalating tensions in West Asia after the US-Israeli strikes on Iran. At the same time, disruptions in shipments through the Strait of Hormuz which

is one of the world’s most important oil transit routes created fresh supply concerns across global energy markets.India, being one of the world’s largest crude oil importers, remains highly vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. A rise in crude prices increases import costs for Indian refiners and oil retailers, putting pressure on fuel marketing margins. n Mumbai, petrol prices climbed to Rs 111.21 per litre and diesel reached Rs 97.83. Kolkata saw petrol prices rise to Rs 113.51 and diesel to Rs 99.82. In Chennai, petrol now costs Rs 107.77 per litre while diesel is priced at Rs 99.55.The prices of fuel vary from state to state. This is mainly because of local taxes and levies. But, the broader trend remains the same. As of now, consumers are now paying higher prices compared to the levels seen before May 15.Furthermore, the repeated hikes also come at a sensitive time as transportation costs, logistics expenses and inflation concerns remain closely linked to fuel prices in India.What investors need to watch now For companies such as IOC, BPCL and HPCL, profitability largely depends on the gap between crude oil procurement cost and the retail selling price of petrol and dieselWhen crude prices decline while fuel prices remain elevated domestically, marketing margins improve sharply. At the same time, the recent fuel price hikes provide additional pricing cushion for these companies after months of pressure from elevated global crude prices.

4 Smallcaps That Provide Steady Dividends Is It Worth Purchasing

New Delhi: Most dividend investors tend to gravitate toward the usual suspects. They focus on the bluest of bluechips that show up on every “safe income” list. And there’s nothing wrong with that. Bluechips and largecap stocks have built that reputation over many years by consistently making regular payouts. But if you’ve been in this game long enough, you know that some of the most rewarding positions in a portfolio are the ones nobody talks about.That’s where smallcaps come in. Smallcap stocks are companies ranked beyond the top 250 names that are yet to make a name for themselves.They excite investors due to their niche offerings, but they can also scare investors by their wild swings in a volatile market.So naturally, astute investors focus on smallcap companies that also have a history of paying dividends. And then there are some smallcap companies that are not just paying dividends but consistently raising them. With 2026 shaping up to be an interesting year for rate-sensitive assets and domestic-focused businesses, it makes sense to keep track of some small-cap names that have been growing their dividend payouts.

Let’s look at 5 such companies. These stocks are filtered using Equitymaster’s stock screener: Best Smallcap Dividend Growth Stocks in India.

First on the list is Cello World.Cello World is a leading consumer houseware brand with a diverse portfolio across plastic, glassware, and writing instruments.The company’s writing segment, re-entered in 2019 under Unomax, now contributes 17% of revenue with industry-best margins.The products offered by Cello are sold under its own brand name. The popular sub-brands under the Cello brand include Kleeno, Puro, Chef, H2O, Modustack, Maxfresh, and Duro.The company also trades in products such as steel and glassware products, by sourcing these products from contract manufacturers primarily located in China and subsequently selling them to consumers. In FY25, the company invested Rs 2.5 billion (bn) at its manufacturing facility in Falna, Rajasthan, for its glassware



business. This facility, operationalized in phases, has an annual production capacity of 20,000 tonnes. This investment marked the company’s entry into in-house glassware production, making it the only domestic consumer products company in India with this capability. Coming to its dividend payout history, it has paid dividends consistently for many years now. Over 3 years, its dividend per share have grown at a compounded growth rate (CAGR) of over 800%.This has been possible owing to healthy financials over the years. Its sales and net profit have grown at a CAGR of 16% and 18% respectively over 3 years.

During the same time, its ROE and ROCE have averaged 44% and 59%.The company has recently announced a structural reorganisation involving a demerger and subsequent merger. Wim Plast’s manufacturing division (molded furniture and air coolers) will be transferred to Cello Consumer Products while the remaining business will merge into Cello World to simplify the structure and regulatory compliance.

Africa Day 2026

London: African leaders gathered in Addis Ababa on May 25, 1963 to found the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the occasion became a symbol of continental liberation that many still call Africa Liberation Day.Sixty-three years later, as the continent marks Africa Day 2026, questions over what liberation really means still linger. What was once defined by flags and anthems is now increasingly seen through debates about who controls wealth, technology and global influence, and how that control shapes everyday life across the continent. For the older generation, Africa Day remains a deeply emotional milestone, a reminder of a hard-won victory against colonial rule and political oppression that reshaped the continent’s history. That shift is also visible in the digital economy, where a new front in the struggle for influence has emerged. This



tension between historical pride and modern frustration has deepened a generational divide in how Africa Day is understood. More than 60 percent of Africans are under the age of 25, and many say the language of anti-colonial struggle from the 1960s no longer reflects their daily experiences of unemployment, rising costs and economic uncertainty.Mobile money, artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure are spreading rapidly across cities like Nairobi, Lagos and Kigali, turning them into some of the continent’s most visible technology hubs and symbols of a fast-changing digital landscape.Yet critics warn that despite this growth, much of the underlying digital backbone remains controlled from outside Africa. Undersea cables, data centres and cloud computing systems are often built, financed or owned by multinational technology corporations.“Digital extraction is the new frontier of neocolonialism,” says Amina Osei, a technology policy analyst at the African Centre for Digital Governance in Accra.“If African data is taken out, pro-

cessed on foreign servers and sold back to us in the form of systems we must pay for, then we have simply replaced old colonial control with digital dependence. Real freedom today means owning our technology, protecting our data, and building the capacity to develop our own platforms,” she told Al Jazeera.“We fought for the right to self-govern, and that political liberation can never be taken for granted,” says Mzee Josphat Kimanthi, 74, a retired civil servant in Machakos, Kenya. Digital technology, once seen as a clear pathway to opportunity, inclusion and economic growth, is now also raising difficult questions about ownership, control and long-term dependence. Who builds the systems, who owns the data and who benefits from the digital economy are becoming central concerns.Many policymakers argue that Africa’s next phase of development will depend less on political ideology and more on whether countries can turn their resources, labour and innovation into real industries that keep value within the continent rather than exporting it abroad.The real test, they say, will be whether these shifts lead to meaningful structural change in how African economies operate, or whether they remain repeated promises in policy discussions that do not fully translate into lived reality.Generational rift

But Kimanthi also sees a widening gap between generations and a growing sense that the promises of independence have not fully translated into present realities.“We thought political freedom would automatically bring economic freedom. Instead, I watch my grandchildren struggle with the high cost of living under debts we did not sign up for,” he told Al Jazeera.For many analysts and young Africans, money, jobs and economic control now sit at the centre of how liberation is understood today. The debate has shifted from flags, borders and national anthems to deeper questions about who controls economies, who makes financial decisions, and who ultimately benefits from growth on the continent. In several African countries, rising debt burdens have become a defining challenge, with governments increasingly constrained in their spending choices. In many cases, fiscal policies are shaped by negotiations with international financial institutions, leaving limited room for independent decision-making.At the same time, governments across the continent are trying to balance relations between Western powers, China, emerging economies and blocs such as BRICS, each offering investment, loans or strategic partnerships that come with their own expectations and influence.Debt pressures

“True liberation cannot exist when a continent produces what it does not consume, and consumes what it does not produce,” Professor Paul Mbatia of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Multimedia University of Kenya told Al Jazeera.

CIA Chief Travels to Havana as Cuba’s Oil Reserves Dry Amid U.S. Fuel Blockade

London: CIA Director John Ratcliffe traveled to Havana on Thursday to meet with Cuban officials as the Trump administration ramps up pressure on the island. Ratcliffe’s trip came a day after Cuba announced it had run out of diesel and fuel oil due to the U.S. blockade and sanctions. For decades, the CIA has carried out covert operations inside Cuba, from orchestrating the Bay of Pigs invasion to repeatedly attempting to assassinate the late leader Fidel Castro. Meanwhile, the Trump administration is reportedly taking steps to indict Castro’s 94-year-old brother Raúl, who served as Cuban president from 2008 to 2018. In related news, more than 30 House Democrats have signed a letter urging the Trump administration not to take military action on Cuba and to lift the blockade. The House of Representatives has rejected another effort to rein in President Trump’s ability to wage war against Iran. On Thursday, House members failed to advance an Iran war powers resolution on a tied vote of 212 to 212, after Democrat Jared Golden of Maine joined most Republicans in opposition. It was the third failed attempt by House Democrats to end Trump’s attacks on Iran. This comes as NBC News reports the Pentagon is considering renaming “Operation Epic Fury” to “Operation Sledgehammer” in a bid to circumvent a 60-day limit under the War Powers Act for the president to order military strikes without congressional approval.

On Thursday, the head of U.S. Central Command, Admiral Brad Cooper, appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee, where he dismissed reports of civilian deaths from U.S. attacks on Iran. This is Cooper being questioned by New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.

Adm. Brad Cooper: “The subject of civilian casualties is a particular passion of mine. We pay attention to it.



We follow all the procedures and have gone above and beyond to, in my case, personally warn the Iranian people of several instances during conflict where they were being potentially used as human targets.” Foreign ministers from the BRICS group of nations have gathered in India’s capital New Delhi, with the issues of Iran and the Strait of Hormuz high on the agenda. On Thursday, Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi addressed the summit, appealing to BRICS countries to help resist U.S. and Israeli attacks.

