

CM Unveils Eco-Tourism Projects and Green Meghalaya Assistance

Shillong, Jun 05: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Friday attended the World Environment Day programme at Mawrah, East Khasi Hills, reaffirming the State Government’s commitment to environmental conservation, sustainable tourism and community-led development. The programme, organised by the Tourism Department and the Meghalaya Basin Management Agency (MBMA), was held under the theme “Inspired by Nature, For Climate, For Our Future” and brought together government officials, community leaders and local residents to mark World Environment Day and promote environmental stewardship. As part of the programme, the Chief Minister distributed Green Meghalaya cheques to beneficiaries under the State’s Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) initiative—a grassroots-level initiative for ecosystem enhancement and sustainable management of Meghalaya’s natural resources, encouraging communities and individuals to actively participate in conservation efforts by recognising and incentivising environmental stewardship.

The Chief Minister also inspected and unveiled the newly developed Eco-Cottages and Glass House Restaurant at Mawrah Lake, aimed at strengthening eco-tourism in the region while generating sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities. He further participated in a plantation drive undertaken using the Miyawaki method, an afforestation technique designed to accelerate the growth of dense, native forests and support ecological restoration. Addressing the gathering, Sangma called for a stronger people-centric approach in government programmes and announced that public representatives and officials should focus on honouring citizens rather than being felicitated themselves. He stated that instructions would be issued to departments to ensure that during government programmes, the focus remains on recognising and celebrating citizens and community members. Expressing his delight at being in Mawrah on World Environment Day, he described the village as a powerful example of what can be achieved when communities and government



work together. Recalling the area’s transformation, he noted that only a few years ago the locality faced water scarcity, declining vegetation, and environmental degradation. The Chief Minister highlighted how the rejuvenation of springs, restoration of vegetation, and creation of water storage infrastructure had transformed the village into an emerging tourism destination while simultaneously addressing local water requirements and creating livelihood opportunities. Speaking about the inauguration of the Eco-Cottages and the Glass

House Restaurant, he described the facilities as among the most unique tourism attractions in Meghalaya and said they would offer visitors a memorable experience. However, he emphasised that tourism extends beyond physical infrastructure. “Tourism is not just about infrastructure. Tourism is about experience,” he said, adding that the success of the destination would ultimately depend on the hospitality, warmth, and participation of local residents. Drawing a parallel with healthcare

services, he remarked that buildings alone do not create meaningful experiences. The Chief Minister urged local communities to work collectively towards creating a welcoming environment for visitors and stressed the importance of skill development and hospitality training. He also called for greater participation of local artists, musicians, and youth in showcasing Meghalaya’s rich cultural heritage through music, dance, folklore, fashion, and other cultural expressions. In this regard, he suggested exploring the development of a small amphitheatre at the site where cultural performances could be organised on a fixed schedule, enabling tourists to enjoy authentic local experiences while creating opportunities for artists and performers. He further underscored the need to ensure that tourism development directly benefits local communities. Referring to the State Government’s homestay initiatives, he encouraged local residents to establish homestays and tourism-linked enterprises so that economic gains remain within the community.

Family of Four Dies in Devastating Fire at Jalukbari

Guwahati, Jun 05: A devastating fire in Guwahati’s Jalukbari area claimed the lives of four members of a family, including two children, in the early hours of Friday.

The deceased have been identified as Kuddus Ali, his wife Kajoli Begum, and their two children. The family, originally from Assam’s Goalpara district, had been residing in a rented accommodation at 22 No. By-lane, Joymati Path in Jalukbari. According to preliminary reports, the fire broke out between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. and spread rapidly through the residential area. While several other tenants managed to escape to safety, the family was unable to get out and became trapped inside the burning house. Witnesses reported that multiple LPG cylinder explosions further intensified the blaze, causing extensive damage and completely destroying two houses.

Following the incident, personnel from the Police Department, Fire and Emergency Services, and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) rushed to the spot and launched rescue and relief operations.

The exact cause of the fire has not yet been determined. Authorities have initiated an investigation to ascertain the circumstances that led to the tragic incident. The tragedy has cast a pall of gloom over the locality, with residents expressing shock and grief over the loss of four lives in the devastating fire.

Manipur CM Presses Centre on Border Fence Work

Shillong, Jun 05: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh has urged the Central Government to expedite the construction of fencing along the Indo-Myanmar border, describing the frontier as one of the region’s most critical security and humanitarian concerns.

Addressing the 73rd Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong, Singh said the ongoing civil conflict in Myanmar has led to a significant influx of people into Manipur’s border districts, creating multiple challenges for the state.

He noted that the arrival of large numbers of people has placed tremendous pressure on local resources and administrative systems, while also affecting the demographic balance in several border areas.

“The continuing conflict in Myanmar has created serious administrative, humanitarian and law-enforcement challenges for Manipur,” the Chief Minister

said. Singh also expressed concern over the misuse of the porous international border by transnational criminal networks. According to him, the border has been exploited by drug traffickers, arms smugglers supplying weapons to non-state actors, and groups involved in human trafficking and other illegal activities.

Welcoming the Union Home Ministry’s initiative to construct a border fence, Singh described the project as a long-awaited and essential step toward strengthening national security.

He urged the Centre to complete the fencing project on a priority basis along the entire Manipur-Myanmar border.

The Chief Minister further advocated a comprehensive border management strategy that includes regulated border crossings, modern surveillance systems, additional border outposts, improved road connectivity and focused development programmes for border communities. “A regulated border regime is

crucial for ensuring long-term security and stability along the frontier,” he said.

Speaking about the internal situation in Manipur, Singh said his government inherited a challenging environment and has been working steadily to restore peace, rebuild trust among communities and promote reconciliation.

He highlighted his visits to relief camps in Jiribam and Imphal, where he met displaced families and community leaders.

Referring to Jiribam as a symbol of hope, Singh said it is the first district where Meitei, Kuki, Paite and Hmar communities have come together on a common platform for peace and reconciliation. The Chief Minister also informed the NEC that the state government, with support from the Centre, has been implementing various humanitarian measures for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs) have been provided to affected families since November 2025.

Mizoram CM moots ‘One-Grid Approach’ to improve connectivity in the NE

Aizawl, Jun 05: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma has suggested ‘One-Grid Approach’ to improve connectivity in the Northeast region.

Addressing the 73rd Plenary of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong on Thursday, Lalduhoma said that connectivity should be pursued through a comprehensive “One-Grid Approach,” integrating roads, railways, air links, waterways, power, telecommunications and logistics into a coordinated development framework. He mentioned that with the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project nearing completion, the region must prepare institutionally and socially to harness emerging opportunities. He urged the Ministry of DoNER to support investment-readiness and trade-readiness programmes, skill development, entrepreneurship promotion, border infrastructure, logistics hubs and community confidence-building initiatives.

Lalduhoma said tourism should be developed through a common Northeast tourism circuit with unified branding and facilitation mechanisms. “The Northeast can emerge as a major logistics and trade gateway through the Act East Policy and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway,” he said. In his address, the Chief Minister stated that the Prime Minister’s Act East Policy provides a strong and visionary framework for the development of the Northeast. He observed that the region is strategically positioned to become a major driver of India’s future growth, endowed with rich natural resources, vibrant human capital and unique cultural heritage. He also submitted the Final Report of the High-Level Task Force on the Northeast Economic Corridor (NEEC), constituted under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), to Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Four Missing Minor Girls from Guwahati Traced in Howrah Within 24 Hours

Guwahati, Jun 04: In a swift and coordinated operation, Assam Police successfully traced and recovered four minor girls who had gone missing from Guwahati within 24 hours of receiving a complaint. According to police sources, a written complaint was lodged at Basistha Police Station on June 2 by the parents and guardians of the four girls. The complainants stated that the girls had left their respective homes together on the morning of June 1 and had not returned thereafter. Immediately after receiving the complaint, Basistha Police launched an intensive search operation.

Information regarding the missing girls was circulated to all police stations across Assam and shared with police authorities in neighbouring states. As part of the investigation, police activated local intelligence networks, analysed CCTV footage from key locations, including railway stations, and carried out technical surveillance to trace the girls’ whereabouts. The coordinated efforts of Basistha Police, along with assistance from the West Bengal Police, led to the successful location and recovery of all four girls from Howrah in West Bengal within 24 hours. A police team from Basistha Police Station is travelling to Howrah to complete the necessary legal procedures and safely bring the girls back to Guwahati. Police officials described the operation as a successful example of prompt action, inter-state coordination and effective use of technology in tracing missing persons.

South West Garo Hills observes World Environment Day

Shillong, Jun 05: A plantation programme was organised at Asnagre in South West Garo Hills on Friday as part of the observance of World Environment Day 2026 under the MegARISE Project - Protection of Vulnerable Catchment Areas in Meghalaya, supported by KfW Development Bank. The programme brought together government officials, community members, village representatives and project stakeholders to promote environmental conservation, enhance green cover and raise awareness on the importance of protecting vulnerable catchment areas for sustainable water resource management and ecological balance.

Assam govt and BJP Assam Pradesh undertake prog to plant 10.2 mn saplings on World Environment Day

Guwahati, Jun 05: On the occasion of World Environment Day, the Government of Assam under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma and the BJP Assam Pradesh Committee jointly launched a massive plantation drive by planting 10.2 million (1 crore 2 lakh) saplings across the State with the objective of building a greener Assam. As part of the initiative, BJP’s 28,000 booth committees planted five saplings each, while the party’s 6.5 million (65 lakh) workers planted one sapling each. In addition, members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across Assam planted two saplings each, resulting in the plantation of more than 10.2 million saplings throughout the State



to mark World Environment Day. Since assuming office in 2021, the BJP Government led by Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma has undertaken strong measures to increase the State’s forest cover by reclaiming forest lands from illegal encroachment.

The Government has also been making sustained efforts to green both sides of the national highways across Assam through extensive plantation drives. At the same time, under the leadership of BJP Assam Pradesh President Dilip Saikia, the party has developed a culture of planting saplings before the commencement of every party programme. Plantation of saplings has been made a mandatory component of all party activities. On

the occasion of World Environment Day, BJP Assam Pradesh President Dilip Saikia and Union Minister Pabitra Margherita planted saplings on the premises of Borsajai Higher Secondary School. Chief Minister Sarma also planted saplings at the Chief Minister’s official residence as part of the campaign to create a greener environment. Dilip Saikia congratulated all the party workers and booth committees across Assam for successfully achieving the Chief Minister’s target of planting 10.2 million saplings. He also urged party workers to take proper care of the saplings planted today and contribute towards making Assam greener and environmentally sustainable.

Creativity Takes Center Stage at Kohima Anime Festival

Kohima, Jun 05: Anime enthusiasts gathered at the Okusa Toyota showroom in Kohima on Friday as Toyota hosted a special anime screening event under the Toyota Anime Festival, offering young audiences a unique blend of entertainment, creativity and cultural exchange. Held at the showroom on New Secretariat Road, the programme featured screenings of the acclaimed anime productions, Attack on Titan and 100 Meters. Participants also took part in interactive activities and had the opportunity to win promotional merchandise. Speaking at the event, Abu Metha praised the initiative and encouraged young people to draw inspiration from anime not only as viewers but also as future creators. Describing 100 Meters as one of his favourite films of the year, Metha said anime demonstrates how ordinary people can become



heroes through determination and imagination. He noted that storytelling, originality and creativity are central strengths of the genre. Metha said Nagaland possesses a rich wealth of legends, folklore and traditional narratives that could be adapted for global audiences through animation and other creative mediums. He urged artists, filmmakers and content creators to use anime as

a source of inspiration for sharing Naga stories with the world. He also highlighted the importance of learning from Japanese culture, particularly its emphasis on precision, punctuality and excellence. Encouraging greater collaboration between Nagaland and Japan, Metha expressed hope for future partnerships that would provide opportunities for cultural exchange and youth engagement.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from anime fans and members of the public, creating a lively atmosphere and underscoring the growing popularity of anime among young people in Nagaland. Organisers said the festival aimed to foster community engagement while providing a platform for creativity, cultural appreciation and meaningful interaction among youths.

Protesters block Indo-Myanmar Sugnu road over alleged killing of Meitei civilian in Manipur

Imphal, Jun 05: Three civilians were killed and seven houses were destroyed after armed militants allegedly attacked Loibol Kholen village near Tupul in Manipur’s Kangpokpi district early Friday morning, according to Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM). The attack reportedly began around 4 a.m. when heavily armed militants stormed the village, triggering an exchange of gunfire that lasted for more than an hour. The incident has once again highlighted security concerns in the conflict-affected hill districts of Manipur. In a statement, Kuki Inpi Manipur condemned the attack and alleged that cadres of NSCN-IM and its proxy group, ZUF (K), were responsible. However, no official confirmation regarding the perpetrators was available at the time of reporting. The tribal body said three civilians from Loibol Kholen lost their lives in the attack. The deceased were identified as Lethkhongam Haokip, his wife Tinmary Haokip, and Jangminlal Haokip. According to KIM, seven houses were reduced to ashes while several other properties suffered extensive damage.

Describing the incident as a barbaric assault on unarmed civilians, the organisation said the

killing of innocent people and destruction of homes and livelihoods constituted a grave violation of human rights and human dignity. “The deliberate targeting of civilians and destruction of homes can never be justified under any circumstances,” the statement said.

KIM expressed condolences to the bereaved families and extended solidarity to the residents of Loibol Kholen village.

The organisation urged the Government of India and security agencies to conduct a comprehensive investigation, identify those responsible, and ensure swift justice. It also called for stronger security measures in vulnerable villages to prevent similar incidents in the future. KIM stressed that those responsible for the killings must be held accountable and emphasized the need to uphold the rule of law while protecting innocent lives and property.

Loibol Kholen and surrounding areas have remained vulnerable since ethnic violence erupted in Manipur in May 2023. Local residents have repeatedly expressed concerns over the presence and activities of armed groups in the region despite the deployment of security forces.

Arunachal Pradesh forms a high-powered group to counter unlawful infiltration



Itanagar, June 05: The Arunachal Pradesh administration has formed a High-Powered Committee to investigate and offer solutions to concerns about unlawful infiltration and illegal immigration in the state. Chief Minister Pema Khandu announced the decision on Thursday, adding that the committee is one of four panels suggested as

a result of recent consultative sessions with community-based organizations, civil society groups, student bodies, legal experts, and other stakeholders. According to an official order issued by the Home Department, the committee will be chaired by Environment and Forests Minister Wangki Lowang. The Commissioner (Home) will serve

as the Member Secretary, while representatives from the All Arunachal Tribal Forum (AITF), All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU), Arunachal ST Bachao Andolan Committee, legal experts and academics have been included as members. The committee has been tasked with studying the prevalence of illegal infiltration and illegal im-

migration within Arunachal Pradesh and recommending measures to strengthen border control mechanisms. Its terms of reference also include suggesting the adoption of biometric and digital verification systems, examining issues related to forged identity documents and undocumented settlement networks, and recommending administrative and

legal measures to address the use of fake or illegal identity papers. The government has directed that all recommendations be made within the framework of existing laws and constitutional provisions. Announcing the development, Chief Minister Khandu said the committee would examine all aspects of the issue and propose measures necessary to safeguard the interests of the state and its indigenous communities. The committee has been given six months from the date of its first meeting to submit its recommendations to the state government. It has also been empowered to co-opt additional experts as special invitees and seek reports, data and status updates from government departments and district administrations whenever required. The order was issued with the approval of the Chief Minister and comes amid growing public discussions on issues relating to migration, identity verification and border management in the frontier state.

Tripura surrendering militants abandon their rail-road roadblock following discussions with the administration



Agartala, June 05: The Tripura Guerrilla Returnees' Demand Committee (TGRDC), which represents surrendered militants in the state, has lifted its intended rail-road blockade after receiving promises from the state administration about their rehabilitation and economic issues. The blockade was slated on June 5 to promote a five-point charter of demands, including effective rehabilitation for former militants. The demonstration was scheduled to coincide with the arrival of Union Home Minister Amit Shah to Agartala. According to officials, the decision to call off the agitation was taken after a meeting chaired by Tribal Welfare Minister Bikash Debbarma with representatives of the TGRDC. Director of the Tribal Welfare Department Subhasish Das said the meeting involved detailed discussions on the demands raised by the surrendered militants, following which the government assured them that their concerns would be addressed. "After the discussions, the TGRDC agreed to withdraw the rail-road blockade scheduled for June 5," Das said. One of the key issues discussed

during the meeting was the rehabilitation of surrendered militants through the Chief Minister's Rubber Mission, a livelihood generation programme aimed at providing sustainable income opportunities. Officials said the Rubber Board had initially approved rubber plantations covering 30,000 hectares in Tripura, which was later expanded to 69,000 hectares. However, funding has not been proportionately increased to support the expanded area. The state administration has contacted the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for more funding to completely implement the project, according to authorities. Das further informed that a follow-up meeting involving various departments and representatives of the surrendered militants will be held on June 9 to explore long-term solutions to their livelihood and rehabilitation concerns. The development is expected to prevent disruptions to transportation services in the state during the Union Home Minister's visit and is a step toward meeting the long-standing demands of surrendered militants.

The Centre reconstitutes Nagaland's environment clearance bodies

Kohima, June 05: The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change has rebuilt Nagaland's two primary state-level agencies in charge of analyzing and approving development projects' environmental impact. According to a notification released by the ministry on June 4, the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) and the State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) have been recreated for a new term. The SEIAA is the statutory body responsible for granting environmental clearances to projects, while the SEAC evaluates project proposals and provides expert recommendations to the authority during the appraisal process. The notification stated that the chairman and members of both bodies will hold office for a period of three years from the date of publication of the notification in the Official Gazette. Under the revised structure, the SEIAA will comprise a chairman, a member and a

member secretary. The SEAC will consist of a chairman, a member secretary and four members. The ministry has also laid down safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest in the functioning of the two bodies. As per the notification, any chairman or member who has provided consultancy services or conducted Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies for a project proponent during the previous five years will be required to recuse themselves from meetings related to the appraisal of projects proposed by that entity. The move is aimed at ensuring transparency, impartiality and credibility in the environmental clearance process while strengthening regulatory oversight of development projects in Nagaland. The SEIAA and SEAC play a crucial role in scrutinising projects with potential environmental impacts and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations before approvals are granted.

Manipur Deputy Chief Minister and Saitu MLA condemn Loibol killings and seek speedy action against offenders

Imphal, June 05: Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen and Saitu MLA Haokholet Kipgen have strongly condemned the death of three citizens and the burning of houses in Loibol village, New Keithelmanbi, Kangpokpi district, calling for quick action against those involved. Nemcha Kipgen expressed tremendous grief over the occurrence, describing the deaths of Letkhangam Haokip, Tinmary Haokip, and Jangminlal Haokip as a tragic catastrophe that has left the community in mourning and sorrow. "I am deeply saddened and anguished by the tragic loss of three innocent lives, including a woman, in the unfortunate incident that occurred at Loibol village under New Keithelmanbi in Kangpokpi district," the Deputy Chief Minister said in a statement. She strongly condemned all



forms of violence targeting innocent civilians, stating that such incidents deepen the suffering of people and undermine efforts to build a peaceful and secure future. Nemcha Kipgen also extended her condolences to



the bereaved families and assured that the government remains committed to ensuring the rule of law and protecting the lives and security of citizens. Meanwhile, Haokholet Kipgen strongly condemned what



he described as a brutal attack on Loibol Khullen village, which resulted in the loss of innocent lives and widespread destruction of homes and property. "The targeting of innocent civilians and the destruction of

their homes and livelihoods are unacceptable and deserve the strongest condemnation," the legislator said. Calling the attack a barbaric act with no place in society, the MLA demanded that those responsible be iden-

tified and brought to justice without delay. He also urged Central forces, state security agencies and the Government of India to take immediate and decisive measures to restore security in the area, protect vulnerable villages and prevent further attacks. Additionally, he called for immediate relief and rehabilitation assistance for affected families who have suffered significant losses. The statements come amid growing concern over the security situation in parts of Kangpokpi district following the deadly attack, which claimed three civilian lives and left several houses damaged or destroyed. Local residents have also demanded enhanced security deployment and swift justice for the victims. Authorities are yet to issue a detailed statement regarding the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Assam is emerging as the northeast's growth engine, says Himanta Biswa Sarma during the NEC plenary

Dispur, June 05: On June 4, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated that the Northeast is no longer characterized by its distance from the rest of India, but by its proximity to Southeast Asia, emphasizing the region's expanding importance as a gateway for commerce, connectivity, and economic growth. Speaking at the 73rd plenary session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong, Sarma stated that East Policy, foreign markets, cultures, and possibilities are progressively influencing the region's destiny. He noted that Assam's emergence as a key economic driver in the Northeast has been supported by sustained investments in infrastructure and development. According to the Chief Minister, the NEC has played



a significant role in this transformation by supporting more than 10,500 km of roads and 2,500 km of power transmission infrastructure across the region over the years. Sarma said one of the most notable changes in recent years has been the shift in discourse surround-

ing the Northeast, with the region increasingly being associated with opportunity and development rather than insurgency and instability. "As Adarniya Amit Shah ji observed at the NEC plenary, the focus can now shift from law and order to protecting citizens' rights

and accelerating development," the Chief Minister said. Highlighting Assam's economic progress, Sarma pointed to advances in sectors ranging from semiconductors and inland waterways to industrial corridors and hospitality. He said Assam is increasingly serving

as the economic anchor of the Northeast. The Chief Minister also credited the NEC with fostering regional thinking and cooperation among northeastern states. He said the region's future lies not in isolated state-level development but in integrated infrastructure, interconnected markets and a shared vision for growth. "From AI and machine learning to blockchain infrastructure, foreign trade and health tourism, the focus is now on preparing the Northeast for the opportunities of the future," he said. The NEC plenary session was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, chief ministers, governors and senior officials from the northeastern states, along with representatives of the central government.

Four family members were murdered in a catastrophic pre-dawn fire at a rental complex in Guwahati



Guwahati, June 05: A fire broke out in a leased residential complex in Guwahati's Jalukbari region before dawn on June 5, killing four family members, including a 12-year-old kid. The victims were trapped inside their home. The deceased are named as Kuddus Ali (65), Kajoli (40), Safiqul (30), and Sahid Ali (12). The family was from Krishnai in Goalpara district and lived in a leased house in Jaymati Nagar, Jalukbari. According to local neighbors, the fire started in the early

morning and raced quickly across the residential property, destroying at least two houses before many inhabitants could flee. Residents said they woke up to smoke and flames, but the blaze had already intensified by the time rescue efforts could begin. The residential compound, owned by Rehena Choudhary, consisted of 11 rooms housing around 10 tenant families. Eight families were reportedly present on the premises when the fire broke out. Firefighters, police personnel and

rescue teams rushed to the scene after receiving information about the incident. Personnel from the Fire and Emergency Services, the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) jointly carried out firefighting and recovery operations. Authorities said the four victims were unable to escape and were found dead after the blaze was brought under control. The cause of the fire has not yet been determined. Officials have launched an investigation to ascertain how the blaze started and the factors that contributed to its rapid spread through the residential complex. The tragedy has left residents of the locality in shock, with the fire reducing parts of the compound to ashes and claiming four lives within a matter of minutes.

Yaba pills worth Rs 47 crore found in Jiribam Bihar resident detained

Imphal, June 05: In a major anti-narcotics operation, the Assam Rifles, in collaboration with Manipur

Police, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and the India Reserve Battalion (IRB), confiscated 4 lakh

Yaba pills worth roughly Rs 47 crore in Manipur's Jiribam area and detained one individual. According to the

official announcement, the combined operation was conducted in response to particular information inputs

about narcotics trafficking in the district. During the operation conducted at Leingangkopi on June 4, secu-

urity personnel intercepted a Tata vehicle and recovered 4,00,000 Yaba tablets concealed for transportation.

The driver of the vehicle, a resident of Bihar, was apprehended at the spot. The seized narcotics and the ve-

hicle have been handed over to the concerned authorities for further legal action and investigation.

Meghalaya BJP Marks Environment Day with Nadda-Led Plantation

Shillong, Jun 05: Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda on Friday joined the Meghalaya BJP’s tree plantation programme in Shillong as part of the nationwide observance of World Environment Day.

Speaking to mediapersons on the occasion, Nadda said the plantation drive was being carried out across the country under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s flagship initiative, ‘Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam’ or ‘One Tree for Mother’.

He informed that crores of BJP workers, members and supporters across India were participating in the campaign by planting trees to mark World Environment Day and to spread awareness on environmental conservation.

Nadda said the initiative carries a deeper message as it draws a parallel between the unconditional love and care of a mother and the role played by nature in sustaining life on earth. He said while a mother nurtures and serves her children without any expectations, the environment too provides humanity with everything needed for survival and well-being.

According to him, the campaign seeks to encourage people to recognise the importance of protecting nature and preserving the environment for future generations through large-scale tree plantation activities. The Union Minister also highlighted the positive impact of such

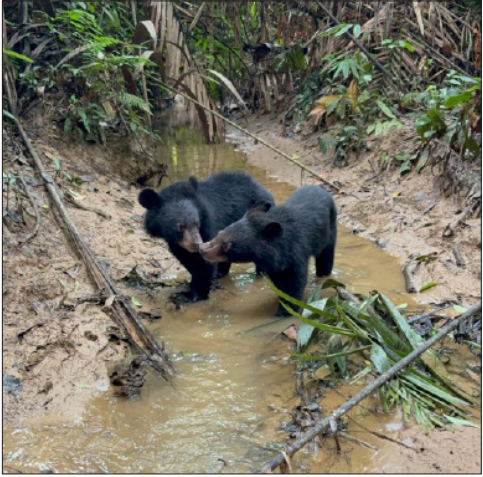
Orphaned Black Bears Released After Rehabilitation in Assam

Guwahati, Jun 05: Two orphaned Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) cubs, rescued from Dissoi Reserved Forest in Jorhat on February 26, 2025, have successfully begun their new life in the wild with their release into Dehing Patkai National Park, Assam, marking an important milestone in Assam’s wildlife conservation journey. The cubs, estimated to be between four and six weeks old at the time of rescue, were discovered alone by a local youth and handed over to the Na-Kachari Beat Office under Jorhat Forest Division. As subsequent surveys found no trace of their mother, they were transferred to the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC), in Kaziranga, for specialised care.

“On World Environment Day, we celebrate one of Assam’s inspiring conservation success stories under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. After months of dedicated care and rehabilitation at CWRC, Kaziranga, two orphaned Asiatic black bear cubs were successfully released into Dehing Patkai National Park, where they now have a second chance to thrive in the wild,” a social media post from the Chief Minister’s Office, stated.

Established in 2002, CWRC in Kaziranga, is a joint initiative by the Assam Forest Department, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI).

At CWRC, the cubs were treated for mild dehydration and nurtured in the small mammal nursery under the close supervision of Dr. Bhaskar Choudhury and his team. They were reared on a canine milk replacer and gradually introduced to conditions that would prepare them for survival in the wild. The rehabilitation of the orphaned Asiatic black bear cubs in CWRC followed the Asiatic black bear rehabilitation protocols of the Centre for Bear Rehabilitation and Conservation (CBRC), Pakke Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh. The rehabilitation process focused on ensuring proper nutrition for optimum growth, retaining natural behaviour, and minimising human imprinting to secure their chances of successful reintegration. In line with best practices, a scientific survey was undertaken to determine a suitable release site. While the Dissoi Reserve Forest was considered, its proximity to human settlements and high disturbance made it unsuitable for bear rehabilitation. A systematic evaluation based on natural cover, distance from habitation, prey availability, and local community awareness identified De-



hing Patkai National Park as the most suitable release site. Offering rich vegetation, abundant natural resources, minimal human interference, and committed support from forest staff and local communities, the park emerged as the ideal new home for the cubs. Formal permission to proceed with the site selection and release was granted on June 4, 2025, by the Office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam.

Border Fencing Along Myanmar Frontier Moves Ahead in Arunachal

Itanagar, Jun 05: Construction of fencing along the India-Myanmar border is progressing in Arunachal Pradesh’s Changlang and Longding districts as part of the Centre’s plan to strengthen border security across the Northeastern region.

In 2024, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) announced an ambitious project to fence the entire 1,643-km India-Myanmar border. While the initiative has faced opposition from several local communities in Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram, work in Arunachal Pradesh has continued steadily since its launch last year.

The border fencing project is being implemented by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

In Changlang district, 4.14 km of fencing



has already been completed out of the 7.3 km proposed under the first phase of the project.

Changlang Deputy Commissioner Vishal Sah said the pilot project near the Pangsau Pass area is progressing smoothly. He noted that Changlang shares the longest stretch of international border with Myanmar among the districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

However, the project has encountered security challenges. In March this year, an Assam Rifles personnel was injured when suspected militants opened fire on a team engaged in fencing work along the border. Reports indicated that members of the NSCN (K-YA) were involved in the attack.

The Assam Rifles, responsible for guarding the Indo-Myanmar border, has

been providing security cover to workers and officials involved in the project.

In Longding district, authorities have proposed constructing 20.5 km of fencing during the first phase. At present, work has begun only on approach roads

leading to the border.

Longding Superintendent of Police Dekio Gumja said fencing is planned between Border Post (BP) 156 and BP 160. He added that the difficult terrain in several locations has made construc-

tion challenging, and fencing has not yet been planned for some stretches.

Meanwhile, fencing work has not yet commenced in Tirap district. However, the district administration has already handed over land between BP 160 and BP 162 to the BRO.

Tirap Deputy Commissioner Techu Aran said fencing is proposed from BP 160 to BP 164. While land between BP 160 and BP 162 has been transferred for the project, the handover process for land between BP 163 and BP 164 is still pending.

The border fencing project is expected to play a crucial role in strengthening security, regulating cross-border movement and addressing challenges related to illegal activities along the India-Myanmar frontier.

Manipur police foils bid to smuggle fuel to Myanmar

Imphal, Jun 05: Manipur Police has claimed to have foiled an alleged attempt to smuggle petrol to Myanmar. Police said they have seized two vehicles and detained two drivers near Pioneer School along Pal-lal-Chandel road after it was found that they were allegedly transporting an illegal consignment of fuel to the neighbouring country.

“One Yodha vehicle bearing registration No. MN09B- 0472 driven by Pasel Nepolian Anal (43) of Chandel District was seized for transporting 11 plastic containers containing approximately 2,420 litres of petrol,” police said.

One Ecco Van bearing registration No. MN06LX593, driven by Lh. Koko George (29) of Chandel District was also seized for transporting six plastic containers containing approximately 1260 litres of petrol, they added.

The two drivers revealed that they were transporting a total of 3680 litres of petrol in 17 containers along Imphal-Moreh road for delivering it to Myanmar. The two vehicles along with the drivers and the fuel are handed over to Kakching PS for further necessary action.

Conrad summits letter to Union HM Amit Shah listing key demands

Shillong, Jun 05: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma has disclosed that the Meghalaya government has submitted a comprehensive memorandum to Union Home Minister Amit Shah during his visit to Shillong for the 73rd Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council (NEC). In this memorandum, the state government strongly urged and reminded the Centre regarding four critical and pressing issues that directly impact the welfare and security of Meghalaya and its citizens. Interacting with media persons, the Chief Minister emphasized that Meghalaya urgently requires legal mechanisms to check and control the illegal influx of foreign nationals into the state. The state government formally requested the Central government to grant immediate approval for the implementation of the Inner Line Permit (ILP), which has already been unanimously passed through a resolution by the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

Assam Cabinet Expanded to 17 as 12 More Legislators Take Oath

Guwahati, Jun 05: The strength of the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led Assam Cabinet has risen to 17 ministers with the induction of 12 more legislators, including four first-time ministers, on Friday.

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office and secrecy to the new ministers at the swearing-in ceremony at the Jyoti-Bishnu Antarjatik Kala Mandir in Guwahati.

The four new inductees in the Sarma-led Cabinet are

Nilima Devi, MLA from Mangaldai Assembly constituency in Darrang district; former Assam Assembly Speaker and Tamulpur MLA, Biswajit Daimary; Thowra MLA Sushanta Borgohain and Golakganj MLA, Ashwini Ray Sarkar.