Abbas Araghchi: “To virtually everyone in this room, our resistance against U.S. bullying is not an unfamiliar battle. So many of us encounter slight variations of the same repugnant coercion. It is high time for us to jointly step up and work towards making clear that those practices belong in the dustbin of history. Today, our nations are closer to one another than ever before, and we cannot ignore the common and dangerous challenge we all face.” President Trump has departed China after a two-day state visit to Beijing, where he met with Presi-

dent Xi Jinping. Their meeting failed to secure a breakthrough in efforts to forge a U.S. peace deal with Iran or to reopen traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. On the flight back from China, President Trump told reporters he has not yet decided on whether he will move forward with a new \$14 billion arms package for Taiwan. During their talks, President Xi warned Trump that differences over Taiwan could lead to conflict between China and the U.S. Lebanon’s National News Agency reports an Israeli “double-tap” strike on a car earlier today killed two men and damaged three ambulances. It followed an overnight bombing by Israel that killed four people in a house in the town of Harouf. UNICEF reports at least 59 children in Lebanon have been killed or wounded by Israeli strikes over the past week, despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire that was supposed to have taken effect in April. The latest attacks came as Lebanese and Israeli officials in Washington began a third round of U.S.-brokered direct talks on Thursday; Hezbollah is not participating.

Trump Says He’s Ready to Attack Cuba

Cuba: Russia and China have condemned the Trump administration’s indictment of 94-year-old former Cuban President Raúl Castro on murder charges. Russia’s Foreign Ministry accused the White House of “attempts to tighten the sanctions noose” and promised to provide “active support” to Cuba. China’s Foreign Ministry said it always opposes unilateral sanctions that have no basis in international law. It added, “The United States should stop brandishing sanctions or judicial proceedings at Cuba and stop resorting to the threat of force at every turn.” On Thursday, President Trump said it was likely he would order military strikes on Cuba. President Donald Trump: “Other presidents have looked at this for 50, 60 years, doing something. And it looks like I’ll be the one that does it. So, I would be happy to do it.” Republican leaders in the House of Representatives called off a vote Thursday on a war powers resolution seeking to end President Trump’s ability to strike Iran. Its abrupt cancellation came as Republicans were on the verge of losing the vote, as several members were absent from the House floor. This follows Tuesday’s 50-47 vote by the Senate to advance a war powers resolution. Any vote in the House will have to wait until at least June 1, when Congress returns from its Memorial Day recess.

This comes as the U.S. and Iran continue to exchange proposals for a peace agreement through Pakistani mediators. Earlier today, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said indirect negotiations over a deal with Iran had seen “a little bit of movement and that’s good.” Lebanon’s National News Agency reports an Israeli strike in southern Lebanon’s Tyre district has killed six people, including two paramedics and a Syrian child. The medics were reportedly killed in a “doble

tap” strike after an initial strike on a motorcycle. The latest violence came despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire that Israel has violated on a near-daily basis. Lebanon’s Health Ministry reports Israeli attacks have killed nearly 3,100 people. Meanwhile, Lebanon’s finance minister told Reuters the war could shrink the economy by at least 7% this year. Israel has deported more than 400 activists it abducted from a Gaza-bound humanitarian aid flotilla in international waters. On Thursday, members of the Global Sumud Flotilla were flown from southern Israel to Istanbul, Turkey, aboard three chartered flights. They arrived with stories of physical and psychological abuse at the hands of their Israeli captors. This is U.S. activist Alex Colston.

Alex Colston: “In one of the prison boats, 35 people suffered fractures to their ribs. People said there was at least 12 sexual assaults that took place. People were tased. Me personally, I was kept in cuffs, where I can’t feel my hands anymore. I was kicked in the ribs multiple times.” The release of the Gaza flotilla members comes amid global condemnation of Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who published video of himself taunting dozens of handcuffed activists. In Greenland, hundreds of protesters gathered at the opening of a new U.S. consulate building in the capital Nuuk on Thursday to denounce President Trump’s threats to annex the island. The protest came after Trump’s special envoy to Greenland, Republican Governor Jeff Landry of Louisiana, made his first trip to the semiautonomous Danish territory. Landry reportedly spoke on Saturday with President Trump, who told him to “go there and make a bunch of friends.” This is Nuuk resident Aron Bang-Isaksen.Aron Bang-Isaksen: “It’s just a really unpleasant reminder of people as commod-

ities or as a product, as something that can be bought and sold. It’s very unpleasant to witness. And I think this ruthless rhetoric, where military actions are not taken off the table, is completely wild and ruthless towards the people who live here.”Senate Republicans abruptly left Washington, D.C., on Thursday for the Memorial Day recess without casting a vote for a \$72 billion budget reconciliation bill to fund ICE and Border Patrol for three years. That’s on top of the \$170 billion provided to those agencies by Congress last year. This comes as President Trump faces a growing revolt among Republicans over his plans to use public funds to build a \$1 billion ballroom at the White House and the Justice Department’s creation of a nearly \$1.8 billion slush fund to compensate MAGA allies prosecuted by the Justice Department. Already several prominent January 6 rioters have said publicly they’ll seek a share of the fund, as have disgraced politicians George Santos and Rod Blagojevich. On Thursday, Senate Republicans met with Attorney General Todd Blanche behind closed doors. The Hill reports the meeting became “a screaming-fest” after Blanche refused to limit who would be eligible to get paid by the fund. North Carolina Republican Senator Thom Tillis called the plan “stupid on stilts.”Sen. Thom Tillis: “Because it will invariably put us in a position where your taxpayer dollars and my taxpayer dollars could potentially compensate someone who assaulted a police officer, admitted their guilt, got convicted, got pardoned, and now we’re going to pay them for that? That’s absurd. The American people are going to reject this out of hand.

Meanwhile, congressional Democrats have introduced legislation to block the Trump Justice Department’s new slush fund. A bill authored by Maryland Congressmember Jamie



Raskin would bar the use of any federal funds to back the settlement and would limit payouts. Other legislation proposes a 100% tax on In Arizona, Tucson advocates are demanding the release of activist and DACA recipient Karla Toledo, who was violently detained at her home earlier this week. Federal immigration agents forced their way into Toledo’s house to arrest her reportedly without showing a warrant. Toledo has lived in the U.S. since she was 1 year old, and obtained Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which protects immigrants who came to the U.S. as children from deportation. But under Trump’s second term, DACA recipients have been increasingly targeted.

Global Sumud Flotilla Activists Describe Torture and Abuse by Israeli Captors

Cuba: Israel has deported more than 400 activists it abducted from a Gaza-bound humanitarian aid flotilla in international waters. On Thursday, members of the Global Sumud Flotilla were flown from southern Israel to Istanbul, Turkey, aboard three chartered flights. They arrived with stories of physical and psychological abuse at the hands of their Israeli captors. This is U.S. activist Alex Colston.Alex Colston: “In one of the prison boats, 35 people suffered fractures to their ribs. People said there was at least 12 sexual assaults that took place. People were tased. Me personally, I was kept in cuffs, where I can’t feel my hands anymore. I was kicked in the ribs multiple times.”

The release of the Gaza flotilla members comes amid global condemnation of Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who published video of himself taunting dozens of handcuffed activists.

In Greenland, hundreds of protesters gathered at the opening of a new U.S. consulate building in the capital Nuuk on Thursday to denounce President Trump’s threats to annex the island. The protest came after Trump’s special envoy to Greenland, Republican Governor Jeff Landry of Louisiana, made his first trip to the semiautonomous Danish territory. Landry reportedly spoke on Saturday with President Trump, who told him to “go there and make a bunch of friends.” This is Nuuk resident Aron Bang-Isaksen.Aron Bang-Isaksen: “It’s just a really unpleasant reminder of people as commodities or as a product, as something that can be bought and sold. It’s very unpleasant to witness. And I think this ruthless rhetoric, where military actions are not taken off the table, is completely wild and ruthless towards the people who live here.”

Republican leaders in the House of Representatives called off a vote Thursday on a war powers resolution seeking to end President Trump’s ability to

strike Iran. Its abrupt cancellation came as Republicans were on the verge of losing the vote, as several members were absent from the House floor. This follows Tuesday’s 50-47 vote by the Senate to advance a war powers resolution. Any vote in the House will have to wait until at least June 1, when Congress returns from its Memorial Day recess. This comes as the U.S. and Iran continue to exchange proposals for a peace agreement through Pakistani mediators. Earlier today, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said indirect negotiations over a deal with Iran had seen “a little bit of movement and that’s good.”

Russia and China have condemned the Trump administration’s indictment of 94-year-old former Cuban President Raúl Castro on murder charges. Russia’s Foreign Ministry accused the White House of “attempts to tighten the sanctions noose” and promised to provide “active support” to Cuba. China’s Foreign Ministry said it always opposes unilateral sanctions that have no basis in international law. It added,

“The United States should stop brandishing sanctions or judicial proceedings at Cuba and stop resorting to the threat of force at every turn.” On Thursday, President Trump said it was likely he would order military strikes on Cuba. Lebanon’s National News Agency reports an Israeli strike in southern Lebanon’s Tyre district has killed six people, including two paramedics and a Syrian child. The medics were reportedly killed in a “double tap” strike after an initial strike on a motorcycle. The latest violence came despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire that Israel has violated on a near-daily basis. Lebanon’s Health Ministry reports Israeli attacks have killed nearly 3,100 people. Meanwhile, Lebanon’s finance minister told Reuters the war could shrink the economy by at least 7% this year.