The other MLAs inducted in the Cabinet include former ministers, Ashok Singh, Bimal Borah, Jayanta Malla Baruah, Kaushik Rai, Keshab Mahanta, Krishnendu Paul, Pijush Hazarika and Ranoj Pegu.

Under constitutional pro-



visions, the maximum permissible strength of the ministry in the 126-member Assam Legislative Assembly is 19.

It may be recalled that following NDA’s emphatic victory in the Assam

Assembly elections last month, Himanta Biswa Sarma had, on May 12, taken oath as Assam Chief Minister for the second consecutive term in the presence of the Prime Minister, Union home minister and sever-

al other Union ministers and chief ministers of the Northeast and other NDA-ruled states of the country.

Besides, Rameshwar Teli, Atul Bora, Charan Boro and Ajanta Neog also took the oath of office as Cabinet ministers in the Sarma-led NDA government on that day.

Seventeen ministers in the Assam Cabinet are from BJP, two are from Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) while one minister is from Bodoland People’s Front (BPF).

Security Forces Bust Drug Haul in Manipur, Recover ₹47 Crore Worth Yaba

Jiribam, Jun 05: In a major crackdown on drug trafficking, a joint team comprising the Assam Rifles, Manipur Police, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and India Reserve Battalion (IRB) seized 4 lakh Yaba tablets worth an estimated Rs 47 crore in Manipur’s Jiribam district and arrested one person.

According to an official statement, the operation was launched following specific intelligence inputs regarding the movement of narcotic substances in the district.

During the operation conducted at Leingangpokpi on June 4, security personnel intercepted a Tata vehicle suspected of being used for

drug transportation. A thorough search of the vehicle led to the recovery of 4,00,000 Yaba tablets concealed inside.

The driver of the vehicle, a resident of Bihar, was apprehended on the spot.

Authorities have seized both the narcotics and the vehicle, which have been handed over to the concerned agencies for further legal proceedings and investigation.

Officials described the operation as a major success in the ongoing campaign against narcotics trafficking in the Northeast. They said the seizure would deal a significant blow to illegal drug networks operating through Manipur.



Assam Rifles, in coordination with Jiribam Police and other security agencies, has been conducting sustained anti-drug operations as part of efforts to curb the trafficking and distribution of narcotic

substances in the region.

Investigators are now working to trace the origin and intended destination of the seized consignment and identify other individuals involved in the smuggling network.

Sangma Meets Amit Shah, Raises Key Meghalaya Issues

Shillong, Jun 05: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Thursday submitted a memorandum to Union Home Minister Amit Shah on key issues such as immigration, tribal safeguards and language recognition, bringing to the fore the State’s concerns on border control, constitutional protections and institutional changes.

In the memorandum submitted to the Union Home Minister in Shillong, Sangma expressed concerns regarding illegal immigration into the State and urged the Centre to establish an effective mechanism to address the issue.

“We suggested that measures such as the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act (MRSSA) and the Inner Line Permit (ILP), for which the State Assembly has passed resolutions, could serve as viable mechanisms to regulate and check illegal

immigration,” Sangma said.

The Centre was also requested for the inclusion of Khasi and Garo languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution to preserve, promote and recognise the linguistic and cultural identity of our indigenous communities.

“We also requested the Government of India to undertake consultations with all concerned States regarding the proposed amendments to the Sixth Schedule, ensuring that any changes strengthen protections and governance mechanisms for tribal communities across the North East and the country,” the Chief Minister said.

Besides, concerns were expressed by various organisations regarding certain amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), particularly provisions that may impact their functioning and assets.

Arunachal Rajya Sabha Race: BJP Nominates Tai Tagak

Itanagar, Jun 05: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has named former Arunachal Pradesh BJP president and current adviser to the chief minister, Tai Tagak, as its candidate for the state’s lone Rajya Sabha seat, ending days of speculation over the nomination.

Announcing the candidature on Thursday, the party highlighted Tagak’s three-decade-long association with the BJP and his significant contribution to strengthening the organisation in Arunachal Pradesh. Born on July 1, 1970, in Peel village under Sangram Circle of Kurung Kumey district, Tagak completed his schooling at Government Higher Secondary School, Itanagar. He earned a bachelor’s degree in Political Science from

Government Degree College, Itanagar (now Dera Natung Government College), followed by a master’s degree in the same subject from Arunachal University, now known as Rajiv Gandhi University. He later pursued legal studies at JB Law College in Guwahati.

Before joining politics full-time, Tagak worked as a government school teacher and also served in various capacities at All India Radio, Itanagar. His political journey began with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in 1983. He joined the BJP as a primary member in 1995 and became an active member in 2003 after stepping down from organisational responsibilities within the Sangh.

Over the years, he has held several key positions in the BJP, including State General Secretary, General Secretary (Organisation), party spokesperson, Chief Spokesperson, State BJP President, and member of the State Core Group. He played an important role in election management, organisational expansion, campaign planning and political strategy in Arunachal Pradesh.

Tagak contested the 2004 Assembly election from Nyapin constituency as a BJP candidate and remained loyal to the party during a period when several leaders switched allegiance to rival political parties.

During his tenure as State BJP President, the party achieved a major breakthrough in the 2014

elections by winning 11 Assembly seats and the Arunachal West Lok Sabha constituency. The BJP’s vote share in the state also rose significantly from around 5 percent in 2009 to 31 percent in 2014. He also led the “Sarhad Ko Pranam Yatra” between 2013 and 2014, an outreach programme aimed at engaging with residents of border villages and highlighting issues related to development, connectivity and infrastructure.

Reacting to his nomination, Tagak expressed gratitude to the party leadership and grassroots workers. He said the nomination reflected the affection and support of dedicated party workers and pledged to work for the interests of Arunachal Pradesh and the nation if elected to Parliament.

Tagak also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP National President JP Nadda, Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein for placing their trust in him.

Congratulating Tagak, Chief Minister Pema Khandu described the nomination as a recognition of his unwavering commitment, loyalty and contribution to strengthening the BJP in Arunachal Pradesh.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also praised Tagak’s dedicated service to the party and expressed confidence that his experience and understanding of people’s aspirations would enable him to effectively represent Arunachal Pradesh in the Rajya Sabha.

Jaintia National Council at Dkhiah East Secondary School

Shillong, Jun 05: In a powerful demonstration of community solidarity and ecological consciousness, the Jaintia National Council (JNC) Khliehriat Circle, in collaboration with Dkhiah East Secondary School, solemnly observed “World Environment Day 2026” on Friday, June 5, at the school premises in Dkhiah East, East Jaintia Hills District. The initiative, anchored by the global theme “Inspired by Nature, for Climate, for Our Future” and the school’s sub-theme “Revive, Rebuild Through Action,” brought together students, educators, community leaders, and or-

ganizational representatives in a unified call to protect and restore the natural heritage of the Jaintia Hills. The program was chaired by the Headmaster, Dr. B. Nongtdu, who warmly welcomed all guests and participants, setting a tone of collective responsibility and forward-looking action. Distinguished attendees included School Managing Committee (SMC) members, teachers, and the Headman of Dkhiah East, Shri P. Nongtdu. True to the spirit of this year’s theme, the program was not merely symbolic — it was deeply action-oriented. Activities included:

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The Decline of Constructive Debate

Public discussions are increasingly marked by polarisation.

Disagreements that once led to dialogue now often result in hostility, with opposing viewpoints treated as threats rather than opportunities for understanding. Social media has amplified this trend by rewarding outrage and encouraging people to engage primarily with like-minded opinions.

The decline of constructive debate weakens democratic culture and limits the exchange of ideas necessary for progress. Healthy societies do not require complete agreement, but they do require the ability to disagree respectfully.

Constructive debate remains essential for informed decision-making and social harmony.

Even though some studies show a fall in traditional cognitive measures like attention span, memory, and IQ among Gen Z, it is actually extremely inaccurate to call them “the stupidest generation.” This decrease shows a departure from the consistent rise in literacy and numeracy abilities that occurred in each generation up to 2000.

But maybe there’s an other way to look at intelligence. Traditional cognitive abilities, such as a certain depth of knowledge that results from careful reading and a reflecting mindset, are what older people are accustomed to searching for in children. However, younger generations need to be evaluated differently. We have to acknowledge that they were born into a very different world characterized by rapidity and ever-evolving technology. Naturally, their cognitive abilities would differ. As a result, we ought to acknowledge their unique cognitive abilities that are appropriate for their era. While juggling tedious schoolwork, you can’t help but be captivated by the impromptu way they use technology



and the inventive manner they plan their festivals and other competing activities.

We must acknowledge that their fast-paced lifestyle coupled with an enormous amount of information has led to a reduced attention span. They use short snippets and bite-sized tidbits to absorb a wide range of information. Many educators lament that their short attention spans prevent them from reading in-depth, which makes them seek for brief summaries produced by artificial intelligence. There is no doubting that an excessive reliance

on technology has led to a certain type of “dumbing down.” Without the aid of technology, children today are unable to complete tasks on their own. Experts claim that using keyboards rather than writing by hand has further impaired cognitive function. Adults have also been impacted to some extent. They find their way via GPS; they scroll through different types of social media instead of reading long articles.

The claim is that if these gadgets and media make life easier and duties shorter, it would be stupid

not to use them. Instead of utilizing a calculator, which would likewise guarantee accuracy, why should people spend time performing math in their heads? It is commonly forgotten that in order to use a calculator effectively, one must have a fundamental understanding of mathematics. I recently conducted interviews with a few applicants who had replied to our job posting for a Hindi instructor. They could communicate in both Hindi and English and were generally well-spoken. Their proficiency with using technology in the classroom really impressed me. They glibly discussed various teaching approaches, activity-based lessons, and PowerPoint presentations. One of them said that she used ChatGPT to turn every lesson into a comic book.

Everything went smoothly until I asked them about their reading, at which point the room fell into an awkward quiet. Since they had no free time, it turned out that none of them read at all. After some time, one of them dared to claim that she had read the Ramayana among

Premchand’s muttering. I was unconcerned, but I soon realized that their classes would be engaging and suitable for today’s kids. “If they can learn how to learn, they can acquire any skill on the planet,” the hip Alpha schools declare. No curriculum can help them if they are unable to. Regardless of how adept our children are at using gadgets and directing Claude, they need to understand that certain abilities are always crucial.

Among these, the capacity to focus and maintain concentration is essential. Short attention spans interfere with learning and result in superficial knowledge and comprehension, which hinders the development of new abilities and self-directed learning. Scholarship cannot be attained without extensive reading. Calling the Z generation “stupid” demonstrates a lack of awareness of current events. When a seven-year-old kid begged his grandparents for a “digital and not an analogue” wristwatch despite being able to discern the time from a clock’s hands, I realized how much things had changed.

No space for symbolic environmental preservation

The northeast’s delayed monsoon has been greatly influenced by this year’s hotter-than-normal summer, according to a warning from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Over the next two to three days, conditions are favorable for the southwest monsoon to continue moving into some areas of the north-eastern states, according to the India Meteorological Department. Since most Assamese farmers rely on monsoon rains during the kharif season, the WMO’s warning and the delayed monsoon necessitate more intelligent and robust responses. The celebration of World Environment Day cannot continue to be ceremonial and limited to the planting of trees, given 60% of Assam’s net cultivated areas are still rainfed. It must reiterate the main point, which is that protecting the state’s farmers from severe weather is intimately related to the preservation of wetlands, river ecology, and forest ecosystems. Warm ocean waters in the tropical Pacific are contributing to the development of El Niño conditions, which usually enhance rainfall patterns driven by global temperatures and the likelihood of extreme weather in the upcoming months, according to the WMO. For rainfed areas dealing with shifting rainfall patterns, expanding irrigation coverage provides a robust option. Since 77% of Assam’s gross cultivated land is currently rainfed, it is now urgently necessary to irrigate more rainfed areas. Paradoxically, the State Irrigation Plan (2022-2027) aims to raise the state’s seeded area under irrigation to 52% by 2027, yet this objective appears to be very far off. This suggests that farmers would continue to be dependent on rainfall



for crop growth as well as the unpredictable nature of rainfall patterns. The uncertainty surrounding the sea-

sonal outlook would only exacerbate food security concerns for a state that is heavily dependent on imports

of critical commodities, including as food grains, fruits, and vegetables, to fulfill rising consumer demand.

The central and state governments’ many afforestation programs, like the Green India Mission and the “Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam” campaign, must prioritize community-based greening and soil and moisture conservation initiatives in light of the new severe climate realities. To transform these initiatives into a strong and authentic social movement of tree planting for a sustainable future, it is essential to raise awareness among all facets of the community about how the effects of climate change are affecting rainfall patterns in the already warm world. In order to ensure a high survival rate and accomplish the main goals, the tree plantation is responsible for caring for the planted seedlings. In Assam and other states in the region, traditional village agroforestry can serve as a living laboratory for the community, particularly the younger members of farm households, to learn the fundamentals of planting trees, the survival of planted saplings, and how improved survival rates result in increased local precipitation and rain, which ensures water availability for crops and livestock. The NITI Aayog has highlighted the potential of agroforestry for ecosystem restoration in its policy document, “Greening and Restoration of Wastelands with Agroforestry (GROW).” The traditional knowledge of the state’s and the region’s indigenous communities can be incorporated into mainstream planning for rainfed areas of the nation for resilient agriculture and ecosystem restoration with the support of a robust agroforestry conservation campaign. Only when communities value the indigenous knowledge systems that have been passed down through the

generations can the agroforestry industry grow in an organized manner as suggested by the National Agroforestry Policy. Food security must be built on a combination of modern scientific farming of high-yielding cultivars that require guaranteed irrigation and traditional farming, which typically yields low crops but is climate robust. Converting the entire cropped area to fully irrigated farmland may increase farmers’ long-term risk of water shortages and negatively impact farm productivity and livelihoods because the effects of climate change significantly alter rainfall patterns, causing water stress in natural water bodies. Increasing tree cover through a persistent program of tree planting and caring for the planted saplings, preventing forest degradation, and conserving rivers, wetlands, and other water bodies through stringent water-conservation frameworks like rainwater collecting are all possible alternatives. Campaigns and actions based on ritualistic schemes are unable to effect the intended transformation; instead, the communities must incorporate these activities into their customs. In order to attain sustained food security in an ecologically vulnerable and climate-stressed region, environmental conservation and restoration must be linked. In order to improve food security and safeguard farm-based livelihoods, Assam requires a more robust community-led movement for environmental protection. There is no place for symbolic environmental preservation efforts when climate change is real and causes harsher temperatures and unpredictable rainfall because they cannot protect farmers from the approaching catastrophe.

Can DK Shivakumar Break Free From Siddaramaiah’s Shadow

As DK Shivakumar’s solemn, if somewhat boring, oath-taking ceremony took place on Wednesday afternoon at Bengaluru’s Lok Bhavan (formerly Raj Bhavan), there must have been a fair number of attentive onlookers at the event as well as those watching it on television. At some point, they must have wondered how Shivakumar, with his forty years of political experience, would manage the menacing shadow of his predecessor Siddaramaiah and provide a good administration in Karnataka. It was evident from the nearly hour-long procession of oath-taking that Siddaramaiah had a significant influence on the choice of ministerial candidates because, with the exception of two, they had all

served under him. Yathindra, his son, was the only newcomer.

The party may defend keeping heavyweights—some even “overweights”—by claiming that Shivakumar’s brigade of “young and new faces” will have room in the second or third stage of the ministry’s growth and that most seniors could not be disregarded. It was more than just fresh wine in an old bottle—or, in the case of Karnataka, new arrack in an old pot—but rather the Congress and Shivakumar’s surrender to a strong leader in order to purchase peace.

However, it remains to be seen if Siddaramaiah would continue to offer his “cooperation” or find a “trigger point” to test

the government’s stability or susceptibility given his erratic temperament. Veteran Congressman Dharam Singh, who served as chief minister of Karnataka’s first Congress-JD(S) coalition administration from 2004 to 2006, is an example of how to handle political pressures. The BS Yediyurappa-led BJP won an astounding 79 seats in the 2004 Assembly elections, while the SM Krishna-led Congress administration fell from 132 seats to 65. However, the JD(S), led by HD Deve Gowda, became a “king-maker,” providing Congressman Dharam Singh the position of chief minister while playing a supporting role.

From the start, Dharam Singh knew that the cunning and seasoned Deve

Gowda would take on the role of “shadow chief minister,” and he would have to obey. Almost every evening, Singh faithfully went to Gowda’s home with official documents. He spent over two hours with Gowda, reporting on the day’s events and receiving “instructions.” Before Gowda pulled the rug from under Dharam Singh’s feet, the agreement lasted for twenty months. But Siddaramaiah is supposed to function at a higher level because he is a socialist and not someone with a feudal mindset. As a gesture of goodwill, Shivakumar is also likely to “consult” him frequently. To guarantee the smooth operation of the government, the party high command may even form a co-ordination committee that

includes KC Venugopal or Randeep Surjewala. Shivakumar may not want to upset him now that he has finally achieved his goal of becoming chief minister, especially because he is in charge of getting the party ready for the upcoming Assembly elections in 2028 and the Lok Sabha elections in 2029. To their credit, Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar have publicly maintained cordiality—even making lighthearted jabs at one another—despite their relentless battle for chief ministership that began almost immediately after the 2023 election results. This should give hope that they are two mature politicians who have figured out how to work together. Crucially, they may have realized that their complementary

strengths—one being an OBC “Ahinda” leader and the other belonging to the main Vokkaliga community—helped the Congress secure an absolute majority, capturing 136 seats in the most recent election. Shivakumar has demonstrated excellent organizational abilities at the party level. When no one else wanted to take over as KPCC president in 2020, at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Shivakumar traveled around the state to assist farmers by purchasing their crops and giving it away for free to everyone, including daily wage earners.

During the challenging period of the pandemic, he also quietly organized transportation for thousands of individuals to re-

turn to their hometowns. In his six years as the state Congress president, he has also demonstrated his ability to mobilize by recruiting over 78 lakh workers, which is said to be the greatest enrollment by the Congress party in the nation. He is searching for someone who will cooperate with him rather than become a rival power center since he will be leaving his position as KPCC president and taking over as chief minister.

One of the party’s top leaders, Satish Jarkiholi, was eager for the KPCC position. However, it seems that the party convinced him to become a cabinet member. BK Hariprasad, a seasoned leader and devoted member of the Gandhi family, is predicted

to be a strong contender for KCC president.

G Parameshwara has been the only deputy chief minister after fending off competition from a few of his colleagues, which is now what Shivakumar also desired. It is not impossible that a Muslim and a Lingayat will eventually be appointed as deputy chief ministers. Young and aspirational, he hopes to earn both a full term for himself and another term in Congress after 2028. He has already approved Siddaramaiah’s request to remain in the chief minister’s official mansion, “Cauvery,” for a further two years. He will likely continue to show him kindness in a number of other ways to keep him amused and secure a stable term for his government.

Tech layoffs surge as AI reshapes the job market; US Fed rate cut uncertainty clouds hiring outlook

Mumbai: The US labor market in 2026 presents a mixed picture: while overall job cuts are running well below last year’s pace, April saw a notable spike in layoffs, the third highest since 2009, driven largely by tech companies accelerating their AI investments at the cost of headcount.Hiring plans have also pulled back sharply. Job openings remain healthy, and private sector hiring showed broad momentum in May, but uncertainty from the Iran war, tariffs, and the Fed’s next move continues to cloud the outlook.

On the other hand, if the inflation shocks from the Iran War and tariffs fade, job growth will likely hold at its current pace. In that scenario, a tightening labor market would likely displace inflation as the Fed’s main area of focus,” says Bill Adams, Chief U.S. Economist, Fifth Third Commercial Bank.Disclaimer: This report is based on data from Challenger, Gray & Christmas, the U.S. Department of Labor, and ADP Research, and is intended for informational purposes only. The figures and projections cited reflect conditions as of the reporting period and are subject to revision. References to geopolitical events, monetary policy, and economic forecasts represent the views of cited experts and do not constitute financial or investment advice.

So far in 2026, US employers have announced 300,749 job cuts, down 50% from the 602,493 cuts recorded through April 2025

U.S. employers announced 83,387 job cuts in April, a 38% increase from March’s 60,620 cuts, but a 21% decline from 105,441 cuts reported in April last year. This marks the third-highest job cut figures since 2009, following 105,441 in April 2025 and 671,129 in April 2020, as reported by Challenger, Gray & Christmas. The US labor market in 2026 presents a mixed picture: while overall job cuts are running well below last year’s pace, April saw a notable spike in layoffs, the third highest since 2009, driven largely by tech companies accelerating their AI investments at the cost of headcount. The more recent data also paints a healthier scenario. Private sector employment increased by 122,000 jobs in May and pay was up 4.4 percent year-over-year, according to the May ADP National Employment Report produced by ADP Research in collaboration with the Stanford Digital Economy Lab. “Hiring was more broad-based in May than we’ve seen in the last few years. The labor market continues to show sustained momentum going into the summer hiring season,” said Dr. Nela Richardson, chief economist, ADP.Takeaway

The rise in layoffs in April is likely connected to tech companies’ employment trends, particularly those heavily investing in AI. These companies are leading in layoff announcements, frequently referencing AI spending and innovation. The trend is likely to continue as AI spendings rise and adoption of AI increases.“For now, financial markets are focused on the risk that inflation shocks from the Iran War and tariffs force the



Fed to raise rates. That’s possible, but it would require the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to persist through the midterm elections. Is that plausible?Hiring plans have also pulled back sharply. Job openings remain healthy, and private sector hiring showed broad momentum in May, but uncertainty from the Iran war, tariffs, and the Fed’s next move continues to cloud the outlook

So far in 2026, US employers have announced 300,749 job cuts, down 50% from the 602,493 cuts recorded through April 2025.U.S. employers announced 83,387 job cuts in April, a 38% increase from March’s 60,620 cuts, but a 21% decline from 105,441 cuts reported in April last year. This marks the third-highest job cut figures since 2009, following 105,441 in April 2025 and 671,129 in April 2020, as reported by Challenger, Gray & Christmas. Going by the Labor Department data, the American job market is improving after a poor 2025, with an average job growth of 76,000 per month from January to April. Tax refunds resulting from President Trump’s tax cuts have positively impacted the economy this year. According to the Labor Department, U.S. job openings increased to 7.6 million in April, up from 6.9 million in March, indicating a resilient labor market amidst economic uncertainty from the Iran war.The department’s Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) revealed that layoffs decreased, but so did the number of Americans quitting their jobs. Furthermore, the report’s measure of gross hiring fell in April, indicating that businesses are still hesitant to hire new employees while retaining those they already have.The US unemployment rate held at 4.3% in April 2026, in line with market expectations. However, the number of unemployed rose by 134,000 to 7.37 million, while total employment fell by 226,000 to 162.62 million.

Arvind rallies 29% hits new high textile stock

Mumbai: Shares of garments & textile company hit a new high of ₹513.25, surging 6 per cent on the BSE in Thursday’s intra-day trade on expectations of healthy business growth. It zoomed 79 per cent from its 2026 low of ₹286.65 touched in January 2026.

In the past one month, the stock price of the flagship company of the Lalbhai Group, rallied 29 per cent. In comparison, the BSE Sensex was down 3.7 per cent during the period.

At 01:05 PM; Arvindwas trading 5 per cent higher at ₹509.20, as against 0.05 per cent rise in the BSE Sensex. In the January to March 2026 quarter (Q4FY26), Arvind’s consolidated revenue and earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) for the quarter stood at ₹2,553 crore and ₹327 crore, up 15 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively, over the previous year quarter.

The company witnessed strong volume growth across all core segments during the quarter, in line with its guidance. Denim volume grew by 19 per cent to 17 million meters with

full year volume at 60 million meters, up 15 per cent. Woven fabric grew by 5 per cent to 35 million meters taking full year volume to an all-time high of 136 million meters. The armenting business continued its strong trajectory, crossing 10 million mark for the third consecutive quarter in a row. The Garmenting segment delivered strong growth of 21 per cent with revenue crossing ₹2,000 crore mark for the financial year 2025-26. Advanced Materials Division reported record performance during the quarter and year with a revenue of ₹1,839 crore, up 21 per cent and EBITDA margin of 15.1 per cent.

Looking ahead, the management said, the global environment remains uncertain with ongoing disruptions, including evolving situations in the Middle East, impacting input costs, supply chains and currency movements. While the near-term risk persists, demand across Textile and Advanced Materials remains resilient, and key sourcing destination continues to be stable for now. The management said, the company is entering FY27 with a healthy order book



position and a strong inquiry pipeline. The management expects to maintain the growth momentum to grow at a double digit with high double-digit growth in Advanced Materials and mid-teen growth in Garments.

However, there may be disruptions in demand, especially in second half due to increase in inflation and other global uncertainties impacting discretionary consumption. Input costs across product lines have risen sharply, which may exert margin pressure in first half of FY27. While the margin recovery is expected in second half, this is subject to easing of geopolitical tensions, the management said.

Analysts back Maruti, TVS, M&M, TaMo after May sale Auto stocks to buy

Mumbai: The automobile sector delivered another month of healthy growth in May 2026, though analysts noted that the industry’s performance is becoming increasingly “fragmented,” with passenger vehicles and tractors continuing to outperform while two-wheelers and commercial vehicles show early signs of moderation.Retail demand momentum remained steady in May for passenger vehicles and tractors, while two-wheelers and commercial vehicles saw signs of slowdown,” analysts at Motilal Oswal Financial Services said in a sector note.Passenger vehicle wholesales, the brokerage added, continued to benefit from lean channel inventories and healthy retail demand, while commercial vehicle growth was affected by disruptions linked to the West Asia conflict. Echoing a similar view, Emkay Global Financial Services said that while the auto pack delivered a steady performance in May 2026, “growth moderation was visible across segments” with two-wheelers and medium and heavy commercial vehicles (MHCVs) witnessing softer retail momentum.As demand sustainability remains a key monitorable amid the ongoing geopolitical uncertainties, analysts advises investors to remain selective and favour companies that show strong market-share gains, enjoy pricing power and have execution capabilities. On the bourses, the Nifty Auto index rose 1.3 per cent intraday on the NSE. The index was up 0.45 per cent at 11:35 Am as against 0.02-per cent dip in the Nifty50 index. Passenger vehicle manufacturers delivered the strongest performance in May.

Maruti Suzuki led the segment with a 34.8

per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) increase in sales to 242,688 units, while Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles reported an even stronger 42.2 per cent growth to nearly 60,000 units. Hyundai Motor India posted a modest 4.1 per cent increase, while Mahindra & Mahindra’s utility vehicle sales grew 10.7 per cent amid supply constraints.

Analysts attributed Maruti Suzuki’s strong performance to lean channel inventories, healthy order backlogs and capacity additions at its Kharkhoda facility, while Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles’ sales were driven by the ramp-up of recently launched models and continued traction in electric vehicles. Hyundai and M&M’s growth, meanwhile, were constrained by supply-side challenges, they said. The two-wheeler segment, meanwhile, saw healthy wholesale growth, but analysts pointed to softer retail trends. Among them, TVS Motor posted a 31.4 per cent rise in volumes to 566,585 units, while Hero MotoCorp reported 12.3 per cent growth, Bajaj Auto registered nearly 20 per cent growth, and Royal Enfield (Eicher Motors) recorded a 15.4 per cent increase.Emkay Global noted that electric two-wheeler penetration increased to 9.2 per cent in May 2026 from 6.6 per cent in FY26, with industry volumes surging 63 per cent year-on-yearCommercial vehicles lose momentumIn the commercial vehicle segment, demand remained under pressure during the month with MHCV retail growth slowing to 8 per cent on year from 23 per cent in the second half of FY26 (H2FY26), indicating a moderation in fleet replacement demand.

Stocks making big moves midday: Eternal, IEX, Jain Irrigation, ideaForge, JBM Autoand more

Mumbai: Indian equity markets were back in positive territory by midday on June 4 despite stock-specific volatility across sectors. The Nifty was around the 23,450 markwhile the Sensex was trading near 74,500 levels.Healthcare, defence, capital goods and electric mobility stocks remained active, with several counters witnessing sharp moves following corporate developments, fundraising plans, order wins and policy announcements.

Here are the top movers and shakers at this hour:EternalThe share price of Eternal Ltd. has gained 3% intra-day today. The stock was one of the top Nifty movers in trade today. There is no specific trigger for the positive movemenIndian Energy Exchange

Indian Energy Exchange Ltd. share price traded in green up around 2% after the company reported an 18.6% year-on-year increase in electricity traded volumes for May 2026. Total traded volume stood at 12,983 million units during the month. India’s power consumption increased 11.5% year-on-year to 164.98 billion units, while peak demand touched a record 270.82 GW. Stock price of Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd. surged nearly 14% by midday after the company commissioned a high-tech industrial-scale biochar facility in Jalgaon, Maharashtra. The facility has an annual production capacity of around 20,000 tonnes and can process more than 50 metric tonnes of agricultural and fruit processing residue every day. According to the company, the project ranks among the world’s largest single-unit biochar reactors and is expected to support climate-smart agriculture, carbon removal and circular manufacturing.The company said additional biochar units are already under development. It also believes the project can create new income opportunities for farmers by converting agricultural residue into a carbon-rich soil-enhancing material while reducing dependence on synthetic inputs.

The board approved raising funds through a combi-

nation of preferential allotment, qualified institutional placement and other permissible routes. The company said the issue size could reach Rs 5,000 million through one or multiple tranches. Several domestic mutual funds and institutional investors, including ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund, Kotak Mutual Fund, Mirae Asset Mutual Fund and WhiteOak Capital, were among the buyers in the transactionGujarat Alkalies and Chemicals

Gujarat Alkalies & Chemicals share price climbed more than 5% by midday after the company partnered with Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions for a hybrid renewable energy project in Gujarat. The project will comprise 75.90 MW of wind capacity and 84.34 MWp of solar capacity under a group captive structure. Power generated from the project will be supplied to the company’s manufacturing units at Dahej and Vadodara.The renewable energy initiative is expected to generate nearly 36.9 crore units of clean power annually. The project will be executed in two phases across multiple locations in Gujarat and is aimed at strengthening long-term energy reliability while reducing environmental impact. VedantaVedanta Ltd. share price remained in focus amid developments related to its ongoing demerger process.The fundraising announcement came after a strong Q4 FY26 performance. ideaForge reported a net profit of Rs 60 crore compared with a loss of Rs 25.70 crore a year earlier. Revenue from operations climbed to Rs 141 crore from Rs 20.3 crore. The company also disclosed that it secured orders worth Rs 530 crore during FY26 and continues to expand its combat drone portfolio through internal development and strategic partnerships. JBM Auto Ltd. share price jumped around 6.25% by midday after the Union Cabinet approved a vehicle replacement scheme covering ageing trucks and buses in the Delhi-NCR region.The policy aims to encourage replacement of BS-IV and older commercial vehicles with BS-VI-compliant or electric alterna-



tives. Benefits include interest subvention on loans, monthly fuel vouchers and incentives linked to electric vehicle adoption. The scheme is expected to benefit more than 2 lakh vehicle owners across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Since JBM Auto has a strong presence in the electric bus segment, the announcement strengthened expectations of improved order inflows and long-term demand visibility.Olectra GreentechOlectra Greentech Ltd. share price gained nearly 4% by midday following the government’s commercial vehicle replacement programme.The company remains one of the major beneficiaries of India’s electric bus transition. Market participants expect the policy to accelerate fleet electrification among public transport operators and improve demand prospects for electric buses over the coming years.The announcement added to positive sentiment around clean mobility companies as policymakers continue to push for lower-emission transportation alternatives.Lenskart Solutions Ltd. share price declined around 0.5% by midday after SoftBank reduced its stake through a block deal.

Exchange data showed that SoftBank arm SVF II Lightbulb (Cayman) Ltd sold 5.65 crore equity shares, representing a 3.25% stake in the company. The transaction was executed at an average price of Rs 508.55 per share and was valued at approximately Rs 2,873 crore.