Senate Delays Vote on ICE as GOP Revolts over Trump’s

London: Senate Republicans abruptly left Washington, D.C., on Thursday for the Memorial Day recess without casting a vote for a \$72 billion budget reconciliation bill to fund ICE and Border Patrol for three years. That’s on top of the \$170 billion provided to those agencies by Congress last year. This comes as President Trump faces a growing revolt among Republicans over his plans to use public funds to build a \$1 billion ballroom at the White House and the Justice Department’s creation of a nearly \$1.8 billion slush fund to compensate MAGA allies prosecuted by the Justice Department. Already several prominent January 6 rioters have said publicly they’ll seek a share of the fund, as have disgraced politicians George Santos and Rod Blagojevich. On Thursday, Senate Republicans met with Attorney General Todd Blanche behind closed doors. The Hill reports the meeting became “a screaming-fest” after Blanche refused to limit who would be eligible to get paid by the fund. North Carolina Republican Senator Thom Tillis called the plan “stupid on stilts.”Sen. Thom Tillis: “Because it will invariably put us in a position where your taxpayer dollars

and my taxpayer dollars could potentially compensate someone who assaulted a police officer, admitted their guilt, got convicted, got pardoned, and now we’re going to pay them for that? That’s absurd. The American people are going to reject this out of hand.”

Meanwhile, congressional Democrats have introduced legislation to block the Trump Justice Department’s new slush fund. A bill authored by Maryland Congressmember Jamie Raskin would bar the use of any federal funds to back the settlement and would limit payouts. Other legislation proposes a 100% tax



These cost-effective decorating strategies can transform small residences into surprisingly opulent spaces

A residence does not need to be vast or adorned with costly furnishings to exude luxury. Intelligent design decisions can enable a smaller, more compact dwelling to be equally as sophisticated and welcoming as a larger one. Careful decoration can be employed to enhance design and style while also managing expenses. Minor design modifications can create a sense of order and visual appeal in a home. Raghunandan Saraf, the founder and CEO of Saraf Furniture, has provided several budget-friendly design strategies to help transform your home into a space that feels elegant and luxurious. 1. Use mirrors to create space

Saraf highlighted that in a small compact home, one of the best and most effective strategies to make a home feel more spacious and bright is the use of a large mirror. When placed across from a home window, a large mirror reflects natural home lighting and creates extra space. Mirrors also come in beautiful decorative styles with either metal or wood frames.

2. Choose light and neutral colours

“When wall painting is chosen in either a light warm white or lighter neutral, the home has a very calming feeling and a sense of spaciousness,” said Saraf. He advises using neutral and lighter wall



colours along with softer cushions and curtains that allow for design decor elements to really stand out.

3. Invest in multi-functional furniture

In the small and compact homes of today, every piece of furniture should be a useful design element. The use of multifunction furniture, like storage ottomans, nesting/tables, and wall-mounted shelves, can help make a home feel more spacious by also controlling clutter and design space.

4. Upgrade lighting for a richer ambience

According to Saraf, the best way to elevate the space of a home is with a good balance of layered lighting to create the best mood and ambience. Soft lighting adds a layer of coziness and elegance and transforms the aesthetic of any home.

5. Introduce texture with soft furniture

People think luxury comes from expensive decor. But luxury can be expressed in texture. Warmth can be added to rooms with velvet cushions, linen curtains, and textured throws or rugs. Elegant design can be affordable when fabrics and materials are layered and mixed. It is a misconception that a luxurious home is only a large home with a large budget. Clever design in small spaces allows a home to look and feel elegant and inviting. Balance, smart furniture, and thoughtful decor can make even small spaces feel inviting.

Madhuri Dixit modernizes the classic white saree by pairing it with a stylish jacket



Madhuri Dixit has returned with yet another remarkable fashion statement, demonstrating once more that style improves with age. At the age of 59, the actress persistently redefines glamour with poise and sophistication. A brief glance at her Instagram profile is sufficient to reveal her passion for ethnic fashion, showcasing everything from classic sarees to exquisitely styled suits and traditional outfits.

Her latest look was no exception as Madhuri dazzled in a gorgeous white saree, adding a contemporary twist to the classic six yards with a chic statement jacket. Let's decode her stunning ensemble and take a few style notes.

Decoding Madhuri Dixit's contemporary saree look

Madhuri chased away the Monday blues as she shared a carousel of stunning pictures on Instagram on May 25, accompanied by the caption, “Black, white... and a little bit of drama.”

Draped in a stunning ivory-white saree with delicate black floral prints, the actor gave classic ethnic fashion a powerful contemporary twist by layering it with a structured black jacket. The fusion look perfectly balanced grace with modern sophistication, making it ideal inspiration for anyone looking to elevate traditional dressing. Decoding Madhuri Dixit's contemporary saree look

Madhuri chased away the Monday blues as she shared a carousel of stunning pictures on Instagram on May 25, accompanied by the caption, “Black, white... and a little bit of drama.”

Draped in a stunning ivory-white saree with delicate black floral prints,

the actor gave classic ethnic fashion a powerful contemporary twist by layering it with a structured black jacket. The fusion look perfectly balanced grace with modern sophistication, making it ideal inspiration for anyone looking to elevate traditional dressing. The saree featured soft monochrome floral motifs spread across the pleats and pallu, adding an artistic charm to the ensemble. The clean drape and fluid silhouette kept the look elegant and understated, while the black tasselled detailing on the pallu added movement and drama. What truly stole the spotlight was the cropped black jacket layered over the saree, bringing a sharp power-dressing element to the otherwise traditional outfit. How she styled her look

Keeping the styling refined and classy, Madhuri accessorised her look

Jasleen Royal's residence in Juhu spans 2,300 square feet

For the singer-songwriter Jasleen Royal, home represents more than merely a resting place between tours; it embodies a vibrant extension of her creative essence. Covering an area of 2,300 square feet and situated in the center of Juhu, Jasleen's apartment, which faces the sea, serves as a prime example of soulful, self-curated interiors. Created in collaboration with Janhavi Singh, the space avoids the clinical polish of typical celebrity homes, opting instead for what Jasleen describes as a ‘warm hug’.

A May 25 house tour shared by Architectural Digest India shows that the heart of the home is a series of interconnected spaces defined by a sophisticated, moody colour palette. Deep sage green walls provide a serene backdrop in the lounge areas, complemented by rich herringbone-patterned hardwood floors.

The living room: a mix of classic and contemporary

A plush, cream-colored sofa is paired with a matching oversized ottoman, perfect for the ‘homebody’ lifestyle Jasleen Royal embraces. A black digital piano sits framed by sheer, floor-to-ceiling curtains that filter the intense

Mumbai sunlight. Arched motifs are a recurring theme, seen in the striking dark-green cabinetry that features an arched vanity nook, complete with vintage-style lamps and personal accolades. The soul of the house: the terrace

While the interiors are cosy, Jasleen shared that the terrace is the ‘soul of the house’. Overlooking the Arabian Sea, the expansive outdoor space features panoramic views: a glass railing ensures an unobstructed view of the horizon and swaying palm trees. A stone Buddha fountain sits nestled among lush potted greenery, creating a peaceful soundtrack of trickling water to compete with the crashing waves. A long, concrete-finish dining table surrounded by wicker chairs serves as the primary spot for hosting. “I love hosting family and friends, so there's always music playing, people sitting around talking, eating, or just quietly staring at the sky,” Jasleen told Architectural Digest India. The bedrooms: Earthy tones and sea views

The transition to the private rooms shifts from sage greens to earthy terracottas and creamy beiges. The bed

The underlying reason for heart attacks that many individuals tend to ignore

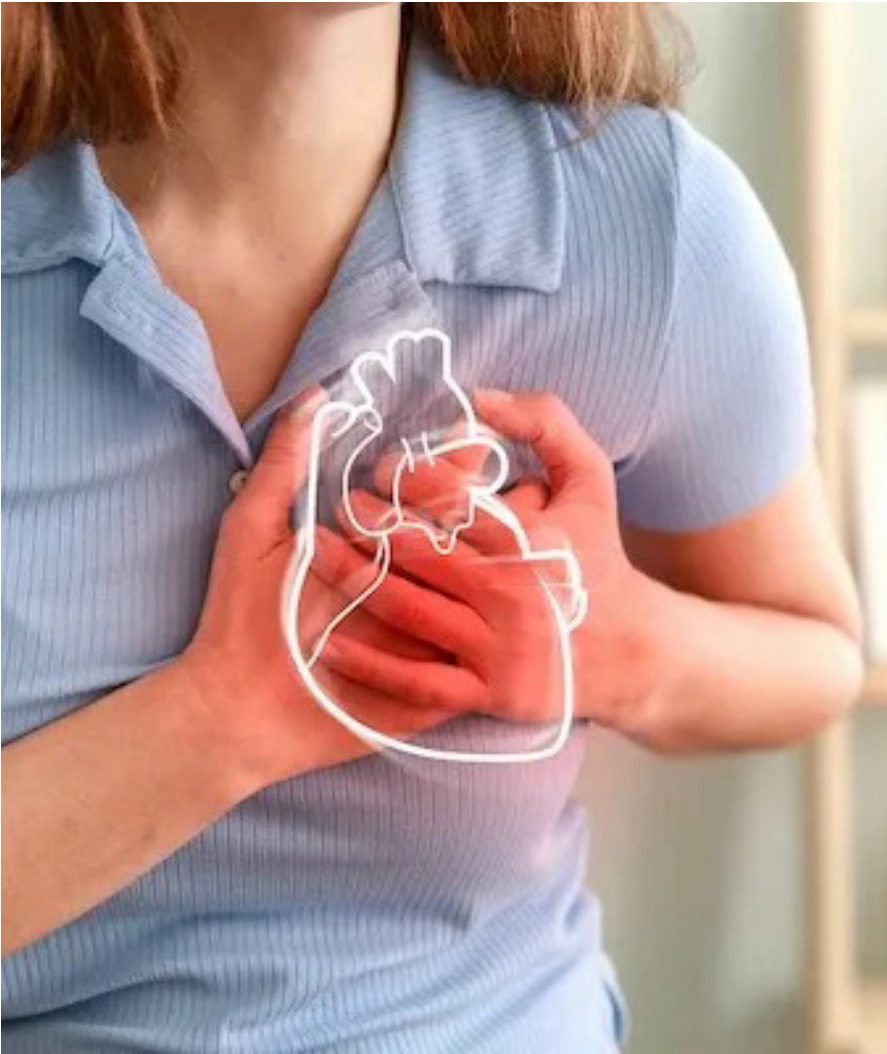
Heart attacks are frequently attributed solely to cholesterol or blocked arteries; however, the reality is much more complex. Daily habits, ongoing stress, inflammation, inadequate sleep, and even emotional well-being can subtly affect heart function as time progresses.