Sterlite Technologies is currently in the spotlight; its stock has surged by 111% over by 670%

Mumbai: Shares of Sterlite Technologies (STL), a connectivity solutions provider of optical fibers, optical fiber cables, optical connectivity and data centre networks, hit a new high, and were locked at the 5 per cent upper circuit at ₹651.90 on the BSE in Thursday’s intra-day trade amid heavy volumes.

The stock price of the telecom equipment & accessories company remained frozen at the upper circuit for the ninth straight trading days, surging 55 per cent during the period. In the past one month, the market price of the company has more-than-doubled or up 111 per cent. It zoomed 670 per cent from its 2026 low of ₹84.65 touched on January 27, 2026. Till 11:42 AM; a combined 5.93 million equity shares of STL changed hands on the NSE and BSE. There were pending buy orders for a combined 35,000 shares on these exchanges, data shows.

Currently, STL is trading under ‘T’ group. T group shares are securities that are put into Trade to Trade (T2T) segment by the BSE. These stocks are not allowed for intraday

trading. The T2T stocks can only be delivery based i.e. the buyer has to take the delivery of these shares.Sterlite Technologies clarifies on volume movementSTL confirms that the company is not aware of any unpublished price sensitive information, which in its opinion may have a bearing on the price/volume behavior in the scrip, which is required to be intimated to the Stock Exchanges as per Regulation 30 and that has not been so intimated. STL further said that the company is aware that as per regulation, it is required to intimate to the Exchanges all the events, information etc. that have a bearing on its operations/performance which includes all price sensitive information, etc. The company, from time to time, has made all necessary disclosures to the Stock Exchanges of such events, information etc. within stipulated timelines, it said. STL made a clarification with respect to significant movement in the volume of shares of the company across BSE and National Stock Exchange of India (NSE). India data center expansion is emerging as one of the most

compelling structural tailwinds of optical fiber, and STL is uniquely positioned to capture it, the management said in Q4 earnings conference call.What’s driving Sterlite Technologies’ stock price?STL is a global leader in digital connectivity infrastructure, serving telcos, data centers, citizen networks and large enterprises. The company’s portfolio spans fiber to fiber optic cables, specialty cables and connectivity products. STL is India’s No. 1 end-to-end optical manufacturer with over 8 per cent global optical fiber cable market outside of China. And with more than 30-plus years of leadership, close to almost 800 patents and 10+ zero waste manufacturing facilities worldwide, STL is truly leading the next wave of global digital infrastructure. STL on May 22, 2026 announced the receipt of a multiyear Product Award Letter (PAL) valued at more than \$1 billion. Under this agreement, through one of its subsidiaries, STL will supply optical connectivity products to a hyperscaler for AI Data Centre build-outs. Under this agreement, STL, through its optical solutions, will

support building AI data center infrastructure in the US for this hyperscaler. Installed capacity is set to grow to 5x from 1.4 gigawatts in 2025 to 8 gigawatts by 2030. What makes this cycle particularly powerful is the breadth of commitment that hyperscalers like Google and Microsoft are deploying tens of billions of dollars. Indian conglomerates like Adani and Reliance are anchoring gigawatt campuses, and even domestic majors like TCS are laying out long term capacity plans, STL said.“This is a diversified and resilient demand base. A supportive policy environment, state incentives, power availability and benefits and tax holidays extending 2047 is further derisking and accelerating the build-out. Every dollar of data center capex has a direct multiplier of fiber intensity across DCI, metro and long-haul networks with optical cable demand projected to grow at 11 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) through 2030. This is not a cyclical uptick. It is a durable high visibility growth opportunity playing out right here in our home market in India”, the company said.

Meesho slips 4%; Choice flags lock-in expiry



Mumbai: Meesho shares slipped 3.9 per cent on BSE, logging an intra-day low of ₹168.25 per share. However, at 12:50 PM, the stock recovered slightly but was down 3.77 per cent at ₹168.5 per share. In comparison, the BSE Sensex was down 0.04 per cent at 74,317.

Choice Institutional Equities has maintained an ‘Add’ on Meesho stock with a target price of ₹210, based on 4x FY28 EV/Revenue, flagging the impending lock-in expiry on June 9, 2026, as a near-term overhang on the stock.

Approximately 68 per cent of Meesho’s pre-IPO shareholding — worth approximately ₹54,000 crore — will become eligible for trading from June 10, 2026, following the expiry of the lock-in period on June 9, 2026. This excludes approximately 20 per cent of the company’s share capital, which remains under lock-in until June 9, 2027, as disclosed in the prospectus.

Ukraine targets St. Petersburg ‘Putin’s Davos’ gets underway

London: Moscow downed hundreds of drones over its territory late Tuesday, regional officials said, after Kyiv launched a major attack reaching as far as the Russian capital as an economic forum drawing thousands of attendees gets underway. Three districts were targeted in the overnight Ukrainian drone assault, according to St. Petersburg governor Aleksandr Beglov, wounding several people and damaging infrastructure facilities. On Tuesday, Ukraine also launched strikes on “critical infrastructure facilities” situated in Smolensk, a city in western Russia close to the Belarus border, the governor Vasily Anokhin said.Two firefighters were killed there while trying to extinguish a blaze “caused by debris from a downed enemy drone,” Anokhin said, adding that two other firefighters and one civilian sustained minor injuries. Ukrainian President Volodymr Zelensky reported “positive results” from long-range strikes against “key targets,” including the St Petersburg oil terminal, one of the largest oil transshipment complexes in northwestern Russia. The terminal plays a “crucial role” in Russian fuel exports and logistics, according to the general staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Other targets included “military targets at the Kronstadt base,” an island naval port near St Petersburg, and a facility in the Tambov region that Ukraine said was involved in the production of Russian weapons, Zelensky added.“Ukraine’s plan for long-range strikes is being carried out exactly as needed to bring peace closer,” the Ukrainian president said.

Russian air defenses intercepted and de-



stroyed more than 350 Ukrainian drones over areas both close to the border and deeper into the country including Moscow, St. Petersburg, and the western city of Novgorod, according to the Russian Ministry of Defense. At least 60 drones flew over the Leningrad region alone, authorities said. Kyiv has intensified attacks hitting key Russian oil assets over the past few months, firing hundreds of long-range drones, squeezing fuel supplies and compounding economic strains for residents. In May, Ukrainian forces carried out their largest assault on the Russian capital in more than a year, state media reported at the time. Footage posted by Zelensky showed fiery explosions and several blazes at one Russian facility. In another of the clips, a huge plume of thick, black smoke is seen behind a high-rise building.Ukraine has this year rapidly developed its medium and long-range drones to attack Russian targets, including Moscow’s oil facilities and other locations far beyond the front lines.The attacks came as the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, or SPIEF, a major business event known as Russian President Vladimir Putin’s version of Davos, began in the city on Wednesday.

US and Iran launch new strikes, as Kuwait says airport hit by Iranian drones

Washington: The US military said it launched “self-defence” strikes on Iran overnight, and shot down ballistic missiles and drones fired at ships and Gulf countries.The strikes on Qeshm Island, in the Strait of Hormuz, were “in response to attempted attacks by Iran across the Middle East”, US Central Command (Centcom) said.Iran said it had attacked US bases and helicopters in a “regional country” using missiles and drones in retaliation. Centcom said Tehran fired two missiles at Kuwait and three at Bahrain, all of which broke apart or were intercepted.Kuwait’s army later said Iranian drones had hit its international airport, causing “significant” building damage and injuries to a number of people.Air traffic was suspended on Wednesday morning. Ministry of defence spokesman Brigadier General Saud Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi described the attack as “criminal Iranian aggression”. He said the wounded had received medical care.

The latest attacks come amid stalled ceasefire negotiations between the US and Iran, after talks on a deal to end the months-long war failed to advance over the weekend. On Monday, Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei denied this had been on the table, adding that Washington was “constantly changing its views and putting forward new or contradictory demands”.In

its recent statement, Centcom said US forces “enforced blockade measures against Botswana-flagged M/T Lexie as it transited international waters toward Kharg Island”.It said the ship’s crew had failed “to comply with directions from US forces multiple times over a 24-hour period”.Overall, six commercial vessels have been disabled and another 122 redirected since the blockade went into force, Centcom said

The BBC has contacted Botswana’s government for comment. Centcom said the strike on Qeshm Island had targeted an Iranian military ground control station, and that the US military also shot down three attack drones that had been launched by Iran toward “civilian mariners that were rightfully transiting regional waters”.The IRGC said “disrupting the security of the Strait of Hormuz will carry a heavy price for the aggressive US military”. Centcom also said Iran had launched “several” ballistic missiles towards countries in the region. “Two Iranian missiles fired at Kuwait fell short or broke apart en route, and three missiles launched at Bahrain were immediately intercepted by US and Bahrain air defence forces.”Iran has repeatedly attacked targets in Bahrain and Kuwait, where US military bases are located.Earlier, Centcom said it had struck and disabled an unladen oil tanker that was sailing



towards Iran, as part of Washington’s naval blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, which began on 13 April.A US aircraft fired a Hellfire missile into the engine room of the Botswana-flagged M/T vessel, after its crew “ignored repeated warnings”, it said.

Centcom also released footage purportedly showing the moment the tanker was hit on Tuesday.The escalation comes after US President Donald Trump this week told his critics to “sit back and relax”, saying that Iran “really wants to make a deal, and it will be a good one for the USA”.US media earlier reported that Trump had requested edits to the terms of a potential peace deal, after meeting with senior aides to discuss extending the framework of a ceasefire.The changes related

to the Strait of Hormuz and the removal of highly enriched uranium from Iran, the BBC’s US news partner CBS News reported - as well as a framework to reopen negotiations on Iran’s nuclear programme.

The top diplomat testified that US negotiators had not offered Iran sanctions relief in exchange for re-opening the strait.“Right now, everything that’s been discussed with them is that ... any sanctions relief is condition-based, which means it has to be in return for the reason why those sanctions were put in place in the first place, which is their nuclear programme,” he said.“The war is over,” he said in another tense exchange with a senator, as lawmakers on the committee questioned the US strategy for ending the conflict.

Seven killed after drone hits bus in Russia-controlled part of Ukraine

Iran: Seven people have been killed and 11 others injured after a drone hit a passenger bus travelling through a Russia-controlled part of Ukraine, an official said.Denis Pushilin, the Kremlin-installed leader of Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk region, said the bus was struck in the early hours of Wednesday as it was travelling between Moscow and Simferopol, in Russian-occupied Crimea.Black smoke could also be seen rising over St Petersburg on Wednesday morning, with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky confirming the city’s oil terminal had been hit

The attack comes as the city hosts the annual International Economic Forum, an event designed to showcase Russia to the world. The strikes come a day after a massive Russian assault on cities across Ukraine killed at least 22 people, including several women and children

On the drone which hit the bus in Donetsk, Pushilin said: “In Yenakiyev, a UAV attacked a Moscow-Simferopol coach; according to preliminary reports, seven civilians were killed.”He added the 11 injured people were receiving medical care. Andriy Kovalenko, the head of the Ukrainian government’s centre for combating disinformation, has talked about a “parallel reality” created by Russian state propaganda, while not explicitly denying claims that the strike took place.“Russia attacks civilians with drones all the time... of course, when everyone is talking about this, when there is evidence of such actions by the Russians, they use their main propaganda tool: creating a parallel reality,” he told the BBC.

The latest wave of strikes comes a day after Russia launched one of its largest attacks on Ukraine since its full-scale invasion began in 2022

At least 22 people were killed after Russia launched more than 700 missiles and drones overnight into Tuesday, Ukrainian officials said. Russia’s defence ministry said the strikes had been a response to previous Ukrainian attacks, saying in a statement that the “strike objectives” had all been achieved.



The Kremlin said on Tuesday it was carrying out the “systematic strikes” it had pledged after accusing Kyiv of a deadly attack on a student dormitory in an occupied part of eastern Ukraine in late May

Kyiv said it had hit a Russian military unit.“This practice will continue,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday, claiming the strikes were targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure.

“Against this background of attacks on our civilians, they come up with stories in which Ukraine acts just like Russia. This is done to justify their own terror as a response to our actions.”The BBC has approached the Ukrainian military for comment.Drones were downed over Belgorod, Kursk and other western regions, as well as near Moscow and over the Sea of Azov, Russian officials added.

In total, Russia says it shot down 350 Ukrainian drones overnightAt least 50 of the drones were downed over the Leningrad region northwest

of Moscow, according to the regional governor Alexander Drozdenko.The region includes St Petersburg, which is welcoming delegates from around the world for the economic forum from Wednesday. Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to address attenees on Friday.“Important facilities on Russian territory were hit last night,” Zelensky wrote on X, sharing a video of black smoke rising above St Petersburg.He described the strikes as “long-range sanctions” and said Ukrainian forces also hit military targets in Russia’s Tambov region. These overnight strikes saw Pulkovo airport temporarily restrict flights, according to Russian aviation watchdog Rosaviatsia.Meanwhile, an 86-year-old woman was killed following a drone attack in Ukraine’s southern Kherson region overnight, Yaroslav Shanko, head of the city’s military administration saidThis came as part of a wider attack by Moscow overnight, with Ukraine’s air force saying Russia launched 198 drones at several different regions, 189 of which were shot down.

Rescuers search for new ways into cave in Laos two men feared trapped

Vientiane: Laos — Rescuers in central Laos are racing to find two men feared to be trapped in a flooded cave network for almost two weeks, as storms batter the dense jungle.Keng-kard echoed those concerns on Tuesday, warning that flooding was still “effectively blocking access into the cave.” Rescue teams deployed additional pumps to drain water “as quickly as possible,” he said.The men are thought to have entered the cave on May 20, just before heavy rain caused flash flooding and blocked their exit. Five others escaped the cave’s narrow tunnels after a crew of international divers were summoned to the Southeast Asian nation. Rescuers rappelled down a newly discovered vertical shaft of more than 100 meters (320 feet) on Monday, raising hopes the drop could provide a safer pathway to the trapped men.

Divers waited anxiously for authorities to bring advanced scanning equipment that could produce a clearer image of the cave, Thai rescuer Kengkard Bongkawong told CNN.Rescuers could potentially use that equipment while being lowered down the shaft, added Kengkard. Until that point, they were using a map drawn with help of five survivors.However, later Australian diver Josh Richards told CNN the shaft was “completely full of rockfall and landslide” and they “couldn’t identify any way” down it, he said in a video clip on Monday. The diver suggested that if enough water is removed, the two missing survivors could leave the cave using the same route they originally used to enter. “Weather remains a major obstacle, he added. “A storm system has moved into the area and rain continues to fall.”

Putin remains uncompromising on Ukraine, but is public discourse on war changing

London: If Vladimir Putin’s Russia had an official slogan, what would it be“Russia is what it is, and we’re not ashamed of showing it,” Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov once told me in an interview.That fits.

But I recently heard an updated version from veteran pop and folk singer Nadezhda Babkina.After receiving an award from President Putin, Babkina told an audience in the Kremlin: “Russia will never surrender thanks to our remarkable, multi-ethnic genetic code... that holds us all together.“Anyone who doesn’t like that,” she added, “can go and poison themselves.”In many ways, the line “they can go and poison themselves” encapsulates Russia in 2026 - unapologetic, unrepentant and uncompromising.Like Vladimir Putin himself. Since ordering the mass invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin leader has displayed no regret, no remorse over his decision to attack Russia’s neighbour - and no intention of ceasing hostilities.This week Russia launched another massive missile and drone strike across Ukraine.The attack came on the eve of the annual

St Petersburg International Economic Forum, an event designed to showcase Russia to the world. High-profile Western investors and politicians have long stopped coming. But the organisers say that delegations from more than 130 countries and territories will attend.For a country seeking foreign investment, more than four years of war with its neighbour doesn’t seem the best advertisement.But, as we have established, “Russia is what it is”. Forum or no forum, the attacks on Ukraine continue.

resident Putin’s public position on the war is unwavering. He continues to demand that Ukraine cede control to Russia of the entire Donbas region. Vladimir Putin has not changed. But one thing in the Kremlin has. And that is to do with Donald Trump.Last year Russian officials appeared confident that the US president would help deliver a Ukraine peace deal on Moscow’s terms. In other words, that President Trump would pressure Kyiv into accepting Moscow’s maximalist demands.

Following last summer’s US-Russia summit in Anchorage, Alaska, for months afterwards senior

Russian officials waxed lyrical about the “spirit of Anchorage” - as if Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin had reached a mutual understanding on Ukraine to Moscow’s benefit

But no peace deal materialised.“I don’t know about the spirit of Anchorage,” President Putin’s foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov told Russian state TV recently. “I have never used that phrase.”It was a sign that the “spirit of Anchorage” has, if not disappeared, then at least started evaporating. What the Kremlin leader had conceived as a short-term “special military operation” has turned into a bloody war of attrition which is now in its fifth year. Since February 2022, Russia has suffered huge battlefield losses, significant damage to its economy and technological decline.What’s more, the war has moved closer to home. Today Ukrainian drones reach deep inside Russia. Oil refineries and other energy infrastructure are regularly targeted. Last month, a large-scale Ukrainian drone attack on the Moscow region highlighted that air defences around the Russian capital could be penetrated.

Six breathtaking shades of pink that are flattering on all skin tones



Pink lipstick has been a fundamental element of beauty for many years. I vividly recall the initial lipstick color I applied when I began my college journey. It was a pink shade I found in my mother's dresser. That charming, rosy pink lipstick not only enhanced my appearance but also elevated my spirits! This particular pink shade has since become my favorite, and I continue to keep it in my bag to this day. As time passed, and all thanks to the evolution of the makeup industry, we now have an array of pink lipstick shades for every skin tone and type. From dusty rose and fuchsia shades that complement medium to dark skin tones to hot pinks and nudes for fair skin tones, there are plenty of options to choose from. And here, we have curated

a list of 6 pink shades that are a must-have in every girl's vanity. Why Pink lipstick never goes out of style Pink is often associated with femininity, youthfulness, and sophistication. Unlike some lipstick colours that come and go with fashion trends, pink remains a timeless choice because of its adaptability. Whether you're heading to the office, attending a wedding, or enjoying a night out, there's a pink lipstick shade suited for the occasion. Choosing the right pink shade as per your skin tone Fair skin: Baby pink, blush pink, rosy nude Medium skin: Rose pink, dusty rose, watermelon pink Olive skin: Mauve pink, berry pink, tea rose Deep skin: Fuchsia, raspberry pink, magenta Matte, Satin, or Glossy?

The finish of your lipstick can dramatically affect the final look:Matte: Offers long-lasting colour and a sophisticated finish.Satin: Provides a smooth, comfortable texture with subtle shine.Glossy: Creates fuller-looking lips and a youthful appearance. 6 shades of pink lipstick Dusty Rose Dusty Rose is a timeless, muted pink shade with soft, rosy undertones that creates an elegant, sophisticated look. It strikes the perfect balance between pink and mauve, making it suitable for both everyday wear and special occasions. This shade particularly flatters fair, light, medium, and wheatish skin tones, complementing both cool and neutral undertones. Bubblegum Pink Bubblegum Pink is a playful, vibrant pink shade that instantly brightens the face and adds a youthful,

fun, and cheerful touch to any makeup look. Its lively colour delivers a fresh and energetic appearance, making it perfect for daytime outings, casual events, and summer-inspired styles. The shade works exceptionally well on fair, light, and medium skin tones, especially those with cool or neutral undertones. Fuchsia Fuchsia is a bold and captivating pink shade infused with rich purple undertones, delivering a striking and confident finish. This vibrant colour instantly elevates any makeup look, making it ideal for parties, celebrations, and statement-making occasions. Fuchsia complements a wide range of skin tones, particularly medium, tan, deep, and rich complexions, where its intensity beautifully stands out. It also flatters cool and neutral undertones. Mauve Pink

Mauve is a sophisticated blend of pink and soft purple tones that creates a chic, modern lip look. The muted elegance of this shade makes it suitable for professional settings, casual outings, and evening wear alike. It enhances natural beauty without appearing overly bright, offering a refined and versatile finish. Mauve Pink looks especially flattering on light, medium, wheatish, and tan skin tones, particularly those with cool or neutral undertones. Nude Pink Nude Pink is a delicate, natural-looking shade that enhances the lips with a subtle touch of soft pink colour. Perfect for everyday wear, it creates a polished yet effortless appearance that pairs beautifully with both minimal and dramatic eye makeup. This universally flattering shade works well across fair, light, medium, and wheatish skin tones, adapting seamlessly to various undertones. Baby Pink Baby Pink is a soft, delicate pastel pink shade that brings a fresh, innocent, and feminine touch to the lips. Its gentle colour creates a youthful appearance while adding subtle brightness to the overall makeup look. Ideal for daytime wear, spring-inspired styles, and romantic occasions, Baby Pink complements fair and light skin tones exceptionally well. It also suits medium skin tones when paired with complementary makeup. Best suited for cool and neutral undertones, this charming shade delivers a sweet and effortlessly elegant finish.

Kareena Kapoor Redefines Classic in a Floral Kurta



Kareena Kapoor Khan is adept at captivating attention, whether she is adorned in a Western attire or a traditional outfit. The actress has been choosing understated looks that enhance her royal presence. On this occasion, she emerged in Mumbai wearing a kurta set that met all the criteria – sophisticated, floral, and ideal for the summer season. Kareena Kapoor Khan turned up to the event, arm-in-arm with her husband, actor Saif Ali Khan. He wore an all-black cotton salwar-khameez with a pair of tinted sunglasses and a black dress shoes. The two of them were pillars of sup-

port for the former's sister, who has been slowly but steadily making her way back to the silver screens. The 45-year-old actor wore a light blue kurta set from Pero. It featured tiny pink flowers all over the dupatta and the wide-legged pyjamas. The high-neck, long-sleeved sheer kurta was layered over a sleeveless, floral-patterned top. The actor and mother of two kept everything else relatively simple. Her hair was straightened, and makeup was dewy. Kareena Kapoor stuck to her tried and true pink lipstick and went heavy on the blush. The Jab We Met and Kabhi Khushi, Kabhi

Gham actor also wore long, dainty earrings with pink stones by the brand Hanut that matched the tiny pink flowers on her outfit. To complete the traditional look, Kareena Kapoor wore a pair of silver joothis that tied the entire look together. Set against a brooding Kolkata that feels as wounded as the people inhabiting it, the story begins with the brutal murder of Ahana Jaiswal, the daughter of Kolkata's wealthiest businessman, Dheeraj Jaiswal. Found dead in a chillingly staged crime scene inside her room, Ahana's murder sends shockwaves through the city.

Messenger bags for laptops that accommodate a 14-inch device

Laptop messenger bags perfectly blend professionalism with practicality. They are more convenient to carry than cumbersome backpacks, present a polished appearance suitable for office meetings, and can also serve as a travel companion while on the go. However, not all messenger bags are designed to comfortably hold a 14-inch laptop, which is one of the most prevalent laptop sizes today. A bag that is overly tight can hinder access, whereas one that is excessively large may feel cumbersome and heavy. To alleviate the hassle of sifting through countless options, I have compiled a selection of eight messenger bags that can comfortably fit a 14-inch laptop. These selections offer a harmonious blend of style, storage, and everyday practicality with ease. 5 Things to keep in mind when picking the right messenger bag Check the laptop compartment dimensions and not just the product title. Look for padded interiors to protect your laptop from bumps and scratches. Choose adjustable shoulder straps for better comfort during long commutes. Make sure there are separate pockets for chargers, documents and daily essentials. Consider the bag's weight before loading it up, especially if you travel frequently. 8 picks that you must explore 1. SWISS MILITARY Glide Stylish Design Laptop Sling Bag for Men & Women with 15.4 Inch Compartment & Multi Organizer Pockets: The Swiss Military Glide keeps things clean, functional and

office-ready without feeling bulky. Crafted from durable polyester with a structured finish, it has the kind of understated look that works just as well in a boardroom as it does at an airport. The padded compartment comfortably accommodates laptops up to 15.4 inches, making it a great option for those carrying a 14-inch device with extra room for accessories. Multiple organiser pockets, a concealed security compartment and comfortable carry options make it a practical everyday companion for work, meetings and travel. 2. DailyObjects 100% Cotton Canvas Commute Laptop Messenger (11L) Unisex bag | Travel Shoulder Handbag With Trolley Sleeve: The DailyObjects Commute Messenger Bag has a relaxed yet polished aesthetic that feels right at home in modern work settings. Made from durable cotton canvas and finished with leather handles, it has a refined look that gets better with regular use. The padded compartment is designed specifically for laptops up to 14 inches, making it an ideal fit for most professionals. Thoughtful additions such as the trolley sleeve, metal zip closure and organised interior make it especially useful for commuters and frequent travellers who appreciate both style and practicality. 3. EUME Commute Laptop Bag for Men | Office Bag for Men & Women | with Padded Compartment | Vegan Leather & Nylon Fabric: The EUME Commute Laptop Bag is one of those rare finds that manages to feel polished, practical and travel-friendly all at once. Crafted from waterproof nylon

with vegan leather accents, it has a contemporary design that works effortlessly for office days and business trips. The padded interior comfortably accommodates laptops up to 15.6 inches, making it an excellent choice for anyone carrying a 14-inch device along with chargers, documents and daily essentials. Thoughtful details such as the bright interior lining, trolley sleeve and organised compartments make this a smart and dependable everyday work bag. 4. MOKOBARA The Transit Briefcase Vegan Leather & Nylon 15L Laptop Crossbody Messenger Bag: The Mokobara Transit Briefcase is designed for those who appreciate clean lines and smart organisation. Its minimal aesthetic is complemented by a thoughtful mix of water-resistant nylon and vegan leather trims, giving it a polished yet contemporary feel. Inside, the dedicated laptop sleeve comfortably accommodates devices up to 15.6 inches, making it ideal for 14-inch laptops with room to spare. Scratch-resistant compartments for tech essentials, hidden bottle pockets and generous storage capacity make it particularly useful for professionals who move between office, airport and café with ease. 5. HAMMONDS FLYCATCHER Genuine Leather Office Bag for Men - Laptop Bag for Men - Padded Laptop Compartment: If classic leather bags are your thing, the HAMMONDS FLYCATCHER Office Bag is worth considering. Crafted from genuine leather, it has a timeless look that feels professional without appearing

overly formal. The rich finish and structured silhouette give it a premium presence, making it suitable for meetings, office commutes and business travel. Designed to accommodate laptops up to 14 inches, it offers a snug and secure fit for most everyday work devices. Multiple internal compartments keep essentials organised, while the adjustable shoulder strap and leather handles ensure comfortable carrying throughout the day. 6. HP Everyday 14-inch Laptop Bag: The HP Everyday Odyssey Briefcase is a great option for those who prefer a clean, understated work bag that focuses on practicality. Its minimal design feels modern and versatile, making it suitable for office commutes, remote work days and frequent travel. Built from durable water-resistant polyester, it is designed to handle everyday wear with ease. The padded compartment securely accommodates laptops up to 14 inches, while multiple organisational pockets help keep chargers, documents and accessories neatly arranged. The addition of travel-friendly features and recycled materials makes it a sensible choice for everyday professional use. 7. DailyObjects Leather Urban Tech Briefcase Bag (7L) Laptop Messenger Bag Sturdy Handle, Detachable Strap: The DailyObjects Leather Urban Tech Briefcase is for those who like their work bags to look polished without feeling overly formal. Finished in smooth faux leather with a soft polysuede lining, it has a refined appearance that transitions effortlessly



from office meetings to coffee shop work sessions. The cushioned laptop compartment is designed to securely accommodate laptops up to 14 inches, making it a strong choice for everyday professional use. Thoughtful additions such as magnetic front pockets, a trolley sleeve and multiple carrying options add convenience, while the slim profile keeps the overall look smart and streamlined.

8. uppercase 14L Omega 03 Professional Laptop Messenger Bag | up to 15.6" | 3x More Water Resistant: The uppercase Omega 03 Professional Messenger Bag is a practical choice for professionals who need generous storage without compromising on appearance. Its clean design and neutral finish give it a contemporary office-friendly look, while the highly water-resistant construc-

tion adds reassurance for daily commutes. Designed to accommodate laptops up to 15.6 inches, it comfortably fits a 14-inch laptop with plenty of room for documents and accessories. Dedicated laptop and tablet compartments, multiple organisers and a trolley sleeve make it particularly useful for those who frequently switch between office work, client meetings and travel.

ENTERTAINMENT

Anupam Kher recalls last talk with Pahlaj Nihalani: 'he sounded weak, sad'

Mumbai: Veteran actor Anupam Kher has shared a heartfelt tribute following the passing of veteran film producer and former CBFC chairperson Pahlaj Nihalani, who died on June 4 at the age of 76. Reflecting on their last conversation, Kher expressed deep sorrow and said he regretted not being able to visit Nihalani during his hospital stay last week.

Anupam Kher took to social media to share a video in which he is seen speaking emotionally about Pahlaj Nihalani. Along with a heartfelt video message, the veteran actor penned a note mourning his passing

and reflected on the close bond they had shared over the years. He posted the video with a caption that read, "The news of Pahlaj Nihalani ji's passing has left a strange emptiness in my heart. I worked with him in several films and every experience with him was a pleasant one. During the shooting of Shola Aur Shabnam, we not only made a good film but also created countless memories. Pahlaj ji was an excellent producer, but more importantly, he was an excellent human being." "He was cheerful, generous at heart and had genuine affection for people.



Sitting with him, talking to him and laughing with him always felt natural and warm. There are very few people in the film industry

who are remembered more for their behaviour than their work. Pahlaj ji was one of them. Today, as I remember him, his smiling

face keeps appearing before my eyes. Pahlaj ji, you will be deeply missed. Your warmth, laughter and affection will always stay with

me. May God grant peace to your soul. My deepest condolences to his family," he added.

In the video, Anupam Kher recalled speaking to Pahlaj Nihalani just a week ago after receiving a message from him. He said in the video, "He played a very big role in my career. I have done many films with him. In fact, just a week ago, I received a message from him asking, 'How are you, Anupam ji?'" After many months, I got a message from him. Whenever he saw something good, he would send a message. I had an intuition and called him. I asked, 'Pahlaj ji, where are

you? I want to meet you.' He said, 'I am in the hospital right now, but I will be discharged tomorrow and go home.' I told him I wanted to come and meet him. I don't know why, but when I heard his voice, he sounded weak and a little sad. He said, 'Let me recover a little and then you can come.' I told him I would visit the following week. And today I got to know that he is no longer with us." Meanwhile, the last rites of the former CBFC chief were held on June 4. Govinda, Varun Dhawan, David Dhawan, Boney Kapoor, Malaika Arora and others were seen paying their last respects.

James Handy dies; son arrested

Agency: For nearly five decades, James Handy quietly built one of Hollywood's most enduring careers, becoming a familiar face across films, television dramas and blockbuster franchises. Known for bringing depth to supporting roles, the veteran actor left his mark on generations of viewers through projects ranging from *Jumanji* to *Top Gun: Maverick*.

The actor died at the age of 81 following a stabbing incident at his home in Tarzana, California. According to the Los Angeles Police Department, Handy was discovered unconscious in the front yard of his residence at around 9.30 am on Wednesday. Authorities said he had sustained multiple stab wounds to the chest. Police have arrested 44-year-old Michael Gledhill, the son of Handy's girlfriend, on suspicion of murder. Bail has been set at \$2 million. According to a police statement, a 911 caller reportedly said: "I am the son of man, I just killed the man of sin." When officers arrived at the property, Gledhill allegedly identified himself, telling police he was "the one they were looking for". "The suspect resides at the location with his mother, who is the victim's girlfriend," the statement added.

Born in New York City in March 1945, Handy's path to acting began during his university years, where he developed an interest in theatre after being cast in a number of stage productions. He later pursued studies in English and Drama and was encouraged by professors to consider acting professionally. However, before his screen career could begin, Handy's life took an unexpected turn. At 21, he was drafted into the United States Army and served during the Vietnam War with the 196th Lightning Brigade in Tay Ninh between August 1966 and July 1967.