Connection between gut health and heart attacks

“For decades, we’ve been told cholesterol is the main cause of heart attacks. But what if the problem actually starts much earlier, in the gut?” said Dr Wolfson in his post, where he spoke about the often-overlooked link between gut health and cardiovascular disease.

“Most cardiologists believe that cholesterol is what causes heart attacks, but it's not. It all really starts in the gut,” he explained. Dr Wolfson added that the relationship between the gut and the heart is rarely discussed in traditional medical education, despite the body functioning as one interconnected system. How inflammation and lifestyle habits affect heart

According to him, many heart attacks do not occur suddenly but are the result of years of chronic inflammation and metabolic dysfunction silently building up beneath the surface. One of the biggest triggers behind this inflammation, he says, is poor gut health and



an unhealthy gut microbiome.

“When the gut is unhealthy, inflammation rises, and that inflammation can affect the arteries, blood sugar, hormones, and overall cardiovascular health,” he noted. He further explained that environmental toxins, pollutants, chemicals, processed foods, chronic stress, lack of sleep, and poor lifestyle habits can negatively impact gut bacteria and weaken overall health over time.

Dr Wolfson emphasised that improving heart health is not only about lowering cholesterol levels but also about creating a healthier internal environment inside the body.

“It's about fixing the environment inside the body that damages arteries in the first place. Your heart and your gut are more connected than you think,” he said.

Alec Baldwin’s daughter
Ireland reveals baby no. 2



Agency: Looks like there’s another little one about to join the Baldwin family. Ireland Baldwin surprised fans over the weekend with a sweet social media reveal that hinted at a major new chapter in her life with boyfriend RAC.

The 30-year-old actor and model announced on Instagram on May 23 that she is expecting her second child with the musician-producer, whose real name is André Allen Anjos. Instead of a traditional announcement, the couple chose a playful video montage to share the news. The clip showed glimpses of the pair preparing for life as a family of four. In one moment, they added a tiny brown fuzzy robe to their collection. Another shot featured a baby onesie placed beside toddler pajamas. A baby bottle was also seen replacing a bottle of wine, while a sippy cup made a quick appearance in the montage.

The video ended with

Ireland holding a strip of sonogram photos inside their dining room entryway. Keeping things simple, the couple captioned the post with just a red heart emoji. Ireland and RAC previously welcomed their daughter, Holland, in May 2023. The toddler recently turned three. The daughter of Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger, Ireland has often shared moments from her parenting journey online, especially snippets involving her daughter and pets.

Earlier this month, she posted a heartfelt video showing Holland spending time outdoors with one of the family dogs. Ireland wrote, “I never imagined that my two soul dogs Kota, my husky and London, my GS would ever get to meet a child of mine. I’ve had Kota and London since I was 18 and 20 years old. I can’t believe my little human gets to be loved by them.” According to her Instagram bio, Ireland has six rescue dogs. Last year, she also gave followers a peek into Holland’s farm-themed birthday celebration. Photos from the party showed the toddler interacting with animals and posing with family members.

Akshay Kumar to lead India’s
first alien thriller Samuk



Mumbai: After Bhooth Bangla, Akshay Kumar is showing no signs of slowing down. The actor already has multiple projects lined up. He is currently shooting for Anees Bazmee’s next alongside Vidya Balan and is also awaiting the release of Welcome to the Jungle.

Now, it has been confirmed that Akshay will headline India’s first alien thriller, Samuk. Directed by Kanishk Varma, produced by Vipul Shah and co-produced by Aashin A Shah, Samuk is being positioned as one of the biggest Indian theatrical event films of 2027. The project will see Akshay Kumar returning to a proper large-scale action role, with the film blending survival horror and alien thriller elements on an international scale. Known for projects like Sanak, Inside Edge and Glory, Kanishk Varma has spent over two years developing the film with Vipul Shah. The makers are aiming to push Indian commercial cinema into an unexplored genre space by combining grounded action storytelling with practical creature effects and high-end visual world-building.

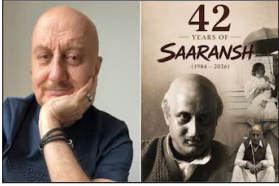
Director Kanishk Varma revealed that the film was inspired by his fascination with elite security forces and iconic sci-fi horror films. “Samuk was born from my love for the SPG world and survival thrillers like Alien and Predator. Bringing those influences together with Akshay sir has been sur-

real.” He also emphasised the film’s reliance on practical effects. “I always wanted the creature to feel physically real on set. That old-school tactile horror is what made films like Alien timeless.” Sources close to the production describe Samuk as a highly cinematic survival alien thriller that combines practical creature effects, military realism and old-school horror aesthetics inspired by iconic Hollywood franchises like Alien and Predator. Akshay Kumar also confirmed being a part of the film. “Yes, I’ve signed this film. I found the script and subject of Samuk fascinating. Alien thriller is a totally new genre for me, and also for our films. I am very excited about it,” he shared. The film also brings together a major international technical team from Hollywood franchise filmmaking. Acclaimed creature FX designer Alec Gillis has joined the project to

design and create the film’s alien creature. Gillis is best known for his work on the Alien and Predator franchises, including Alien: Romulus, along with films such as Starship Troopers, Smile, It and Tremors. A veteran of Hollywood creature filmmaking for nearly five decades, Gillis previously worked under legendary filmmaker Stan Winston on Aliens and the original Predator.

The film’s action will be overseen by British stunt coordinator Luke Tumber, whose credits include Mission: Impossible, the Venom films, Star Wars, No Time To Die and Marvel’s Vision Quest. Produced by Vipul Shah, directed by Kanishk Varma and co-produced by Aashin A Shah, Samuk is currently being developed as a large-scale pan-Indian theatrical film with global production ambition, and is expected to go on floors soon.

Anupam Kher reflects on
42-year journey, labels
Saaransh iconic



Mumbai: It’s a special day for veteran actor Anupam Kher as his debut film Saaransh completes 42 years since its release, marking a remarkable milestone in his cinematic journey. The film, directed by Mahesh Bhatt, released on May 25, 1984, and also starred Rohini Hattangadi, Madan Jain, Soni Razdan and others. To mark the special occasion, Anupam Kher shared a video reflecting on his journey in the film industry, recalling how quickly the decades have passed since his first appearance on screen.

Anupam Kher shared a video message in which he said, “42 years ago, my first film Saaransh was released at Mumbai’s Metro Cinema. I didn’t even realise how these 42 years passed by. In these 42 years, I have received immense love from the film industry, the audience, technicians, directors, producers, and co-actors. I never imagined that 42 years later, when I would be making this video, I would have completed 551 films.” He further added that if one does not give up, anything is possible. “If a clerk’s son from a college department can come to

Mumbai with just ₹37, and in his first film, despite being 28 years old, play the role of a 65-year-old man, and 42 years later can say he has done 551 films—anything is possible.”

In his caption, Anupam Kher wrote, “42 YEARS OF SAARANSH! Today, I complete 42 years in the world of cinema and entertainment. Exactly 42 years ago, on 25th May 1984, my first film “Saaransh” was released. What a journey it has been. Full of struggles, victories, failures, learning, laughter, tears, friendships, and unforgettable memories. But through all the ups and downs, “Saaransh” remains the most defining and iconic chapter of my life. I will forever remain grateful to the Universe, to all the directors, producers, writers, technicians, co-actors, and audiences who believed in me and gave me love through all these years.”

Cocktail 2: Shahid Kapoor calls ‘Tujhko’ song with Rashmika effortless

Mumbai: The makers of “Cocktail 2” on Monday unveiled the romantic track “Tujhko” pictured on Shahid Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna. The actor says it’s “romantic without trying too hard”.

Shahid said in a statement:

“Tujhko has a certain stillness to it... the kind that sneaks up on you. It’s romantic without trying too hard, and that’s what I connected with most. There’s an ease and intimacy to the song that feels very real.”

“Shooting it with Rashmi-

ka was effortless... we just leaned into the emotion of it. I think it’s one of those songs people will want to sit with for a while.” The song is all about soft chemistry and moments that feel deeply personal yet cinematic. Wrapped in warm

visuals, flowing silhouettes and sunlit frames, “Tujhko” creates a world that feels tender, effortless and emotionally immersive.