Nushratt Bharuccha clarifies after RCB video sparks controversy row



Mumbai: The joy of seeing Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) lift the trophy in the IPL 2026 final recently turned into an unexpected social media misunderstanding for Nushratt Bharuccha. What began as a simple celebration post on her Instagram stories quickly spiralled into intense public debate, forcing her to address the controversy head-on today.

A few days ago, Nushratt shared a recording of her television screen capturing the winning moments of the IPL 2026 final. While the intent was to share her excitement with fans, the video clip went viral for an entirely different reason. Viewers quickly latched onto a vague, unusual, and sexual noise heard in the background of the recording. This audio sparked heavy speculation and deba-

te among social media users, leading to confusion and baseless accusations. Taking to her Instagram stories today, Nushratt finally addressed the situation, expressing her frustration with how quickly the narrative had been twisted. She directly confronted the rumours, writing, "Re-posting again, coz I wanna know what's the big bawaal about my pup making sounds?"

In her detailed clarification, she highlighted the absurd nature of the claims and revealed that a fraudulent statement had even circulated in her name. "Kuch logon ne hadh hi kar di hai. Ek puppy ke rone ki awaaz se itna bawaal mach gaya hai and someone has issued a fake clarification also on my behalf. So here's the reality. I was watching the match at my friend's house and their young puppy was making these crying sounds." Nushratt concluded her statement by urging the public to think twice before engaging in online harassment or jumping to conclusions based on limited context.

Final Supergirl trailer out: Milly Alcock leads as heroine

Agency: The final trailer for Supergirl has officially been released, offering fans an action-packed look at the upcoming superhero film. Starring House of the Dragon breakout star Milly Alcock in the title role of Kara Zor-El, the film draws inspiration from the beloved comic book series Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow.

In this latest glimpse, audiences see a more reluctant side to the lead character. The trailer highlights the differing perspectives of Kara and her famous cousin, Superman, played by David Corenswet. Highlighting their contrasting philosophies, Kara says, "He sees the good in everyone while I see the truth." The footage also reveals that Superman eventually steps in to support his cousin, gifting her a new super suit to assist her on her journey. The film follows Kara's mission to protect a young woman named Ruthye Marye Knoll (played by Eve Ridley), who is seeking revenge for her father's death. Their quest to stop the villainous Krem of the Yellow Hills (Matthias Schoenaerts) brings them into contact with



the formidable Lobo, played by Jason Momoa. A central emotional drive for the story is Kara's bond with her best friend and family, the super-dog Krypto, who she is fiercely determined to protect after he is hurt by Krem.

James Gunn shared the final trailer on X alongside the announcement that tickets are now available for the film's release. Supergirl, directed by Craig Gillespie and written by Ana Nogueira, will release in theatres, including IMAX, on June 26. The cast also features David Krumholtz and Emily Beecham as Ka-

ra's parents, Zor-El and Alura In-Ze, respectively, along with Ferdinand Kingsley and Diarmaid Murtagh Set to the iconic track Call Me by Blondie, the trailer highlights the high stakes of the film. Supergirl kicks off a busy 2026 for DC Studios, which will follow the film with the HBO series Lanterns on August 16 and the film Clayface on October 23. Looking further ahead, both Milly Alcock and Jason Momoa are expected to return for the Superman sequel, Man of Tomorrow, slated for a global release on July 9, 2027.

Peddi makers spend ₹23 cr on lights, junior artistes

Agency: The makers of Peddi reportedly spared no expense in mounting the Ram Charan-starrer on a grand scale. According to a leading producer, the film's production costs escalated significantly due to lavish spending on various departments.

"The producers cleared bills worth nearly ₹15 crore for outdoor unit vans, lighting equipment, and related logistics required for shooting across multiple locations," he revealed. "Another ₹8 crore was reportedly spent on junior artistes alone, as several sequences demanded hundreds of background actors to enhance the film's scale and grandeur. These are unusually high figures even by Telugu cinema standards," he added. The producer also pointed to the film's visual effects expenses, particularly a train sequence involving Jagapathi Babu's character. "A substantial amount was spent on the VFX work, but the final output looked artificial in places. Some of the visual effects stood out for the wrong reasons," he noted.

However, he was all praise for cinematographer R. Rathnavelu, who delivered stunning visuals despite the



criticism surrounding other technical aspects. "Rathnavelu has done a commendable job. The film boasts several breathtaking visuals that elevate its overall presentation," he said. Industry sources suggest that Peddi's budget eventually crossed ₹300 crore, significantly higher than the initial estimate of ₹250 crore. Extended shooting schedules and reshoots at select locations reportedly contributed to the cost escalation. "On average, the production incurred daily shooting expenses of around ₹40-45 lakh, which is quite substantial," the producer observed.

Directed by Buchi Babu Sana, Peddi was reportedly shot over more than 220 days. While the prolonged schedule added to the budget burden, the filmmaker is said to have prioritized perfection and quality, resulting in one of the most expensive productions in Telugu cinema in recent years.

Shilpa Shinde mocks Hina Khan

Mumbai: After Hina Khan reacted to Shilpa Shinde's confession about fake sexual harassment allegations against the producer Sanjay Kohli in 2016, Shilpa has hit back at her. Hina, who participated in Bigg Boss 11 alongside Shilpa, took to her X handle to issue a statement saying she is 'shocked' and 'appalled'. The former Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai actress condemned Shilpa's actions and called it 'shameful'.

Shilpa, in a new video, seemingly took aim at Hina's breast cancer diagnosis and her father's death and said, "Log mere naam par publicity gain karna kab band karenga pata nahi hai. Lekin chalti train mein mat chadhiye, aapko chot lagegi, hai na? Aap publicity gain karne ke liye, aap logon ke paas apni bimariyan hain, ghar ke logon ki jo death hui hai woh log hain, toh aapko Shilpa Shinde kyun chahiye, hai na? Aap already bahut publish ho (sic)." Without taking Hina's name, she also slammed people for not supporting her nine years back. "Us waqt agar saath diya hota, toh aaj yeh naubat nahi aati. Nau saal ke baad humne kaam kar liya. Mujhe kisi ne nahi kaha bolo, lekin main ek ladki ke father aur ek aurat ke husband ke liye khadi hoon, kyunki maine jhooth bola tha. Main apne dil par jhooth lekar nahi jee sakti. Agar us waqt maine unhe arrest karwa diya hota, toh main aaj khud arrest ho jaati ki meri galti hai, mujhe de do.

Madhuri Dixit fan celebrates Maa Behen, gifts 400 saplings to farmers

Mumbai: A fan of actress Madhuri Dixit handed out fruit saplings from his chaat shop in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, to celebrate her film 'Maa Behen'. Pappu Sardar, who runs his chaat shop in the busy Sakchi market, started this unique idea a day before World Environment Day, drawing crowds to his shop where songs from the movie played.

Sardar bought 400 fruit saplings like mango, black berry, guava, and litchi, and carefully chose people who showed interest in gardening to make sure his effort would be meaningful. He said, "I am focusing on farmers and villagers who come to Jamshedpur for



work, because I believe they will plant and care for the saplings, making this initiative successful.'

Maa Behen, a dark comedy, was released on Netflix on Thursday. Sardar has been celebrating Madhuri Dixit's birthday every May

15 since 1998 with great excitement. He said the saplings would help the environment and also provide income once they bear fruit. Sardar told PTL, 'Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for 'one sapling in the name of mother', I

decided to give away 400 fruit saplings a day before World Environment Day and to celebrate the release of Madhuri Dixit's 'Maa Behen'.' He urged everyone to help protect the environment. Maa Behen is a Netflix dark comedy directed by Suresh Triveni and stars Madhuri Dixit, Triptii Dimri, Dharna Durga and Ravi Kishan. The film follows a mother and her daughters whose lives spiral into chaos after they find themselves trying to cover up a crime in a neighbourhood where secrets rarely stay hidden. Blending family drama, crime and comedy, the Netflix original premiered on June 4.

BTS melt hearts with emotional family photos for 2026 FESTA



Agency: The wait is officially over, and the internet is collectively crying happy tears. As part of their annual FESTA celebrations, BTS has just dropped their highly anticipated 2026 "Family Photos". BigHit Music released a stunning collection of 13 portraits across social

media, showing all seven members, RM, Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V, and Jungkook completely reunited in a single frame. The images radiate the exact kind of close-knit, beautifully chaotic family that fans have fallen in love with over the last 13 years.

While the annual family photo has been a sacred tradition since their debut, the 2026 edition specifically carries an entirely different emotional weight. This marks their very first anniversary photoshoot together since all seven members officially completed their mandatory military services. It feels like a breath of fresh air and a massive sigh of relief for fans worldwide. Seeing them standing shoulder-to-shoulder again, right as they kick off their highly anticipated full-team comeback, is the ultimate reassurance that the wait was worth it.

Hrithik Roshan seeks roles beyond 'good guy' image, recalls luck by chance Zafar

Mumbai: Superstar Hrithik Roshan recalled his role of Zaffar in the movie 'Luck By Chance', expressing his wish to play more such characters in his career.

On his Instagram handle, Hrithik Roshan shared a glimpse of an interaction he recently had in which he was asked about the "roles he was looking for." To this, the actor said that he wishes to portray more characters like "Zaffar" in 'Luck By Chance'. Despite his wish, the actor feels "sad" that the directors always approach him for "good guy" roles.



Hrithik Roshan wrote, "Just got asked what's the kind of role I'm looking for. And I surprised myself when it came to me. Remember Zaffar from luck by chance? That's the one.

I'd jump on something like that. But directors only wanna see me play the good guy. Sad." Hrithik Roshan made an extended cameo appearance in the film 'Luck by Chance.' It

Nushratt Bharuccha unfazed in first public outing after viral row



Dressed in a sleek black bodycon gown, Nushratt kept her look elegant yet contemporary. The ankle-length outfit featured a structured square neckline with contrasting white straps, creating a striking monochrome effect. The fitted silhouette was paired with a dramatic thigh-high slit detailed with a white vertical accent, adding a touch

of glamour to the ensemble. She completed the look with straight hair, radiant makeup, softly defined eyes and nude lips, making her one of the standout attendees at the launch.

On the professional front, Nushratt was most recently seen in the horror thriller *Chhorii 2*, directed by Vishal Furia.

is written and directed by Zoya Akhtar in her directorial debut. Produced by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani, it stars Farhan Akhtar and Konkana Sen Sharma in lead roles, with Rishi Kapoor, Dimple Kapadia, Juhi Chawla, Sanjay Kapoor, Isha Sharvani, Ayy Khan and Sheeba Chaddha in pivotal supporting roles. The movie was released in 2009.

Hrithik Roshan was last seen in the movie 'War 2', which also starred Jr NTR in the lead role. It was directed by Ayan Mukerji and was released in 2025.

SRH’s Rs 13 crore star discusses what makes 15-year-old stand out

New Delhi: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, a 15-year-old wonderkid for the Rajasthan Royals (RR), has reserved his best for Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in the 2026 IPL. Sooryavanshi went out for a duck in the first encounter between the two teams, but went on to score a 36-ball century and a 29-ball 97 in the next two games. SRH and England star Liam Livingstone has said that Sooryavanshi is unlike any other batter he has seen. Livingstone complimented Sooryavanshi’s timing and progress and went on to describe what sets him apart from others. ”We got Sooryavanshi’d. Oh my goodness. We bounced him out early on in the tournament, and then he got a hundred and a 97,” Livingstone said, speaking on the Stick to Cricket podcast. “I’ve never seen anything like it, and this was my seventh IPL.

I’ve played with and against some very good players and I’ve never seen anything like it,” he stated on Sooryavanshi. Livingstone elaborated on Sooryavanshi’s incredible development through the course of IPL 2026, and pinpointed exactly what makes him stand out com-



pared to others. ”The way he hits the ball is so clean. He never mis-hit a ball the whole time. The development that he made as a player from the start of the tournament to the end... we were bowling bouncers and he was hitting it over third-man, bowled a low full toss and he was flicking it over,” Livingstone said. Sooryavanshi

ended IPL 2026 with 776 runs in just 16 matches, at a breathtaking strike-rate of over 237. The 15-year-old broke Chris Gayle’s long-standing record of the most sixes by a batter in a single season, smashing 72 maximums. As a result of his exploits, Sooryavanshi bagged five awards in the IPL 2026 final post-match presentation, including

the Orange Cap (highest run-scorer) and the ‘Most Valuable Player’ (MVP) award. Sooryavanshi’s tally of 776 runs also ranks fifth in the all-time list of most runs scored by a single batter in an IPL season. Livingstone, on the other hand, was bought for Rs 13 crore by SRH ahead of IPL 2026, but he only played two games.

A man was murdered when a wall collapsed during sewage pipeline installation in Lodhi Colony



New Delhi, 5 June: A 55-year-old man died and two others were injured after a boundary wall fell during sewer pipeline installation in south Delhi’s Lodhi Colony early Friday, according

to officials. According to the Delhi Fire Services (DFS), a call about a wall fall was received at 1:18am from a location near the Lodhi Hotel in Lodhi Colony. Firefighters dispatched

one water tender, one water bowser, and an intense rescue tender to the scene. According to officials, the incident occurred when a border wall collapsed during ongoing sewage pipeline construction, trapping three workers beneath the rubble. “Before the arrival of rescue teams, local residents managed to pull out two injured men and shifted them to AIIMS Trauma Centre through PCR and CATS ambulances. The third worker was rescued from the rubble by DFS personnel and rushed to the hospital,” the official said. The deceased was identified as Devender, 55. The injured were identified as Rajesh, 48, and Umar, 20, both of whom are undergoing treatment at AIIMS Trauma Centre. Authorities are investigating the circumstances that led to the collapse and whether safety protocols were followed during the work.

A fire broke out at a multi-story structure near the Savitri Cinema in Delhi, leaving two firefighters hurt

New Delhi, 5 June: At least two firefighters were burned while fighting a fire at a six-story building in south Delhi’s Greater Kailash neighborhood, across from Savitri Cinema, when a fire broke out at the Tata Communications office on the third level, according to fire authorities. The fire has been extinguished, but cooling operations in the building continue, according to officials. A senior Delhi Fire Services (DFS) officer stated that the fire control room received a call at 2:47am reporting an office fire in a multi-story structure opposite Savitri Cinema in Greater Kailash (GK)-1. Initially, eight fire trucks were dispatched to the location.

Around 3am, two more fire tenders were dispatched as the fire was declared of “Make-4” category by station officer Govind. Another fire tender was sent around 3:30am. “At 4:30am, assistant divisional officer YS Meena reported that two firemen from Mathura Road fire station,



Sandeep and Suresh, sustained burns in their hands during the firefighting operation. They were rushed to Safdarjung hospital for medical attention,” the DFS officer said. At 5:30am, ADO Meena informed that the fire was brought under control and by 7:05am, the fire was doused completely. “The fire was in the battery

room on the third floor in the TATA Telecommunication office. Nearly 200 square feet of area was affected. The building comprises ground plus five floors,” added the DFS official. A statement from the TATA Telecommunication office is awaited and the copy will be updated whenever it is received.

Ivory Coast stuns France in pre-World Cup friendly Amad Diallo shines



Nantes: Amad Diallo scored a late winner to help Ivory Coast defeat France 2-1 in a World Cup warm-up match in Nantes on Thursday. France captain Kylian Mbappe had hoped to beat Olivier Giroud’s 57-goal record for Les Bleus on his 97th appearance for the country, but had a disappointing evening and was withdrawn by head coach Didier Deschamps at half-time, putting him in second place with 56 goals. Rayan Cherki gave France the lead in the last minute

of the first half with a powerful low shot following some excellent movement in the box. However, Guela Doue, the French-born older brother of France star Desire Doue, equalised after 53 minutes. And Manchester United winger Diallo, who came on as a second-half replacement, sealed the victory for the Elephants with an instinctive finish six minutes from time. France, one of the World Cup favourites, will play another friendly against Northern Ireland

in Lille on Monday before kicking off their campaign for a third World Cup championship against Senegal in East Rutherford on June 16. Iraq surprised a mostly second-string Spain with a 1-1 draw as they prepared for their first World Cup appearance since 1986 in A Coruna. On 16 minutes, the European champions’ captain, Ferran Torres, scored the first goal. Merchas Doski, a German-born left-back, startled goalkeeper Joan Garcia with a cross just 11 minutes later.