Composed by Pritam, sung by Arijit Singh, with lyrics by Amitabh Bhattacharya, the track blends emotional

vulnerability with a breezy summer softness that perfectly complements the film’s world. Rashmika added: “For me, Tujhko feels like a warm hug. It’s soft, emotional and filled with little moments that feel very real.” “I loved shooting

this song with Shahid, and I think there’s something very calming and beautiful about the way the song unfolds.” “Cocktail 2” is set to release in the cinema halls on June 19. Directed by Homi Adajania, the movie is believed to be a spi-

ritual sequel to the 2012 hit “Cocktail”, which featured Saif Ali Khan, Deepika Padukone, and Diana Penty as the lead. The previous song “Mashooqa” pictured on Shahid and actress Kriti Sannon had landed into trouble after it was claimed that the

track resembles the 1993 Italian song ‘Se So Arrubate A Nonna’ by duo Bibi & Coco. However, its singer Raghav Chaitanya came out in support of composer Pritam Chakraborty, calling the plagiarism allegations “completely baseless.”

Chand Mera Dil day 3: Lakshya,
Ananya film nets ₹11 crore

Mumbai: Romantic dramas may be back on the big screen, but sustaining momentum at the box office is proving tougher than ever. Chand Mera Dil, starring Ananya Panday and Lakshya, saw a slight jump in collections over its opening weekend, though the film is still struggling to find strong footing in theatres.

Directed by Vivek Soni, the film released on May 22 and opened to mixed-to-negative reviews from critics. Despite the modest growth on Sunday, the romantic drama wrapped up its first weekend with a total India net collection of ₹11.10 crore. According to trade website Sacnilk, Chand Mera Dil earned ₹4.35 crore on Sunday. The numbers showed minor gro-



with from Saturday’s ₹3.75 crore collection. On its opening day, the film had collected ₹3 crore. So far, the movie’s total India gross stands at ₹12.94 crore. The film’s performance has fallen behind last year’s blockbuster romantic drama Saiyaara, starring Ahaan Panday and Aneet Padda, which had a record-breaking theatrical run

and eventually became the highest-grossing romantic film in Indian cinema.

However, Chand Mera Dil is still performing better than Ek Din, featuring Junaid Khan and Sai Pallavi. The film had earned ₹1.07 crore on its first Sunday. Interestingly, Ananya’s previous release, Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, had re-

gistered a higher first Sunday collection of ₹5.5 crore. Backed by Dharma Productions, the film has been produced by Karan Johar, Adar Poonawalla, Apoorva Mehta, Somen Mishra and Marijke deSouza. The screenplay has been written by Tusshar Paranjape and Vivek Soni, while the dialogues are by Akshat Ghildial, Tusshar Paranjape and Vivek Soni. Set against the backdrop of Hyderabad, the story follows two college students who fall in love before an unplanned pregnancy changes the course of their lives. As the relationship evolves into marriage, emotional strain and unresolved frustrations begin to take over. A violent argument eventually becomes a defining moment in the narrative.

Mouni roy reflects on
journey from TV to films

Mumbai: Actress Mouni Roy recently turned heads at the 79th Cannes Film Festival, where she arrived at the French Riviera for the showcase of her film Bombay Stories at the prestigious Marché du Film. In an interview with Brut, she reflected on her journey from television to cinema. Best known for her roles in TV shows like Naagin, Devon Ke Dev Mahadev, and Junoon, she made her Bollywood debut in 2018 with Akshay Kumar’s Gold. Speaking about her career trajectory, Mouni revealed that it took her nearly nine years to transition from television to films. While she expressed deep gratitude to television for shaping her career and providing her livelihood, she added that films offered her

the opportunity to explore a wider range of characters in a shorter span of time.

In a chat with Brut India, Mouni said, “It took me a very long time, I think 9 years to move from TV to films. But I would also say I am a very proud TV actor. Television has given me everything, my livelihood, and I am so grateful. But I also wanted to do movies because you get to play different characters every few months. As an actor, you always want to do bigger, better work. I only see it like that. I don’t think that the medium matters as long as you’re doing great work and as long as you’re getting to play characters the way you want to do.” When asked what kind of work feels important to her at this

stage of life, she replied, “Every. I don’t take one minute or a second for granted. I want to do everything. I want to do tragedy, comedy, dark characters, anything. You say it and I want to do it. I am very very hungry for work.”

Speaking about her journey, she said that it has been a roller coaster ride. “There has been a lot of hardships and failures. Some successes, few milestones. We are all really lucky to be doing what we are doing because we love it. I can wake up in the morning feeling tired, sad, really unwell. But I never wake up in the morning not wanting to go to work. That’s the biggest blessing. That we love what we do. And I am really grateful for it,” she said.

Tejasswi
flaunts ring
with Karan



Mumbai: Karan Kundrra and Tejasswi Prakash recently hit the headlines after they got engaged on the Netflix reality series Desi Bling, where Karan proposed to her in a grand, emotional sequence that quickly went viral. Now, the newly engaged couple has made their first public appearance after the on-screen proposal, stepping out in Mumbai for an event. Tejasswi was seen flaunting her massive diamond engagement ring, and fans couldn’t stop gushing over the lovely couple.

Several photos and videos shared by paparazzi showed Karan Kundrra and Tejasswi Prakash stepping out for an event in Mumbai. Karan kept it casual in a maroon shirt paired with black pants, while Tejasswi turned heads in a brown thigh-high slit dress. She carried a clutch in her left hand, drawing attention to the massive diamond engagement ring that was hard to miss! The huge rock instantly garnered he attention of fans and paparazzi alike. Videos of the couple soon began circulating online. Check out the video below! Desi Bling premiered on Netflix on May 20, and fans witnessed one of the most emotional moments from Karan Kundrra and Tejasswi Prakash’s relationship so far. For the proposal, Karan arranged an elaborate surprise with the help of his friends in Dubai including Rizwan Sajjan, Satish Sanpal, Adal Sajjan, Sana Sajjan, Tabinda Sanpal, Pamela Serena, Dyuti Parruck, Iryna Kinakh, Alizey Mirza, Lailli Mirza, and Janvee Gaur. All of them appeared in regal outfits as part of the grand setup created for the occasion.

Tusshar Kapoor celebrates
25 years, shares 2001 tickets



Mumbai: Actor Tusshar Kapoor turned nostalgic on the 25th of May, as his debut film ‘Mujhe Kucch Kehna Hai’ completed 25 years of release.

Celebrating the milestone, the actor took to his social media account and shared a collage of old tickets of the movie from different theatres across the city of Mumbai, in Maharashtra from the year 2001. The tickets included shows from various single screen

theatres that were extremely popular back in the day, where audiences queued up outside cinema halls for Bollywood hits. Tusshar captioned the story as, “25 years of Mujhe Kucch Kehna Hai 25/5/2001,” along with the word “Grateful” and also a green heart emoticon.

Talking about ‘Mujhe Kucch Kehna Hai’ the movie released on May 25, 2001, and marked Tusshar Kapoor’s acting debut

opposite Kareena Kapoor. The movie was directed by Satish Kaushik and produced by Vashu Bhagnani under the banner of Puja Entertainment. The movie also starred Amrish Puri, Rinkie Khanna, Alok Nath, Himani Shivpuri, Dinesh Hingoo, and others in pivotal roles. Talking about the plot of the movie, it revolved around a shy young man trying to express his love to the woman he deeply admires. The music of the movie, especially songs like ‘Rabba Mere Rabba’, ‘Guncha Hai Gul Hai’, and ‘Dupatta’ became extremely popular.

Following the success of ‘Mujhe Kucch Kehna Hai’, Tusshar Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor went on to share screen space in many movies including ‘Jeena Sirf Merre Liye’, ‘Khakee’, and ‘Golmaal Returns’.

Bhumi Pednekar demands stricter
laws after viral obscene video



Mumbai: Actor Bhumi Pednekar has reacted strongly to a viral video showing some men allegedly making obscene gestures towards a woman’s wall painting near a swimming pool. The actor shared the clip on social media and demanded stricter laws against crimes targeting women and children.

The video, originally shared by the Instagram account Tube Indian, sparked outrage online. Bhumi reposted it on her Instagram Stories and spoke about what she described as a disturbing mindset among young people. Sharing the viral clip, Bhumi wrote, “This is the mentality of our youth. These are the same people who are going to sexually assault children and women. We are in a pandemic. Just words and showing shame isn’t enough.

Stricter laws, stricter laws, stricter laws.” Her reaction comes at a time when several incidents involving women’s safety have triggered nationwide conversations. In recent days, reports related to alleged dowry harassment and mental torture cases have shocked people across the country.

This is not the first time Bhumi has publicly expressed anger over crimes against women and children. In Ja-

nuary, the actor had reacted to reports about a six-year-old girl allegedly gang-raped by three boys aged 10, 13 and 14 in Delhi. Bhumi had then spoken about the environment children are growing up in and questioned society’s response to such incidents. The actor said, “Breaks my heart to see under age boys go through with something so heinous. Imagine the environments they are growing up in. We are punishing the

voiceless in our country, and have sensationalised, dogs being a threat.” Actors Kangana Ranaut and Ridhi Dogra have also recently spoken about women valuing their independence and raising concerns around marriage-related pressures. On the work front, Bhumi was last seen in Prime Video’s series Daldal. Directed by Amrit Raj Gupta, the show is based on Vish Dhamija’s bestselling book Bhendi Bazaar. In the series, Bhumi played DCP Rita Ferreria, a police officer investigating a serial killer who slits the wrists of victims. The series also starred Samara Tijori, Aditya Rawal, Geeta Agrawal, Chinmay Mandekar, Ananth Narayan Mahadevan, Rahul Bhat, Sandeep Kulkarni, Shivraj Walvekar, Sandesh Kulkarni and Jaya Bhattacharya. Daldal was released on January 30.

The Supreme Court said that the CBI would likely take over Twisha Sharma’s death investigation within a day



Bhopal: The Supreme Court on Monday was informed that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is expected to take over within a day the probe into the unnatural death of 32-year-old actor-model Twisha Sharma at her matrimonial home in Madhya Pradesh, amid mounting allegations of institutional bias, procedural irregularities and possible lapses in the investigation. A bench led by Surya Kant and comprising justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi recorded the statement by the Madhya Pradesh government that it has already written to the Centre recommending a CBI probe into the matter.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, told the bench that the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) notification enabling the CBI to formally take over the investigation was likely to be issued during the day.

“The investigation has to be conducted fairly and dispassionately all through,” observed the bench, while requesting both sides to refrain from making public statements and urging the media not to publicise or broadcast statements of potential witnesses while the probe is underway.

“We are against the narrative that is being created. That is why CBI should take over,” the bench remarked during the hearing, adding that while it had “no doubt” about the fairness of the state police, an independent agency investigating the matter would inspire greater confidence in the facts of the case. The top court also expressed concern over the public discourse surrounding the case and the allegations that the judi-

ciary was influencing the investigation because the deceased’s husband is a lawyer and her mother-in-law a former judicial officer.

“We are slightly pained at the developments...It is unfortunate that it is being said that the judiciary is derailing the trial,” remarked the bench.The matter has been registered suo motu by the apex court as “In Re: Alleged institutional bias and procedural discrepancies in the unnatural death of a young girl at her matrimonial home”, based on media reports and attendant circumstances.

In its order, the bench noted that a news report published on May 18 had raised questions regarding “institutional bias and discrepancies” in the investigation, particularly because the husband of the deceased was a practising lawyer and the mother-in-law a former district judge.“A narrative was also created that fair investigation was denied due

to involvement of judiciary. That is why suo motu proceedings were initiated,” the court recorded.The court noted that a second autopsy had already been conducted in Bhopal by a team from AIIMS Delhi pursuant to directions issued by the Madhya Pradesh High Court, and that the cremation had since taken place.

“The only issue as of now survives for consideration is consent to the recommendation for CBI probe,” the bench said in its order, recording the assurance by the solicitor general that the matter would be taken up with the authorities so that the CBI “immediately takes over the investigation”. During the hearing, senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appearing for Sharma’s family, argued that the case involved concerns of “institutional bias”, alleging delay in registration of the FIR and failure to preserve evidence. “Each day evidence will get lost,” Luthra submitted.

Responding to the concerns, the bench assured the family that the top court would ensure an impartial investigation.“We will ensure that this incident is impartially investigated. Get your statements recorded,” said the bench, while reiterating the request to the media not to turn witness accounts into “sound bites”.

The bench also underscored that “fair trial has been ensured now” once the CBI takes over the probe.At one stage, Mehta told the court that the controversy had intensified after one of the “potential accused”, referring to Sharma’s mother-in-law and former district judge Giribala Singh, gave media interviews allegedly maligning the deceased. Mehta informed the court that Giribala Singh had been granted anticipatory bail on May 15, which has since been challenged both by the state government and the victim’s family before the Madhya Pradesh high court.He further said the police had repeatedly asked her to record her statement, but she had allegedly declined to appear, following which investigators offered to visit her residence for recording her statement.Senior advocate Siddhartha Dave, appearing for the accused side, also flagged concerns over media reportage, telling the bench that even his statement made before the police had been published in newspapers and urged the bench to ensure a fair probe for both sides.The bench then cautioned all sides against litigating the matter in public. “We would like to impress upon family of victim that instead of making statements in public or before media, they should get their versions recorded before the investi-

gating agency so that no prejudice or adverse impact is caused to the ongoing investigation,” the order said.

The court also requested the media “to avoid recording statements of persons who are likely to be potential witnesses”.“This shall avoid unnecessary premature impression of outcomes on certain issues which have to be investigated,” the order added, while asking the public to “refrain from speculation and have trust and faith in the most premier investigating agency”.

Clarifying that it had expressed no opinion on the merits of the allegations, the bench said it was entirely for the investigating agency to examine all aspects of the case. Sharma was found dead at her home in Bhopal’s Katara Hills area on May 12, barely five months after her marriage to advocate Samarth Singh. Her family has alleged dowry harassment, mental and physical torture, and murder, allegations denied by the accused side, which has maintained that she died by suicide.

Singh, who had remained absconding for 10 days after an FIR was registered against him and his mother, surrendered before the Bhopal police on May 22 and is currently in police custody.The case has drawn widespread public attention amid allegations regarding handling of forensic evidence, CCTV footage, delays in lodging the FIR and possible influence in the investigation. The National Commission for Women had earlier also taken suo motu cognisance of the matter, describing the death as “suspicious” and seeking an action taken report from local authorities.

It’s up to others to chase world No. 1 spot now: Magnus Carlsen



Oslo: World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen sounded less dismissive than detached while reflecting on his gradual shift away from classical chess, making it clear that after more than a decade at the summit, his priorities have evolved even though his dominance has not faded. The Norwegian great said that after conquering classical chess, he now derives greater joy from rapid and blitz, while reminding the current generation that they must first climb the mountain he scaled and survive the unforgiving grind of elite classical battles before questioning his priorities. Carlsen added that he now prefers a “steadier diet” of every format the game has to offer.

“So there is at least some data to suggest that the rating that I have now is fairly reasonable,” said Carlsen, who is chasing a record-extending eighth title at Norway Chess, while also reminding that despite drifting away from classical chess, he remains the benchmark the world is still chasing.“

And then, yeah, to kind of maintain that level, the times that I play classical, it’s kind of up to the others to make a run... and get that first place on the world rankings,” he said.

“That’s for my priorities. I generally prefer faster formats, at least like a steadier diet of that, but I enjoy everything,” added the Norwegian, who as recently as last year won both the World Rapid and Blitz crowns despite the rise of a fearless younger generation.

Carlsen has distanced himself from the classical World Championship cycle largely because of fading motivation, the exhausting demands of opening preparation and a growing dissatisfaction with the format.

Having dominated classical chess and held the undisputed world title for a decade, he has often said the excitement and person-

al meaning of defending the crown had gradually disappeared.

Even as he edges closer to Garry Kasparov’s legendary 20-year reign as world No. 1 a mark Carlsen is roughly five years away from matching the Norwegian insisted he is not chasing records anymore, recalling how his attempt to breach the mythical 2900 rating barrier ultimately fell short.

“I think the one time I talked about getting a record, it was 2900, and that didn’t go very well. I’m kind of giving up that hope. So other records, I don’t know, I don’t play a ton of classical chess.

“But it seems that ever since the Qatar Masters in 2013, all of my performances have been in the same range kind of. Now it’s about the right doses .”

Carlsen also backed innovations aimed at making chess more entertaining, saying formats such as Armageddon tie-breakers at Norway Chess add much-needed drama and reduce the monotony of draws.

“When Germans were removed from chess , there was an outrage. When time was shortened from two and a half to two hours, there was outrage about that as well. ”But times are changing, and I think we want to have a balance between trying to have the best possible play, but also to allow some room for making mistakes.”

He added that with modern-day preparation becoming increasingly sophisticated, two hours of thinking time per player was more than sufficient.

“Obviously, as humans, we are pretty flawed regardless of the format, but there is this feeling that considering how advanced we are now in preparation and everything, there needs to be an element of making it a little bit tougher than the very classical time controls. Two hours of thinking is a pretty long time,” he said.

Roberto De Zerbi breaks Tottenham out of a jail they should never have been in



Agency: Almost half a century ago, Matthew Engel had a line in this newspaper about Sheffield United going top of the Fourth Division being like hearing a friend had been made head of the prison library: you wanted to congratulate them but really you were wondering what on earth they were doing there in the first place. It was a similar story at Spurs today: for all the understandable glee and relief, even to be in danger of relegation is evidence of things having gone badly wrong. It may be that the future has this as the first day in the new history of Tottenham. Roberto De Zerbi is clearly a manager of great promise – 11 points in seven games may not be earth-shattering, but it is a lot, lot better than what came before – and the injury crisis surely can’t be this bad for a third straight season. Perhaps coming so close to the brink will startle them into decisive action in a way that last season’s fourth-bottom finish, mitigated as it was by the Europa League success, did not.

Perhaps there really will come a bracing clarity of vision and they will rise again. The world can change very quickly. It’s only four years ago that Spurs were, for the sixth season in succession, finishing above Arsenal. A season out of Europe, while it will have a negative impact on revenues, can have a remarkable rejuvenating effect.As nervous as Tottenham fans became with news of West Ham’s goals flashing up on phone screens, for a long time it simply didn’t seem plausible that this Everton might score at all, never mind twice. The chaos of injury time, the headers over the bar, Antonin Kinsky’s fine save from Tyrique George, seemed out of keeping with the previous 90 minutes, more a manifestation of Spurs’s anxiety than anything Everton were doing. It was very hard to square this tentative side with the team that had such an impact in the Premier League title race by drawing 3-3 with Manchester City. Spurs, as in the defeat by Nottingham Forest and the draw

against Leeds, began well and got gradually scratchier but, on this occasion, it didn’t matter: only belatedly did the sponge mallet of Everton’s attack transform into something that might do damage. Some Spurs fans had been doubtful about attending, or even following the game on television or the radio. There was a lot of talk of long walks or gardening, avoiding the anxiety until it was all done, but football is about emotion whether positive or negative;

when the bus arrived – undissuaded despite how badly that went when they tried it against Forest – this was as good an atmosphere as anybody could realistically expect. The roar at the final whistle was deafening, and whether it was relief or euphoria doesn’t really matter: it will be remembered. And so Spurs won a first home league game since 6 December. They got their lap of honour. They got to stand before the South Stand and soak up the acclaim.It didn’t feel hugely different from the final day a year ago, when the reception was similar despite a 4-1 defeat to Brighton. Then too they had finished 17th, with three fewer points than they managed this season, although relegation had never been a threat in the way it was in 2025-26. But the Europa League they had won the previous Wednesday softened the mood and offered hope that this season might be better. It turned out to be just as bad in the league without the mitigation of Europe. Is this different? Perhaps, in the sense

that De Zerbi is in situ. He has completed the first and most important objective. Next season, the tasks will be less well-defined and thus perhaps harder to achieve. But he has not looked overwhelmed by the job in the way that Thomas Frank did within a few weeks.