Spain dominated possession and Torres hit the bar five minutes before the break but Spain, whose coach Luis de la Fuente gave seven players who are not part of his World Cup squad their international debuts on the night, could not find a winner. Meanwhile, Iran finished off their World Cup preparation with a 2-0 victory over Mali in Turkey. They are due to leave for their tournament base in Mexico on Saturday having finally received their entry visas this week. However, they are yet to receive US visas and are due to play all three of their group matches in the United States, starting with New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 16. Someone who did receive his US visa, though, was Switzerland forward Breel Embolo. He had been prevented from flying to the US with the rest of the squad on Tuesday as his electronic travel authorisation was placed under review. However, the Swiss federation announced on Thursday that his visa had been approved and that Embolo would travel on Friday to join his teammates.

R Praggnanandhaa Breaks Silence On Struggle Following Candidates’ Loss



Toronto: R Praggnanandhaa, an Indian chess ace, acknowledged on Thursday that it was difficult to accept losing the Candidates Tournament championship after giving “everything” to gain the chance to face D Gukesh for the World Championship crown, only to be left terribly disappointed. The 20-year-old Grandmaster was one of eight players who battled in the Candidates in Cyprus earlier this year, but finished seventh, with Uzbekistan’s Javokhir Sindarov winning the title and the opportunity to face Gukesh for the world championship. Praggnanandhaa now has an opportunity to put the Candidates disappointment behind him at Norway Chess, where he has emerged as a title contender, sitting third with two rounds remaining and just two points behind leader Wesley So. He can kickstart the new two-year World Championship cycle on a positive note with a title here. “Yeah, certainly that’s (disappointment of not doing well in Candidates) is something that I have to deal with because

in the last two years I was thinking only about this cycle... I sort of gave everything for this. There was nothing else I was thinking about,” said the Chennai-based GM, reflecting on the disappointment of missing out in the Candidates. “You can also see from the tournaments I played last year that I was just going for this (Candidates qualification)... one spot in FIDE circuit and it is disappointing the way it ends like this. But, yeah, it is what it is. I have to try and get back to playing tournaments,” he added. Praggnanandhaa said after investing so much time and energy into qualifying for the Candidates, he now wants to rediscover the joy of the game without constantly looking ahead to the next qualification race. “After the Candidates, I felt like I just want to enjoy chess now. I just want to play and have fun. Last year, I was just going for that one thing but now I feel I don’t want to think about the next cycle... all the way from now I just want to chill and enjoy chess,” he said.

Parallel energy distribution network HERC should outrightly reject pvt player’s licensing request, argues former minister

New Delhi, 5 June: Former Haryana finance minister Sampat Singh has asked the Haryana power Regulatory Commission (HERC) to reject Eleven Power Private Limited’s plea for a parallel power distribution license in Gurugram and Nuh revenue districts. In a statement, the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) leader accused the BJP administration of arranging backdoor privatization of the state’s electricity distribution system. He said that the decision to provide a parallel distribution license to a private entity in Gurugram and Nuh was a “pre-planned loot of public assets”. He stated that the INLD will reject the measure. The former minister said that when state power distribution companies were in red with combined losses crossing ₹27,915 crore, outstanding dues over ₹10,000 crore, and total loans touching ₹30,904 crore, the state government is facilitating a private company incorporated just last year to enter the distribution business.

“This company has no history, or track record. Yet it has proposed a ₹4,717 crore project. Who is backing them? The BJP government must answer,” the former minister demanded. The INLD leader said a “giant financial mirage” was created by the company. “Its authorised share capital is only ₹100 crore and paid-up share capital is just ₹1 crore. But it has proposed to infuse



equity of ₹1,415.02 crore. This is not a mere technicality but a fraud waiting to happen. The HERC has rightly questioned this,” he alleged. The INLD leader also asked as to why Gurugram and Nuh were being “cherry picked” by the company. Official data shows 75% of DHBVN’s revenue comes from just three districts, with Gurugram having the lowest losses and highest-paying consumers. The peti-

tioner’s own business plan admits it will initially focus on the most lucrative pockets. “This is textbook cherry-picking. The private company wants the cream – the profitable urban consumers – leaving the public discom to serve only the poor and rural. The cross-subsidy framework will collapse overnight,” Singh warned. Singh said the company has no power purchase agreements, no land, no sub-

stations. “This is a house of cards built on hot air and political patronage,” he said. The HERC itself has recognised the danger, stating that a parallel licensee “may affect DHBVN’s ability to sustain the prevailing cross-subsidy framework.” Singh said that in his capacity as a consumer representative, he was initiating a decisive fight before the HERC to get this petition undone.

Being Pragg: The lonely life and burnout of a chess champion

Oslo: It's great when sportspersons talk about processes. Methods. It's a rare peek into their rarified air where only excellence is allowed. Sometimes, it's better when sportspersons allow themselves to be vulnerable in the company of travelling scribes. It's a glimpse into the life of an elite athlete, someone who left school to chase greatness as a child. Before the ninth round at Norway Chess, R Praggnanandhaa, once the world's youngest IM, is pouring his heart out. In a very candid interview, something very rare by the standards of Indian sportspersons, the 20-year-old admits to burn out because of a very punishing 2025. Before that, he also concedes that he would have liked some school or college friends to hang out with whenever he's in Chennai. But he has none. "I would have loved to have some school or college friends (in Chennai),"



the World No. 14 says. "But you have to give (up) certain things (to achieve certain things)." While he doesn't regret it — he admits that if he had a normal childhood, he wouldn't be where he is — the yearning is hard to miss. It's basically a look into the somewhat lonely life of an elite chess player. In a wild two month period in the middle of 2025, he played tournaments in France, Poland, Romania, Armenia, Uzbekistan and Croatia. Spanning multiple formats and in different continents, the then teen willed himself

to complete this crazy schedule, in part, to qualify for the Candidates again. Post this mad two month sequence, he went to both North America as well as South America over the next few months, sandwiched by a tournament in Asia. Mentally, he was exhausted. "Even if you have the physical energy, you don't have the mental energy to keep doing the same thing at every tournament," he says. The same routine, the same patterns... It gets tiring. It becomes automatic, you just don't enjoy it anymore."

That punishing journey eventually was rewarded as he qualified for the Candidates but it ultimately ended in disappointment. "I just want to play chess and chill (now). I don't want to think about the next two-year cycle." "This has nothing to do with the game. But I thought I might as well say it. Whoever is responsible for the NBA App... we have one of the best Western Conference finals (going on) and when people have 'no spoilers' in the App, they expect no spoilers." In isolation, this was the latest in a series of quotable Carlsen quips from inside the confession box. But what made it arresting on Wednesday was that it came during a very tricky opening. Playing with the black pieces, the World No. 1 had already been forced into a couple of deep-thinks by this point and Carlsen had already made a few trips to think aloud the problems he was facing in front of him.

Pakistan declines Asian Fencing Championships invite from India

Pakistan declines India's fencing invitation

New Delhi: Pakistan has declined an invitation to participate in the upcoming Asian Senior Fencing Championships in New Delhi, opting not to send a team for the continental event. The championships, scheduled to begin on June 19 at Bharat Mandapam, will be hosted by India for the first time. The development comes despite India maintaining that Pakistani athletes would be welcome to compete in multilateral events. Speaking to PTI, Fencing Association of India (FAI) Secretary General Rajeev Mehta confirmed that Pakistan chose not to submit entries for the competition before the registration deadline. "We sent an invite to Pakistan, as well as Afghanistan, to participate in the championships but they chose not to send their fencers. The deadline for sending entries is long over and we are now in the process of procuring visas for the athletes and officials," Mehta said. Last month, the Sports Ministry reiterated that while the ban on bilateral sporting engagements with Pakistan remains in place, athletes from the neighbouring country would not be prevented from participating in internation-



al multi-nation events held in India. However, Pakistan ultimately decided against sending a contingent for the championships. The Asian Senior Fencing Championships are expected to feature competitors from more than 30 countries across Asia and Oceania. Nearly 100 delegates and technical officials are also set to attend the event, which will serve as one of the biggest fencing competitions ever hosted in India. The tournament will also coincide with the General Assembly of the Fencing Confederation of Asia (FCA), marking the first time the continental body's leadership will convene in India. Interim International Fencing Federation (FIE) president Abdelmoneim El

Husseiny is also expected to attend the gathering. While preparations for the championships are progressing according to plan, organisers are continuing to address visa-related concerns affecting a few participating countries. "Preparations for the championship are progressing smoothly, with coordination being undertaken alongside international and national authorities to ensure world-class event management and athlete experience," Mehta said. "However, a few participating nations are currently facing visa-related challenges. The delegations and officials from Hong Kong are experiencing difficulties in securing timely visa appointments due to limited appointment slot availability at the visa application centre.

RCB's Jacob Bethell faces the heat as Jamieson blows England away

London: England crumbled on the opening day of their much-awaited Lord's Test against New Zealand, slipping to 118 for 8 when bad light delayed play in the second session. New Zealand's fast bowlers, led by Kyle Jamieson and Will O'Rourke, ran riot in London, making the best use of the nip and swing on offer. The Lord's pitch on Day 1 was far from easy to negotiate, and it appeared the England batters lacked the application required to deal with the excessive seam movement. White-ball captain Harry Brook was the lone batter to show any real fight. Having been dropped on eight, he went on to score the solitary half-century of England's first innings before the stoppage. None of the others, including captain Ben Stokes and former skipper Joe Root, managed to get going. Interestingly, social media was abuzz with questions regarding England's preparation for the three-match series against the former world champions. While Jofra Archer was unavailable for selection following a heavy workload in the IPL 2026 season, questions were raised over Jacob Bethell's preparation as well. Bethell, who had arrived in the UK before the IPL 2026 playoffs, managed just six runs after facing 22 deliveries on Day 1. He was dismissed LBW by Will O'Rourke, who got the ball to angle in sharply



from around the wicket. The left-hander, batting at No. 3, looked utterly at sea, failing to cover the line of the delivery and allowing the ball to crash into his pads. Quite a few critics pointed out that Bethell had erred by spending so much time with Royal Challengers Bengaluru, despite not getting opportunities at the start of the IPL season, which concluded on May 31. Former captain Sir Alastair Cook had previously suggested that Bethell ought to have played County Cricket instead of warming the benches in the IPL. However, Bethell and a handful of former cricketers, including Kevin Pietersen, defended the decision. Even head coach Brendon McCullum, speaking to the press on Tuesday, insisted that Bethell appeared well-prepared to face the red-ball

challenge. "I'm sure working in India, I know it's probably not ideal from a structure point of view and maybe not getting as much red-ball games under his belt, but he has a calm head and he's a very methodical preparer in terms of the mental side of the game," McCullum had said. Bethell had been one of the few positives for the England side during their 1-4 drubbing in the Ashes in Australia earlier this year, where he hit a century in Sydney. However, serious concerns remain over his lack of match practice leading into this all-important Test in London. Crucially, Bethell was not the only man undone by the quality of the New Zealand pace attack. Ben Duckett, who pulled out of the IPL after securing a contract

with Delhi Capitals, managed just 19 before falling LBW to Nathan Smith. Debutant opener Emilio Gay became the first of Jamieson's four victims. Joe Root survived just eight deliveries in the middle before receiving an absolute peach from O'Rourke. Wicketkeeper-batter Jamie Smith was subsequently undone by a delivery that seamed back in sharply after pitching, knocking his off-stump clean out of the ground. Captain Ben Stokes, walking in at No. 7, scraped together 12 off 23 balls before Jamieson claimed the prize wicket, courtesy of a sensational catch in the slips by Kane Williamson. Brook, despite being dropped twice, failed to convert his half-century into a substantial score, leaving tail-enders Ollie Robinson and Josh Tongue together in the middle with England reeling at 118 for 8. England collapsed to 118 for 8 on Day 1 of the Lords Test against New Zealand, struggling against the swing and pace of bowlers Kyle Jamieson and Will O'Rourke. Harry Brook was England's lone resilient batter, scoring the only half-century. Concerns rose over England's preparation, especially Jacob Bethell's lack of red-ball practice despite IPL exposure. New Zealand's attack dismantled key players including captain Ben Stokes and Joe Root. England's batting frailties left them vulnerable early in the series.

Gautam Gambhir optimistic about India qualifying for Test Championship final



New Chandigarh: Head coach Gautam Gambhir has expressed confidence that India will push for a spot in the World Test Championship final despite a difficult start to the ongoing cycle. Speaking to the press on the eve of the one-off Test against Afghanistan in New Chandigarh, Gambhir said there is immense belief within the dressing room that the team can go on and win the title. India failed to qualify for the World Test Championship

final for the first time in three editions last year. A 1-3 defeat in Australia, preceded by an unprecedented home whitewash against New Zealand in 2024, knocked them out of the race. In the new cycle, India drew 2-2 in England, with Gambhir overseeing a transition period following the retirements of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and R Ashwin from Test cricket. However, they were stunned by a visiting South African side, who claimed a 2-0

series victory last year. "Very optimistic. We are always optimistic. Till you have the chance to qualify for the final, we are always optimistic. We know the kind of talent we have. I don't think there is any reason not to believe that we can't win the World Test Championship. That is not just me, but everyone in the dressing room believes. We can have one-odd bad series here and there, but we know the kind of talent and how much hunger we have in the dressing room," Gambhir said. India have won only four of their nine Tests in the ongoing cycle and are languishing in sixth place in the WTC table. They face a challenging run ahead, beginning with a two-Test series in Sri Lanka in August before travelling to New Zealand for another two-Test series in November. The race to the final is set to intensify when India host Australia in a much-anticipated five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy series in January and February next year. India's upcoming one-off Test against Afghanistan will not be part of the World Test Championship cycle, but Gambhir stressed that the team would field a full-strength side to ensure continuity. "Again, a Test match is a Test match.

Afghanistan coach urges ICC to provide more Test matches for red-ball growth

New Delhi: Afghanistan head coach Richard Pybus has called on the ICC to provide emerging Test nations with a more structured schedule, arguing that teams cannot be expected to develop in red-ball cricket without regular opportunities to play. Speaking ahead of Afghanistan's one-off Test against India, Pybus said the responsibility for ensuring the growth of newer Full Members lies with cricket's governing body. His comments come as Afghanistan continue to establish themselves in international cricket despite receiving limited exposure in the longest format compared to the game's traditional powers. "I think the onus is with the ICC," Pybus told reporters during the pre-match press conference on Friday, June 5. "When a country gets granted full membership, it's one thing to get a full fixture list. And it can't be that the development historically of teams is just based on what exposure they get at World Cups." Afghanistan have made remarkable progress since gaining Full Member status in 2017, emerging as a competitive force in



white-ball cricket and regularly challenging established nations. However, their opportunities in Test cricket have remained scarce, with the team often restricted to one-off matches or short bilateral assignments that provide little continuity for long-term development. "I don't think anybody could have conceived 20 years ago where Afghanistan would be now and quite how quick that development has been. When the series started to become two-Test series, to me it made absolutely no sense because you don't want a series which is a tie. There needs to be a three- or five-Test series so that you can actually win the series." To paint a fairer image,

Afghanistan have played only 12 Test matches so far in their history. Irrespective, Pybus praised the BCCI for providing Afghanistan with valuable fixtures, while urging other Full Members to follow suit and help expand the Test calendar for developing nations. "Credit to the BCCI. They've given us plenty of cricket this year, which is fantastic for us to be able to develop," he said. "I'd like to see going forward that the other senior full members also start to build out a list. Historically there are countries around the world whose development was very slow because quite honestly they just couldn't get enough games." The Afghanistan coach argued that the sport should have moved beyond the challenges that restricted the growth of smaller cricketing nations in previous decades. According to Pybus, modern cricket must ensure all Full Members have access to meaningful bilateral schedules if the game is to continue expanding globally. "We need to be in a situation now where there's a proper fixture list," he added. Afghanistan's upcoming one-off Test against India from Saturday, June 6.