He has a big achievement to his name already, rather than, like Frank, replacing the manager who had won the club their first trophy in 17 years.The squad will take some reshaping but this time the positive vibes at Spurs may be well-founded. What that means is less clearcut, not least because nobody quite knows how the switch from profitability and sustainability regulations to squad cost ratio will play out. But at the very least, the relative lack of games should make finishing in a European qualifying position next season a viable goal. Relegation, certainly, shouldn’t be a threat.But then it shouldn’t have been this season. Spurs really have no business in the prison library.

Mission Karmayogi 2.0 to institutionalise government-wide capacity building reforms: Chairperson of the CBC

New Delhi: The next phase of Mission Karmayogi will have a sharper focus on institutionalising the capacity building reforms initiated under the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building , the chairperson of the Capacity Building Commission , S Radha Chauhan, said on Monday. Launched in 2020, the NPCSCB, popularly known as Mission Karmayogi, marked a major shift in the training architecture for government employees. It sought to move capacity building from episodic training programmes to a more structured, role-based, and competency-driven system rooted in Indian ethos and aligned with national priorities. “The next phase, i.e., Mission Karmayogi 2.0,

will build on these foundations and take the reform agenda deeper into government systems, with greater emphasis on states, frontline institutions, and the organisational capacities required to absorb and apply individual learning,” Chauhan told PTI in an interview.

She said the proposed programme “will be a leap” in the aspirations that “we have for Viksit Bharat”. The CBC, which is the custodian of the Mission Karmayogi framework, has in the past few years helped set up the foundational practices, frameworks, and institutional mechanisms needed for a new capacity building ecosystem. These include role-based and competency-linked learning pathways, common quality standards for learn-

ing content, and the use of integrated government online training Karmayogi as a national platform for digital learning, said Chauhan, former secretary of the Department of Personnel and Training .

The next phase seeks to institutionalise these reforms so that capacity building becomes an integral part of government functioning, rather than a stand-alone training activity, she said, adding that this would mean embedding learning into roles, governance priorities, systems, processes, and institutional culture across ministries, departments, states, and frontline agencies.

Giving details of the shift enabled by Mission Karmayogi, Chauhan said the quality of learning available to public servants has

been standardised through the programme.

A public servant in Bhopal, Thiruvananthapuram, or Nagaland can access the same quality of learning content because it is available on iGOT, and standardisation has been ensured, she said. “Therefore, you are reaching the quality of capacity building uniformly across the length and breadth of the country. That is a major shift and output that has happened,” Chauhan said when asked about the changes being brought in by Mission Karmayogi.

The next stage will go beyond access to quality learning. It will focus on how individual capacities developed through Mission Karmayogi can translate into improved organisational performance, the

CBC chief said.

This is especially important in an era of rapidly evolving technology and artificial intelligence, where public institutions need not only trained individuals, but also adaptive systems, modern processes, data-driven decision-making, and institutional cultures that can absorb new capabilities, said Chauhan, a 1988 batch retired Indian Administrative Service officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre.

She said a key priority will be preparing public servants and government institutions for an AI-enabled governance ecosystem, and the commission is working towards further developing the capacity of civil servants to deal with an artificial intelligence-led agentic ecosystem.

AI-related learning has also been taken to frontline workers such as “panchayat sachiv, urban local body representatives, anganwadi workers, constables, traffic constables, people who are the face of government for the citizens”, Chauhan said.

“This approach reflects the broader vision of Mission Karmayogi 2.0. Capacity building is not limited to senior officials or formal training institutions. It must reach every level of government and be supported by organisations that are equipped to use new skills meaningfully in everyday governance and service delivery,” she said. Chauhan said the learnings and reform solutions emerging from Mission Karmayogi are now drawing international interest

with some countries showing interest in adopting the programme’s approach.

The commission is also exploring how India’s capacity-building platform and governance structures can be shared globally as a digital public good for capacity building.

“During the India AI Impact summit, we launched a global alliance for digital capacity building. In that we have had many countries approaching us on Mission Karmayogi... The Asian Development Bank has shown interest in working with us. Brazil is a country that has a lot of common interests with us.

So we are trying to engage with them,” she said. Chauhan said the commission is looking at several partners to start a conversation on how the ca-

capacity-building platform, along with the governance structures created under Mission Karmayogi, can be shared globally. “This we have already initiated, and we are in the initial round of talks with many other countries.

The Ministry of External Affairs is helping us also,” the CBC chief said.“Mission Karmayogi 2.0 thus signals the next stage of India’s capacity-building journey.

Domestically, the focus is on institutionalising reforms so that individual learning leads to stronger organisations and better governance outcomes. Globally, India is beginning to share its capacity building architecture, platforms, and reform learnings with partner countries,” Chauhan said.

Messi Injury Sparks Argentina and Fan Panic Ahead of FIFA World Cup

Messi Injury Overshadows Miami Win, Sparks Panic

New Delhi: If you are waking up and reading this first thing in the morning, this is probably the exact nightmare scenario you were hoping to avoid. Argentine superstar Lionel Messi has sent shockwaves through the football world after abruptly walking off the pitch during Inter Miami's match on Monday, May 25. With the highly anticipated FIFA World Cup 2026 just 18 days away, the timing could not be worse for Argentina as fans across the globe hold their collective breath.

The drama unfolded in the 73rd minute of a thrilling clash against the Philadelphia Union. The 38-year-old maestro was seen holding onto his left hamstring in noticeable discomfort. Shortly after, he was substituted for Mateo Silvestri. However, it was his post-substitution behaviour that truly sounded the alarm bells. Instead of taking a seat on the Inter Miami bench to watch the remainder of the



game, Messi bypassed his teammates entirely and headed straight down the tunnel to the dressing room. Inter Miami has yet to provide an official medical update regarding the severity of the issue, leaving an anxious void of information. While a dark cloud formed over Messi's health, Inter Miami managed to secure an absolute goal-fest of a 6-4 victory over Philadelphia. The frantic win, which successfully propelled them to second place in the Eastern Conference standings,

was fueled by a spectacular hat-trick from Luis Suarez, a brace by German Berterame, and a dramatic stoppage-time strike from Argentina national teammate Rodrigo de Paul.

This developing injury scare comes at a critical juncture for the reigning world champions. Head coach Lionel Scaloni has yet to announce Argentina's final official squad for the tournament, and any potential threat to Messi's fitness completely rewrites their tactical playbook. The upcoming tour-

nament in North America is widely expected to be Messi's final World Cup appearance. Having famously led his country to glory in Qatar in 2022 and subsequently defending their Copa America title, the legendary number 10 remains the undeniable focal point around whom the entire national team is built. Messi has previously stated that he would try his best to be ready for the World Cup but emphasised he would not force his participation if it put the team's collective success at risk.

He famously battled through an injury in the 2024 Copa America final as well, proving his immense dedication to the badge. Domestic league success will do little to calm the nerves of an entire nation. Argentina has been slotted into Group J for the upcoming tournament, where they are scheduled to begin their title defence against Algeria, Jordan, and Austria.

Djokovic Challenges Sabalenka With Unique Dance Move, Claiming Victory Is Impossible

New Delhi: 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic revived his viral battle dance celebration at the 2026 French Open and even challenged Aryna Sabalenka with a playful message after his first-round win at Roland Garros. Following his comeback victory over Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, Djokovic recreated the same dance that became popular alongside Sabalenka during last year's tournament. The Serbian star was seen dancing on the Roland Garros stairs before sending a cheeky challenge to the women's World No.1. Roland Garros later shared a video on social media in which Djokovic said: "Check this out. You can't beat that, Aryna. I challenge you." The fun exchange quickly caught attention online, with fans enjoying the light-hearted rivalry between the two tennis stars. Sabalenka and Djokovic had also exchanged similar dance celebrations during the 2025 Roland Garros campaign, turning it into one of the tournament's viral off-court moments.

Djokovic survived a stern first-round test against Mpetshi Perricard as he battled past the Frenchman in four sets to reach the second round of the men's singles event. The 39-year-old recovered from a slow start to secure a 5-7, 7-5, 6-1, 6-4 victory on Court Philippe-Chatrier. Djokovic initially struggled against Perricard's booming



serve and the strong home support behind the young Frenchman. Perricard became the first French player in 14 years to take a set off Djokovic in the opening round at Roland Garros after breaking serve at 5-5 in the first set. However, the Serbian great showed his trademark resilience in the second set. After missing several break-point opportunities, Djokovic finally converted at 6-5 following a thrilling 17-shot rally to level the match. From there, momentum shifted completely in his favour as he dominated the next two sets with his superior experience and consistency.

The victory also marked Djokovic's record 82nd Grand Slam main-draw appearance, taking him past Roger

Federer. Meanwhile, Aryna Sabalenka is set to begin her campaign in the clay-court major against Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro. Sabalenka will once again be aiming to win her maiden Roland Garros title after falling short in previous campaigns on clay. Last year, she reached the final, where American star Coco Gauff defeated her.

At the French Open 2026, Novak Djokovic challenged Aryna Sabalenka with a "viral battle dance" celebration. This light-hearted exchange occurred following Djokovic's first-round victory over Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard on May 24, where he was filmed performing the move on the Roland Garros stairs before playfully telling Sabalenka she "can't beat that."

Vinay Kumar Hails Bhuvneshwar's Impact In RCB's Dominant IPL 2026

Mumbai: Former Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) player Vinay Kumar praised pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar for his impact in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season for the defending champions. Kumar said, Bhuvneshwar, along with pacers Josh Hazlewood and Rasikh Salam Dar, will look to treat the IPL 2026 playoffs like any other game. Bhuvneshwar has been one of the core reasons in RCB's impressive IPL 2026 campaign so far. RCB have capped the group stage campaign off brilliantly as they are at the top of the IPL points table with nine wins in 14 matches.

They will now look to defeat the Gujarat Titans (GT) in the Qualifier 1 clash on Tuesday. Speaking on JioHotstar, JioStar expert Vinay Kumar said that Bhuvneshwar plays a crucial role in the RCB's bowling attack, both as a



key bowler and leader. He praised his disciplined approach alongside Hazlewood and Rasikh Salam, adding that their experience should help the unit stay calm and focused in the playoffs. "Bhuvneshwar Kumar's role is extremely important for RCB, both as a bowler and as the leader of the attack. He has bowled brilliantly alongside Josh Hazlewood and Rasikh Salam, maintaining a disciplined, almost Test-match-like approach and lengths. With

so much experience, I don't think Bhuvneshwar or the bowling attack will take any pressure in the playoffs. They will look to treat the playoffs like any other game and focus on executing their basics," Vinay Kumar said. Vinay Kumar said that finishing in the top two in the IPL is very important because it gives teams a second chance to reach the final, even if they face a defeat in Qualifier 1, as they get another chance in Qualifier 2. He added that momentum is crucial

in a short tournament, so the primary goal should be qualification, followed by securing a top-two finish. "Finishing in the top two is extremely important in a tournament like the IPL because it gives teams another opportunity to get to the final, even if one game goes wrong. In a shorter format, momentum is everything; once you lose it, it becomes difficult to regain control. That's why the first target should always be qualification, and the second should be finishing in the top two," Vinay Kumar said. "RCB have played outstanding cricket this season and, unlike previous years when they were heavily dependent on batting, they are now playing as a team; they look like a complete side. Their middle order, with players like Tim David, Jitesh Sharma and Rajat Patidar, has added stability and power, which is crucial in T20 cricket," he said.

Bruno Fernandes Breaks Premier League Assist Record To Cap Off Stellar Season

Brighton: Bruno Fernandes has broken the all-time Premier League record for the most assists in a season to cap off a stellar campaign for Manchester United. Fernandes got his 21st assist of the season via a corner as Patrick Dorgu ensured that United took the lead at Brighton. Fernandes sent in a whipped cross from the corner and Dorgu rose above everyone else to nod the ball home, which ricocheted off the post and into the goal. There was a bit of doubt with the goal and if it belonged to Dorgu as the ball hit the post and then got the last touch off Verbruggen. But the Premier League awarded the goal to Dorgu and the record was finally belonged to the Portuguese midfielder.

You can see the full video here: Fernandes started off the season with a more deeper role under Ruben Amorim and only got his first assist during Manchester United's win at Anfield on October 19. After Michael Carrick's appointment, Fernandes was put back into his usual No.10 role and started to dictate the games for United. This saw him get assists in wins over Manchester City, Arsenal and Chelsea. Fernandes was able to level the record during United's win against Nottingham Forest, where there were many chances for him to break the record. But he was let down by his teammates who missed some clear cut chances. Fernandes



was voted as the Premier League Player Of The Year on Saturday and also won Premier League Writer Player of the Year award. Bruno Fernandes recorded 21 assists during the 2025-26 Premier League season, setting a new all-time record for the most assists in a single campaign. He surpassed the previous record of 20, which was jointly held by Thierry Henry and Kevin De Bruyne. The Portuguese midfielder secured the record-breaking 21st assist during Manchester United's final match of the season against Brighton, providing a whipped cross for a Patrick Dorgu header. Following his historic

performance, Fernandes was named the Premier League Player of the Season, having also contributed eight goals to help his team secure a third-place finish and a return to the UEFA Champions League. Michael Carrick played a pivotal role in the success of Bruno Fernandes during the 2025-26 season by restoring him to his preferred attacking midfield role. Following the departure of Ruben Amorim, who had utilized Fernandes in a deeper, more restricted position, Carrick moved the captain back into the "number ten" role to maximize his creative influence. The tactical adjustment.

Criticisms Are Justified As I Haven't Performed Well, Admits D Gukesh

Oslo: D Gukesh refused to hide behind excuses, admitting that his form since winning the 2024 world title has fallen well below expectations and that criticism from former greats was justified. Gukesh, who opens his Norway Chess campaign against Vincent Keymer on Monday, has endured an underwhelming past 18 months, struggling to secure top finishes as pressure mounts ahead of his world title defence later this year. Though the 19-year-old said he tries to block out the criticism, he admitted that results have not gone his way in the lead-up to his world title defence against challenger Javokhir Sindarov.

Most of it (critical comments made by former greats) I don't see, but there are some that I have heard and I think it's fair," said Gukesh on Sunday ahead of his opening-round game in the Norway Chess tournament here. "I have not been performing well in the last one-and-a-half years and I think I would say that my performances have been way below expectations. They (critics) have the right to say what they feel and I have the right to do my best," added Gukesh seated alongside Magnus Carlsen, who is chasing a record-extending eighth Norway Chess title on home soil.



This year, Gukesh finished 10th at the Tata Steel Chess Tournament, followed it up with a ninth-place finish at the Prague International Chess Festival, and most recently finished sixth at the Superbet Rapid & Blitz Poland on the Grand Chess Tour. Gukesh recently decided to pull out of all classical events on the Grand Chess Tour and, for now, will play only in Norway Chess and the Chess Olympiad before his World Championship title clash against challenger Sindarov. Sindarov, who is also in Oslo, will no doubt be keen to closely study the Indian's game ahead of their much-anticipated showdown later this year. "Yes, Norway Chess and the Olympiad

are the two tournaments I will be playing, there are more which I am considering," said Gukesh, without elaborating his plans.

Gukesh said he would be happy to play the World Championship match anywhere in the world, but acknowledged that it would be special if it were held in India, even though the pressure of defending the title at home would be immense. "Anywhere would be nice... In India there's always a lot of pressure. The World Championships will attract a lot of (attention). If it's in India it will be supercool and I will be very happy," he added. Gukesh agreed that winning the World Championship for the first time and

defending it require completely different mindsets, adding that retaining the title is tougher than winning it. Surely there are different mindsets going into winning both the matches and many people have said that defending a title is more difficult than actually winning it. So for sure, there is a lot of expectation and pressure of not wanting to lose. "But at the end of the day the basic thing is to go there and play good chess.

Yeah, I'll try my best to win," he said. Gukesh was seated across the board from Carlsen at Norway Chess 2025 when the Norwegian great, frustrated after losing to the Indian, banged the table in exasperation—a moment that quickly went viral and was watched by millions around the world. Asked whether he would like to see Carlsen recreate the famous outburst at this year's edition, Gukesh said the incident was terrific for the sport as it generated enormous publicity and pushed chess further into the global spotlight. "My job is to play chess. That (winning or losing) is not in my control. But that moment in general I guess speaks about...chess players generally don't show a lot of emotions but when it did happen, a lot of people got attracted to chess.

DPVL Phase One Trials Conclude Amid Massive Response From Delhi's Young Volleyball Talent

New Delhi: The phase 1 trials of the Delhi Pro Volleyball League (DPVL) concluded successfully on Sunday, witnessing an overwhelming response from aspiring volleyball players across the capital. Despite challenging heatwave conditions in Delhi, young athletes turned up in large numbers, showcasing exceptional passion, determination, and commitment towards the sport.

The trials were attended by members of the Delhi Volleyball Association, including Kulbir Singh and Priyank Sharma, whose presence further motivated the players, said a release. The trials served as an important step in identifying emerging volleyball talent from the grassroots level, with several promising players impressing the selectors through their performances. The DPVL management expressed satisfaction with the quality of participation and reiterated its vision of creating a strong platform for nurturing future volleyball stars from Delhi. To ensure a professional and transparent selection process, the league constituted an experienced selection committee that evaluated players



across multiple parameters, including technical ability, fitness, game awareness, and on-court performance. Adding further motivation to the event, Indian volleyball players Vineet Kumar and Prince Malik visited the trials venue and interacted with the participants, encouraging the young athletes and appreciating their dedication towards the game. Former India Captain Vineet Kumar, known for his vast experience at the highest level of the sport, interacted with the young athletes during the trials. "It is inspiring to see so many young players turning up with such dedication despite the extreme weather conditions. The energy and passion we witnessed today clearly show that Delhi has immense volleyball potential, and initiatives like DPVL can

create a strong pathway for future stars," he said.

Prince Malik, who has represented the country at major competitions, also praised the initiatives and the spirit shown by the participants. "The atmosphere at the trials was extremely positive and energetic. The players were giving their absolute best on court, and that is what Indian volleyball needs at the grassroots level. DPVL is creating a fantastic platform for upcoming talent," he said. DPVL founders Neeti Rawat and Jasoda Gulliya expressed happiness over the tremendous response received during the opening phase of the trials and thanked the athletes, coaches, parents, and supporters for contributing towards the success of the event.